

In an earlier life, I was an ardent thespian. I loved acting and directing plays and musicals, and even managed to get paid for my work from time to time. One of our favorite shows back in the '80s was the musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* by the budding team of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. I hadn't read enough of the Bible to appreciate it back then (EfM came later), but the musical captures the Biblical story with remarkable fidelity. Joseph, you will recall, was the youngest and most beloved of the twelve children of Israel (aka Jacob, son of Isaac, whose name was changed to Israel after an all-night wrestling match with a mysterious being—was it God?—see Gen. 32:22-31). To his eleven brothers, Joseph was a spoiled brat with an annoying way of boasting about the vivid dreams he had of his own wonderfulness while parading about in a particularly nice coat, a special gift to him from their father. The brothers' hatred stopped just short of murder. Instead, they threw Joseph into a pit and then sold him to a passing band of migrating Ishmaelites, who in turn sold Joseph (at a profit) to Potiphar, the captain of the royal guard in Pharaoh's Egypt. Back at the homestead in Canaan, the brothers lied to their father that Joseph had been eaten by wild beasts. And that was just the beginning of the drama.



It is a great story, in the biblical as well as the Broadway versions. Very amusing, easy to read, it's a charming riches-to-rags-back-to-riches tale with humor, pathos, and some good comeuppance for the penitent brothers at the end. There are even some racy bits and themes of sexual exploitation presented, eliciting giggles in the stage version when Joseph is invited—no, trapped—to become the sex-slave of Potiphar's wife, for which he is the one punished, shamed, and thrown into prison. When we hear this portion of scripture preached from the pulpit, the lesson is usually how God can take even human evil and use it to bring about God's good purposes on earth.

But wait a minute.

Only recently did I come to recognize the true horror in the story as well (a sign that my erstwhile clueless consciousness has elevated perhaps slightly). For this is also a story of what we recognize today as human trafficking, and the horrendous subset of that crime, sex trafficking. I was at first reluctant to bring up this story in connection with the topic of human trafficking. There is nothing giggle-worthy, funny, or whimsical about human and sex trafficking, a global evil that has come to infect much of our Diocese around Middle and North Georgia. The FBI and the Urban Institute identified Atlanta as one of the cities with the highest incidences of child sex trafficking in the country. The same economic and cultural engines that have made Atlanta a major hub of transportation and commerce also attract the worst elements of this human, systemic, and ancient evil. We live in the midst of it, everywhere. While it is often invisible, our community is infected with this modern form of slavery.

So What?

So. I had to tell you all that in order to tell you this. The purpose of the Episcopal Community Foundation (ECF) is to provide support for parishes in their ministry with the victims of human trafficking (along with others experiencing [poverty and oppression](#)). But the honest truth is—dare I say it?—there does not seem to be much in the way of ministry to focus upon at this time. There have been efforts in the past (for instance, [the "S.O.A.P" project](#) to distribute rescue information in bars of soap to victims of sex trafficking around the Super Bowl in 2018 by All Saints' Atlanta and other Episcopal churches). But if there are other current ministries among the Episcopal churches of our Diocese directed to the victims of human trafficking, none have inquired about ECF's funding resources or grants.

There are, however, many organizations across our Diocese and the State of Georgia, that would welcome aid in their work helping victims and bringing light and awareness to this form of evil. Our Executive Director, Lindsey Hardegree, tells me that she has had conversations with these organizations who would welcome the chance to partner with local church groups and faith communities. RescuingHope.com has compiled a [list of organizations](#) across the state who are instrumental in this work.

So the good news (to you and me who, lest we forget, are the bearers of Christ's Good News to the world) is that we do not have to tackle such enormous problems on our own or face the daunting task of starting new ministries. It is enough simply to join and partner with those who have already started the effort. [Contact Lindsey](#) and she will help identify who to contact in your parish's local community. If you can get your parish involved in this effort, ECF stands ready to help.

Opening the Closed Doors

As I think back, comparing the Joseph story in Genesis and our Broadway version, there is at least one aspect in which I think our musical "gets it" better than the Bible. Genesis makes no mention of what the experience of dehumanization was like from Joseph's position. Only in the musical version do we get a sense of the utter despair felt by this young person after being shamed and thrown into prison after being unjustly accused of sex crimes with Potiphar's wife. It is expressed through one of Andrew Lloyd Webber's loveliest (and saddest) songs entitled "Close Every Door." I have to believe it comes close to touching the pain and suffering felt by all Children of Israel who know this dark prison.

A Prayer for Open Doors

O Great Love, through whom we know the power of love to open doors that have been closed and to roll away the stones that entomb the deadness of our hearts, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. Grant that we might embody the same power of love to open doors for others in prisons of darkness and suffering. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other's burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world. Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God. **Amen.**
(Adapted from Richard Rohr)

*Close every door to me
Hide all the world from me
Bar all the windows
And shut out the light
Do what you want with me
Hate me and laugh at me
Darken my daytime
And torture my night
If my life were important I would ask "Will I
live or die?"
But I know the answers lie
Far from this world
Close every door to me
Keep those I love from me
Children of Israel
Are never alone
For I know I shall find
My own peace of mind
For I have been promised
A land of my own.*



William Porcher DuBose, III is a past member of the ECF Board of Directors and is a member of St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church in Atlanta. Billy enjoyed a twenty-year career in aviation for a large energy corporation, established the company flight department, and helped manage its fleet of aircraft. After retiring in 2016, he moved to Atlanta and earned his MDiv. in 2020 from Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

SUPPORT ECF

Your one-time or monthly donation allows us to serve people experiencing poverty and oppression throughout our Diocese. [Make a donation at https://episcopalcommunityfoundation.org/donate/](https://episcopalcommunityfoundation.org/donate/)