

## BELIEFS & Values

### Local churches, synagogues TEAM up

BY BARD PEIT TEMPLETON  
SPECIAL WRITER

The chance to lend a helping hand to someone in need was just the opportunity Lisa Vautaw was looking for when she heard about the TEAM (The Emergency Assistance Ministry) Center of Greater Birmingham and Bloomfield.

On June 1, Vautaw, of Beverly Hills, accepted a part-time position as the new coordinator for the TEAM Center which is located at the First Baptist Church in downtown Birmingham.

TEAM's original coordinator, Carol Averill, retired and has relocated to another area.

"I thought it would be a good way for me to be of service to the community, and a way for me to help people in need," Vautaw said. "My motivation comes from wanting to be of service to God."

The TEAM Center has been in operation since September 1996 as a way for area congregations to respond to individual requests for assistance. The idea was to



TEAM player: Lisa Vautaw of Beverly Hills is the new coordinator of the TEAM Center.

help people who are in transition or experiencing some kind of emergency family crisis.

"The area churches and synagogues got together and decided instead of having people going from church to church they could

send someone to a central location and that's here at the TEAM Center," explained Vautaw.

The center places first priority on helping persons in the Birmingham area.

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### Reconcile differences at table God sets

#### FOCUS ON THEOLOGY



REV. ALLAN ECKELMANN

always struck me as a rather strange thing for God to do, and for the Psalmist to acclaim, for that matter. Filling your plate with goodies just doesn't seem like a very effective thing to do when people are out gunning for you.

Wouldn't you expect the

Psalmist to extol God for striking down one's enemies; for wiping those enemies off the face of the Earth? Instead, the Psalmist rather passively declares that God will set up a moratorium for you in the midst of a group of people who would like to see you hanging from the highest tree. After all, with the wolves nipping at your heels, you might have more pressing matters to worry about than liver paté.

We have to remember, however, that in both the Hebrew Bible and in the Christian scriptures, as well as in Islamic tradition, the table is a symbol of fellowship, and is, therefore, a symbol of reconciliation.

To prepare a table in the presence of your enemies is to invite those enemies to dine

with you; and if they dine with you, you are establishing a relationship of trust and respect with them. All of this is to say that God is at work trying to achieve a reconciliation between you and your enemies.

This is why, in the Christian church, you are supposed to seek reconciliation with those whom you have wronged and with those who have wronged you, before you receive Holy Communion. The table is the place of reconciliation. God's solution to the problem of enemies is not violence, but reconciliation.

Some people might say, "But wait a minute; I don't have any enemies!" There are at least a few people who can legitimately say, "I love everybody, and

Please see TABLE, B8

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