

# AVENEWS

Newsletter of THE NEW YORK AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Washington, DC

## NYAPC Honors Lincoln

By Wilson Golden

*NYAPC honors the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln with tributes to the 202<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of his birth on February 12 and the sesquicentennial of his First Inaugural on March 4, 1861, and first attendance at our church on March 10 following.*

*Lincoln's spiritual life and relationship with NYAPC and Pastor Phineas Densmore Gurley will be highlighted in sermon and children's time themes in worship services on February 13 and March 6 and at a special Friday Forum to be held with Lincoln biographer Ron White in the Lincoln Parlor at Noon on March 4.*

President-elect Abraham Lincoln and his family came to Washington 150 years ago this month, and right from the start NYAPC played a major role in his faith journey and presidency.

After taking a suite at the Willard Hotel to prepare for his March 4<sup>th</sup> inauguration as arguably the most consequential president in the nation's history, he and his family selected a pew at The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, where they worshipped on the first Sunday following his inauguration. The Civil War began only a month later with the April 12<sup>th</sup> firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston, SC.

For the next four years, until Lincoln's assassination on April 14, 1865, NYAPC and its pastor, Phineas Densmore Gurley, were central forces in the life and presidency of Lincoln and his family. His faith journey had been forged on the prairies of Illinois when, as a young politician struggling with the question of the nation's "original sin" of slavery, he was often skeptical about religion. But the transformative power of the great conflict that ultimately took over 600,000 lives and his rising belief in God as an active force in human history as preached by Gurley from the NYA pulpit significantly impacted Lincoln and his Second Inaugural Address. The masterful speech has often been described as sermon-like with its unprecedented 14 references to God, four biblical quotations, and three invocations of prayer.

The crucible of that faith journey might well have been the struggle-within-the-struggle of how to make right the evil of slavery, embedded so long before in the U. S. Constitution. Stark evidence of the turmoil within Lincoln's own mind is the document on display in our Lincoln Parlor—a precursor to the Emancipation Proclamation that proposed a process to end slavery.

All the while, Lincoln and his pastor had formed a bond stretching from the consolation provided by Gurley to the Lincoln family when 11 year old Willie died on February 20, 1862. Gurley conducted the funeral, presaging the last rites he performed for Lincoln himself just three years later. Gurley was among those to whom Lincoln turned as he struggled with the emancipation question and, in 1865, to the drafting of the Second Inaugural, dubbed by Lincoln biographer Ronald C. White, Jr., as "Lincoln's Greatest Speech."

Just over a month later, Gurley was called by the family to the dying Lincoln's bedside at the Peterson House across the street from Ford's Theatre where the assassin's bullet had felled the still young 56-year-old President. He had enjoyed an evening of theatre at the end of what historian Michael Beschloss describes as perhaps the only truly happy day of his presidency. On April 19, Gurley eulogized Lincoln in the White House East Room, and shortly thereafter at his graveside in Springfield, Illinois. As Edwin Stanton said at the time of Lincoln's passing following a prayer by Dr. Gurley, "...and now he belongs to the ages."

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## Finding the Beloved Community of God

By Rev. Tara Spuhler McCabe

The worship service on January 16, 2011 sparked a conversation with our high schoolers on what is the Beloved Community of God AND can you love someone if you do not trust them...important questions. Our conversations took us to reflections on race relationships for each of us today. We have three to four different generations in our high school class. This brought home the passage that speaks directly to the generations (1 John 2:7-17)

1. The Fathers' generation – Phil Hanna and then younger Mary Spatz, Paul Dornan, and Betsy Merritt
2. Young People – not so young but in this context, Chris Rehling and myself
3. Children – our youth: Peter House, Henry Lewis, Trevon Denmon, Olivia Lewis, Jonah Hoff (Charlotte Torres and Julia Hiemstra were at the adult class)

Across these generations we were sharing our own journeys on race as we are to be the Beloved Community of God: where and how are we able to love and trust one another?

From the “fathers” generation, an effort needs to be made in order to be with one another of different races. It may not be as hard now but the “fathers” generation acknowledges that it is important to make a conscious effort. The beauty here for me was Phil proclaiming that he sees hope in the children’s generation as less of an effort may need to be made for racial diversity. For him, being with the younger people and seeing their generation, he has hope for racial unity.

In our young people’s generation I reflected how there are pockets in my life that were wonderful when I did not know that they were wonderful. High school, for me, was unique in that we were all drawn to a magnet nerd school; therefore, someone’s skin color was lower on the list. Not saying racism wasn’t there but it was not our main identity. AP and IB became the obsession. Nearly 20 years later, I recognize how great a gift this nerdish community was at Stanton. Less of an effort had to be made in order to share friendships, dates, sports and studies with fellow students of all races. And this was in the South. I know that I miss this quality of high school, as I do need to be more intentional about the diversity in my life and in my children’s lives. At the end of the day, I ask, have we spent the day in the diverse beloved community of God?

For our “children,” our youth, they offered truths of how they still see and experience racism in their schools, even though “racism” is sometimes considered not that big of deal for teenagers. Our youth have been told, by their peers, that they are not black enough, maybe Asian enough, or white enough...cheap shots on what a race is supposed to be. One teen shared how his friend works on the yearbook and noticed that only the soccer team in their school is racially integrated while the other teams were not so integrated. Or that many of the social groups featured in the yearbook: photography club, chess club, etc. were majority African-American or Caucasian or Hispanic and so on. Our youth do notice the absence of racial diversity as it pertains to social situations.

As members of this particular church, it is essential that we hear from each of the generations on this topic. The hope that Phil offers is a vision and a purpose for our youth and younger, in this beloved community. And what I am aware of is: we cannot take advantage of what might be before us unless there is authentic racial unity. We must take ownership of continuing this hope and be intentional in our lives for authentic diversity in the beloved community! I did not know then, what a gift I had, what a beautiful community I was a part of and how hard it might be to still have a racially integrated community today.

This particular church offers a sanctuary space for community. Sanctuary space is where trust and love can grow and be fostered. This particular church, because of its location and passion, continues to be intentional about building relationships across economic, academic, and racial divides. We can never presume to be perfect at it, this is not our goal. But we are intentional about being an authentic integrated community of God...and by this, I think continuing to be intentional about whose we are and who we belong to: We are beloved children of God and we belong to God. In this way we can fulfill the hope that someone like Phil Hanna sees in all of us. For this is my prayer.

## Six Days in Cuba

By Beth DuMez

On January 20, nine members of NYAPC and four people from other congregations set out to visit our sister church, Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada de la Habana (First Presbyterian Reformed Church of Havana, "First Havana" for short), under the leadership of our pastor Roger Gench. This is the ninth such visit. Use your imagination to join us on this trip.

Imagine the Atlantic Ocean roaring in, while kids from the church's baseball team, Estrellas de Lealtad (Stars of Loyalty), stretched and began their practice in a grassy field nearby. Each of us had been presented with a gladiola in thanks for our support. The sky quickly caught our attention as darkening clouds signaled a coming rain and, at the same time, illumined the ocean in vast fields of varying turquoise.

Stand with us in a circle on the upper balcony of the church patio, overlooking the beautiful stone wall and 1920s stained glass windows of the church as we take turns praying before our meals. The church provided every lunch and dinner of rice and beans, chicken or pork, cabbage-tomato-cucumber salad, plantain, fresh rolls, and fruit.

Travel with us in our noisy, bumpy van—along with photographer Leinad and guide and translator Carmina—to visit other Presbyterian churches in the towns of Guines and Nueva Paz, each such a bright shining presence in its neighborhood, surrounded by gardens. Prayer meetings in various homes, Bible study at the church, sports teams and art projects are typical. The Guines church has seven Sunday School sessions every week. The Presbyterians are friendly with other denominations, and typically have American partner churches. On Tuesday, the magnificent El Sagrado Corazon de Jesus (Catholic cathedral) is where we gather with hundreds of others to celebrate Christian Unity. The Rev. Hector Mendez, pastor of First Havana, preaches, surrounded at the altar by other clerics. Our own Stephanie Simpson processes and participates with children in a symbolic bringing together of puzzle pieces.

Relish learning that the Cuban Council of Churches, founded in 1941, has 79 members in a variety of denominations. Seven new denominations are seeking membership. Typically the churches help people in difficulty (HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, alcohol dependence, impairments, and help for people experiencing emotional trauma). Because public transportation is so limited, churches also encourage and help to support their "satellites:" house churches in people's backyards and living rooms.

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The Newsletter of  
The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church

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Next Issue: May, 2011

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Deadline for Materials: April 30, 2011

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The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church  
welcomes all people  
into community, worship, service  
and leadership.

## TRANSITIONS

### Marriages

Kristin Williams and Matthew Ford, Oct 14  
Hazel Mollison and Alex Close, Oct 23  
Emily Witt and Milko Rospigliosi, Oct 23

### Births

Brendan McFerran, Oct 31  
Noritza Gagosian, Nov 5  
Madeleine Mae Golden, Dec 19  
Alistair Antares Yoder-Danewitz,  
Dec 28

### Baptisms

Hazel Mollison, Oct 10

### Deaths

Marjorie Foster, Oct 30  
Gilbert Anderson, Nov 9  
Charles Smith, Nov 22  
Mary Ann Luby, Nov 29  
Frank Chocola, Dec 4  
Marie Townsend, Dec 6  
Frances Lynch, Dec 23  
Michael Brown, Jan 12  
Kermit Hinton, c. Jan 12  
Frederick Marvil, Jr., Jan 24  
Mary Anne Davis, Feb 6

## Six Days in Cuba *(continued from Page 3)*

Ask us about the Sunday when the Rev. Roger Gench preached at First Havana and his theologian friend, the Rev. Uxmal Livio Diaz, interpreted. They naturally created a perfectly coordinated duo of passion, gesture, and dynamic translation. Our group, accompanied by Roger on a guitar, sang a Taize blessing.

Your “representatives,” Jim Bird & Betsy Merritt, Rebecca Davis, Beth DuMez, Lauren Dwyer (Church of the Pilgrims), Roger Gench, Rachel Lentz, Sylvia Ross (Ashburn Presbyterian), Marilyn Seiber, Stephanie Simpson, Susan Tilt, and Margie and Ron Wiegerink (Reformed Church of America) became a compatible group of friends to bond and communicate with fellow Christians and to enjoy Cuba’s gentle adventures. First Havana’s staff greeted us warmly. Several members had already formed lasting friendships with various staff members on previous visits.

The Rev. Hector Mendez and members of his congregation introduced us to the programs of the church, which serve the neighborhood as well as the congregation: the beautiful library (welcoming neighbors), the Tai Chi and School of the Elderly classes, and a chance to spend time with many of the kids on the church’s four (!) baseball teams. Susan Tilt—creator of religious vestments, presented a gift for the chancel on behalf of our group. She also planned and executed an opportunity for church members to make their own necklaces: elegant combinations of fabric-covered straws and beads.

Finally—enjoy with us the cultural riches of Havana. Enjoy a full dress rehearsal by the Ballet Litz Alfonso, a girls/women ballet troupe that is Fusion of Cuban tradition, flamenco and traditional ballet. First Havana helped start and support the troupe, the founder grew up at First Havana where her mother is a member. Then there is the art market; a visit to the studio-home of a major artist who has created a veritable amusement park of his mosaics, sculptures, and fantasies; and — wherever we go--- the bicycle taxis, 1930’s and ‘40’s American cars, and the crumbling glory of architectural treasures.

It was a wonderful time of sharing our faith, our cultures and our friendship. Our two churches are truly sisters!

## Seeking a NYAPC Archives Center

By Marilyn J. Seiber

In January 2011, NYAPC’s History Committee established a NYAPC Archives Center Working Group supported by archivist Dan Stokes and chaired by Marilyn Seiber. The idea to establish an Archives Center open to scholars, historians, the congregation,

and the public has been discussed for several years. The effort has finally been launched to explore what an Archives Center should have, its goals and purposes, its location in the church, and how we might secure funding for the project.

The Working Group seeks to establish an improved and more permanent space for the NYAPC documents and treasures of its history and to develop a plan of action for doing so. The Archives documents currently are stored in a room behind the stage in the Radcliffe Room sharing a wall with the Clothes Closet for the homeless. This space previously was a senior-high Sunday school classroom. NYA documents were first stored in a bricked room in the former church office where the Docherty Center is now located. When the Docherty Center was established, the archives were moved to a closet in the back of the Park Level behind a stairwell, with documents placed on wood shelves. From there, they were moved to the current location.

The Working Group’s initial discussion identified three separate work areas that are needed:

- 1) A storage area for documents that is secure, temperature controlled, and would not be subject to flooding and water damage;
- 2) A records processing area with tables and sufficient space to work and search through documents that is also secure; and
- 3) A reference room with tables and lighting sufficient for users to use the documents and shelving for duplicate copies of materials and books that can be kept in a public space.

We might also want to use the room for displays and exhibits. It is also possible that we would want to design a reference room that could be used as a as a multi-purpose room for meetings or classes. This room would be locked as are other church rooms not in use.

Anyone with an interest in establishing a NYAPC Archives Center is encouraged to join the Working Group. All are welcome! Contact Marilyn Seiber ([mjs1wan2@bellatlantic.net](mailto:mjs1wan2@bellatlantic.net)) if you have questions.

### Special Outreach Offerings in 2010

One Great Hour of Sharing	\$11,442
Alternative Christmas in July Store	\$1,740
Peacemaking Offering	\$8,341
Christmas Joy	\$1,005
Alternative Christmas Store	\$6,471

**TOTAL** **\$28,999**

**Note:** All of these offerings are sent on to others outside the church, with the exception of the Peacemaking Offering, 25% of which is retained for the work of the Peace and Justice Committee.

## NYAPC: For Mary Anne Davis, A Family Affair

By Edith Holmes Snyder

For Mary Anne Davis, The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church and the many people she has known in her 65 years as a member of this congregation take center stage in her life. “I never had family beyond my immediate family—first my parents, sister and brother, and later my husband, our daughter and now her husband and two sons. The church has been my extended family.”

And Mary Anne has been a most faithful member of this community, contributing to the church from 1945 to date her considerable administrative skills, a deep affinity for and enjoyment of music, and, most of all, an abiding interest in and love of people. She remembers all the individuals she has encountered along the way—their names and family members, important roles they played in the church, and dates special to them. Mary Anne has remained in touch with many longtime members by mail and especially by telephone and in the process helped knit the congregation together. Members regularly read her “Over the Coffee Cups” column in *AveNews* to catch up with each other.

### Volunteer and Employee

Mary Anne Jackson first saw James Davis, the man who would become her husband, in March 1946 while attending a party with friends from NYAPC and introduced herself to him following choir practice the next week. The couple married and raised their daughter, Margaret Anne, in the church. Together, the Davises were active in the choir for more than 50 years, and when she wasn’t singing in the choir, Mary Anne helped in the church crib room, or nursery. To the great joy of her parents, Margaret Anne also sang in the choir and as a soloist during worship services and directed the children’s, or junior, choir before leaving the Washington area to pursue graduate studies in music.

Mary Anne served as a Deaconess for 34 years and as hostess for memorial services during Robert Craig’s years as pastor, while Jim fulfilled the responsibilities of Deacon for 23 years, as well as the roles of Elder and Trustee. She was an officer for the NYAPC Women’s Association, which, among many other activities, created the church’s first Christmas tree; Mary Anne recalls making from foam the ornaments that symbolize the Lordship of Jesus with members Helena Weiss, Erma Ferguson, and Grace Wilson, among others. She has ordered the flowers for the church each Sunday since the 1970s, and Jim helped her in this task until his death. For years, Mary Anne participated in decorating the sanctuary for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter and organizing the Red Cross blood drives at NYAPC.

Her professional life also involved stints as an employee of the church—first as church secretary toward the end of Peter Marshall’s ministry and at the beginning of George MacPherson Docherty’s tenure, and working with James Bryden, a U.S. Army chaplain who, as Campus Pastor for the National Capital Presbytery, served George Washington, Howard and American Universities. More recently for years and to date, Mary Anne augments the church office staff, filling the weekly lay worship service roster of greeters, liturgists, tour guides and servers of Communion from the living room/office of her Alexandria home of more than 50 years. Members consider it an honor to be on her regular call list and to hear the message, “Please call me back so I will know how to proceed,” when they miss speaking with her.

### Early Years

Mary Anne was born November 7, 1921 in Chicago, the first child of Albert Graves Jackson and Mary Craig Deam Jackson. She was joined 26 months later by her sister, Elizabeth (Betty, also a longtime member of NYAPC), and 18 months after that by their brother, Albert Graves, Jr., or “Jack,” as he is known to this day. Another sister, Harriet Jean, died in infancy at the age of six months. The family moved several times during Mary Anne’s childhood, living in Akron and Toledo, Ohio, returning to Chicago, and then relocating to Shelbyville, Tennessee and her grandmother’s country home before finally settling in Chattanooga.

Mary Anne’s father was in the insurance business, which struggled, along with so many other industries, during the Great Depression of the 1930s. A good carpenter who had also served as a sergeant in World War I, Albert Jackson joined the Civilian Conservation Corps, where he again attained the rank of sergeant. His daughter recalls that during these difficult

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**Mary Anne Davis** *(continued from page 5)*

years, he also worked for a travelling circus. “He did whatever he could to put food on the table.” He modeled a work ethic that Mary Anne has employed throughout her life.

A strong student, Mary Anne was several times promoted ahead of her grade in elementary school. By the time she was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, the family had moved to Chattanooga where she was a member of the honor society, the Red Cross, and the typing club. When she graduated from Central High School in 1940, Mary Anne had participated in clubs involving debate and parliamentary procedure, hiking, and Bible study. She remembers her Bible study teacher saying, “If you bring your Bible and a notebook, you get so much more out of the lesson.” While Mary Anne was still in high school, all of her family—except her father who was a lifelong Methodist—joined the Mission Ridge Presbyterian Church in Chattanooga where she sang in the choir and helped direct it.

Mary Anne began to work outside of school at 16, receiving her Social Security card and starting a position at the Ten Cent Store in Chattanooga. She earned 25 cents an hour and \$2.00 a day and recalls that 2 cents were taken out of every paycheck for Social Security. After high school, she enrolled in the University of Chattanooga to which she earned a county scholarship that paid half of her tuition for two years. While in school, Mary Anne met her expenses in part by working at a local movie theatre. When the manager of the theatre was drafted and the woman who worked as cashier took his place, Mary Anne became the cashier. She would work at the theatre until 10:00 pm, stay up most of the night studying, catch the bus to school, work the switchboard there and attend classes, and return to the theatre to open the box office by 2:00 pm. “I learned then to do with very little sleep, and don’t need much to this day.”

After graduating from college, Mary Anne worked as the secretary to the vice president of the University of Chattanooga, who then recommended her to the president of the Chattanooga Glass Company, supplier of two-thirds of the bottles Coca-Cola used to bottle Coke for overseas shipment. She worked as his secretary from June to November 1944 before traveling to Knoxville to enlist in the Navy.

**To Washington by Way of the Navy**

The war dominated Mary Anne’s college years. She remembers lying on the floor reading the Sunday paper and comics when she heard on the radio the news about Japan’s December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. Following her graduation from college, her mother treated Mary Anne to a trip to Atlanta. The moon shone bright the night they stayed in that city at the Piedmont Hotel, and Mary Anne recalls saying, “Well, that’s a bombers’ moon, if ever there was one.” The date was June 6, 1944, D-Day.

Her brother, Jack, was already in the Navy, a signalman and Chief Bosun’s Mate, who served with the landing craft infantry in the South Pacific and then as a submariner journeying under the North Pole and in the waters off Alaska and Russia. There really was no other choice of service for her.

Mary Anne joined the Navy on November 30, 1944 and reported for duty December 12 of that year at Hunter College in the Bronx, New York. She and five other women lived in an apartment across from Kings Bridge Armory and marched across the bridge over the frozen reservoir each morning for basic training. In March, Mary Anne was assigned to yeoman, or secretarial, school at Oklahoma A&M and spent four days traveling from New York to Stillwater, OK, by train. These were the months of vying for the bottom bunk bed and spending time with church friends who either helped her on her way, or also enlisted and shared in her adventures. For example, Mary Anne and her friend, Dora, from Ohio, took the bus to Oklahoma City and visited a Presbyterian church where they heard a soloist sing “How Beautiful Are the Feet of the People Who Bring Good Tidings.”

The snow and ice of New York were replaced by the rain and mud of Stillwater. Mary Anne and her compatriots marched in the mud in their goulashes and she became a platoon leader. The normal course of study was three months; however, already advanced in typing and shorthand, Mary Anne finished in two. San Francisco was her first choice of assignment because her brother was billeted there; next came New York and finally Washington DC. Fortunately for NYAPC, she got her last choice. After a brief visit home in Chattanooga, Mary Anne journeyed to the nation’s capital on March 29, 1945. Dora was

posted there, too, and the two young women went to dances and church services together. It was at a United Service Organization (USO) office at 13<sup>th</sup> and G Streets, NW that they saw a sign for the NYAPC Young Adult Group on Saturday night and decided to pay the group a visit.

### **A Church in Transition**

Mary Anne and Dora began attending church services at NYAPC, climbing the wire staircase on the New York Avenue side of the building—the pew rent entrance—in hopes of getting a seat, as was church policy if the occupants of a pew failed to arrive ten minutes before the start of the service. George Burroughs, associate minister at the church, sang in the choir directed by Charles Dana Beachler and helped organize and lead the three young adult groups (Tuxis or "Training Under Christ In Service" for high school students, Young People for those who were between the ages of 18 and 25, and the Young Adult Forum for those 25 and older). "I could hardly wait to turn 25," says Mary Anne. By then, she had met Jim Davis, who had just returned to Washington from his service with the Air Corps in Texas, California and Europe, and they started working on *AveNews* together and dating. Mary Anne joined the church on May 19, 1946.

NYAPC was in transition during and immediately following the war years. Peter Marshall had arrived as the church's new minister in 1937 and "was the draw," Mary Anne recalls. When Marshall began his ministry, the congregation consisted of older people, many in their 60s and 70s and well-to-do. Among the key members were "the Stotts, who owned stationery stores; Mr. Herndon, a government man; Judge Leetch of the Tax Court; and Andrew Willard, president of the National Bank." Mary Anne recalls an atmosphere of dignity where pew rents were paid and Communion was served by men in frock coats. "They all sat on the front row. They were organized and knew what to expect."

The war altered the congregation's composition as young service people like Mary Anne Jackson and Jim Davis streamed into Washington. "All the young adults gathered round the church because we had no place to hobnob during the war years. There were as many as 60 young adults there on Sunday nights. We became a family," says Mary Anne. "Sometimes the older members of the congregation looked down their noses at us, but they also often smiled."

In addition to the young adult groups and *AveNews*, the choir proved a meeting place for the youthful servicemen and women. Arriving from Columbus, Georgia with Dr. Marshall in 1937, Charles Beachler launched the choir in August of that year. "He would stand out on the street and ask passersby 'Do you like to sing?' and 'Would you like to sing in my choir?'" The initial 27 members soon became 125.

### **The Choir: NYAPC's Building Block**

"The choir is what really built the young contingent at the church," recalls Mary Anne. "We sang at Constitution Hall. We sang in Alexandria and Baltimore. We enjoyed a lot of good, social times. The choir became the building block of the church—out of it came people who got involved in other church activities, such as the Community Club." Some 32 couples met in the choir, married, and began their families. The original parents club that Catherine Marshall taught consisted of choir members. Mary Anne remembers Thanksgiving in 1957 when Dr. Docherty baptized the babies of four choir couples—Marie and Dick Townsend's Nancy, Pat and Jim Inglis's Susan, William and Shirley Mitchell's son, and Jim and Mary Anne Davis's Margaret Anne.

Jim and Mary Anne participated in the choir for half a century. "Jim sang for 57 years; he went to choir rehearsal on a Thursday night and died suddenly the next evening, having delivered Meals on Wheels during the morning. I only stopped singing when macular degeneration made it impossible for me to see well enough to read the music." Mary Anne remembers Steve Prussing's music ministry during the Docherty years. She made costumes for the operettas the choir performed under Prussing's direction and was once cast as "the old dame who wore a black dress and sang *Ruddigore* in a creaky voice." For years, the costumes from these performances were stored in the Bell Tower until Dr. Docherty's sermon archive displaced them and they were donated to Catholic University and a high school in the District with a strong drama program. Mary Anne and Jim arranged the choir retreats and meals. Betty, Mary Anne's sister, was also very involved, serving coffee to the choir. The choir returned their years of devotion by making all three honorary members.

After her honorable discharge from the Navy in December 1946 and echoing her experience at the movie theatre in Chatta-

## Mary Anne Davis *(continued from page 7)*

nooga, Mary Anne filled the role of NYAPC church secretary when Jane Hicks took James Patton's place as financial secretary/business manager after he was drafted into military service. Mary Anne served in this post for four years, through Peter Marshall's death in early 1949 and George Docherty's arrival in early 1951. She particularly appreciated working with Jim Patton when he returned to the church after his service; "we worked together like brother and sister." Mary Anne went on to work on Capitol Hill, for Potomac Temporaries, Reporter Magazine, St. Agnes Episcopal School for Girls, Urban Systems Development Corporation, a division of Westinghouse, and finally in Government Affairs for Westinghouse for 20 years before "retiring" to her volunteer assignments for NYAPC.

Looking back, Mary Anne recalls little controversy about the decision to tear down the original 1859 church and replace it with the current building, which was dedicated in December 1951. "The old church did not have a basement and relied on a coal furnace. Coal had to be poked down a tube on H Street NW to reach the structure," says Mary Anne. "The building was archaic, even decrepit." But still more compelling was the critical need to address the lack of room: "We didn't have enough space; we filled the sanctuary and the lecture room, which corresponds roughly to today's Radcliffe Room, and still there weren't enough seats. The general agreement was that the building should be replaced," and so it was.

While buildings can be replaced, certain people can never be, and Mary Anne Davis is one of those people. For health reasons, Mary Anne is now with her daughter, Margaret Anne Butterfield, son-in-law Stuart, and her grandsons, Steven James and James Emerson in Wilmington, Delaware.

*Thank you, Mary Anne, for your many years of service to NYAPC in so many different ways. This place and its people would not be what it is and we are without you. We miss having you in the heart of your church family, but you are in our hearts nonetheless, and we are thankful that you are surrounded by the love of your daughter and her family.*



### OVER THE COFFEE CUPS by Mary Anne Davis

Ordinarily, when students begin the study of journalism, one of the first things they are taught is not to use personal pronouns such as "I", "we" or "me"; however, with this column I am breaking the rules.

On December 22, in consultation with my daughter and an oncologist, I received the verdict that I had developed a terminal disease brought on by cancer of the liver. I also learned that there was no expectation for future developments which might bring about a cure for my condition. At this information, I was totally devastated.

The decision was made that I should go home with Margaret Anne Butterfield, my daughter, and be with her family during the ensuing time. Margaret Anne, my son-in-law, Stuart, and their two boys, Steven and Jimmy, could not possibly give me more love and care and round-the-clock attention and concern than I am now receiving. This has been the greatest blessing in my life and I am so grateful to have this privilege, the deepest that one could ever have.

Words cannot express my gratitude and deep appreciation for the constant prayers, along with the many beautiful cards, letters, and heartfelt sentiments, which come to me via the daily mail and by phone. The lovely flowers and bouquets I have received, both from my NYA friends and new local friends, have been astounding. It is very difficult for me even to estimate the number of miles that have been traveled by my NYA family members for the many visits which bring great pleasure to my days. In addition to all of the warm, loving and constant nurture that flows from my relatives and my NYA friends, I am receiving a great outreach of care and attention from the pastors, staff and members of First & Central Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, the church the Butterfields attend.

All I can say from the bottom of my heart is "Thank You, Lord, for all of my blessings, each and every day." BCNU

*Mary Anne Davis passed away on the morning of Sunday, February 6, 2011.*

## NYAPC Singers' Missionary Zeal

Rev. John T. ("Jack") Mathison



NYAPC singers were represented through a selected trio at its caroling at **The Residences at Thomas Circle** on Sunday, December 12. In order to augment the trio, Martha Davis, Marsha Renwanz and Fritz von Fleckenstein enlisted a couple of residents of

Thomas Circle, Joan Ensor and Jack Mathison, to join in the singing of Christmas carols. We could sense the enthusiasm and appreciation of the residents from the smiles on their faces.

NYAPC choristers also visited **Ingleside at Rock Creek**, on Saturday, December 18, where Eric and Tamara Slaughter, Meg House, and Ruth and Fritz von Fleckenstein sang for residents in the Health Care Unit, and also visited NYAPC parishioners in their rooms. On Sunday, December 19, Martha Davis, Marsha Renwanz, Marie Meka, and Ruth and Fritz von Fleckenstein sang at **Whole Foods on P Street**, standing on a balcony overlooking the produce section that was very much like a musicians' gallery.

All of the singers had a lot of fun, and the listeners also seemed to be enjoying themselves. Even in the produce section, people smiled and several people thanked the singers. We fully expect many new prospective members in the pews on Sunday mornings!



Al Slaughter refinishes a chair found in the attic of The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC. The chairs were manufactured at the Readsboro Chair Company.

## History of NYA Choir Chairs

*(adapted by Ruth von Fleckenstein from a story in the Deerfield Valley News)*

You probably have noticed the newly restored chairs used by the choir in the sanctuary. You may remember when they were being used in the Peter Marshall Hall or elsewhere in the church. You may even have one, since many of them were given away. Here is the rest of the story.

An old inventory card shows that the church special-ordered 150 rock maple chairs from the Readsboro Chair Factory in 1942 at \$5 apiece. Each chair had a small Presbyterian cross carved into it and the words "Readsboro Chair Company, Readsboro, VT" imprinted on the back.

When the sanctuary was renovated, Eric Slaughter and other church volunteers sanded the thirty-four remaining chairs, rebuilt, and restored them by hand. Eric said the process wasn't easy and to repair them properly, they took one of the chairs apart to see how it was assembled. "The original glue and wooden bows were incredible. They had ribs and spirals around the bow and I'm sure this pattern made them strong and impossible to get out. That's probably why they lasted so long. I don't know where they found that wood, but you can't find that kind of quality today. Today it's poplar and eucalyptus. We may have the last top grade maple chairs in the country and anyone who bought one in those days got the same.

Tullio Marchegiani, who worked in the Readsboro Chair Factory in 1942, said he was glad to hear that the Washington church found the remaining chairs and was putting them back into use. He was not surprised at how long they lasted and believes they will last a lot longer now that they have been refurbished. "They were built so damn rugged. That's why they're so difficult to take apart," said Marchegiani. "(Maple) is the hardest one you can find. As far as durability, you can't beat (it)."

Some parishioners are bringing their chairs back to be repaired. Eric is looking for information from anyone who is familiar with assembling the chairs to contact the church. "It would cost \$400 to replicate each one," said Eric. "(The Readsboro Chair Factory) was so indicative of the American industry. The techniques used to assemble these chairs were so innovative at the time. That's why we're holding on to them." To contact Eric call (202) 689-5707 or e-mail him at [eric.slaughter@gmail.com](mailto:eric.slaughter@gmail.com).

### SAVE THE DATE! Earth Day, April 9.

Help children of the church and others clean up the Anacostia. Keep tuned for more details. [marynellclark1@gmail.com](mailto:marynellclark1@gmail.com)

## 2011 Annual Stewardship Campaign has Continued to Bridge the Gap!

By Courtney and Jim Spearman, Stewardship co-chairs

Although the 2011 "Bridging the Gap" Annual Stewardship Campaign officially ended on November 21, there still remains work to do and pledges are continuing to come in. So far the campaign has received \$663,000, \$10,000 shy of our \$673,000 goal, but remarkable at \$27,000 more than the pledges made last year. Thank you to all who have bridged the gap with pledges for 2011!

The theme for the 2011 campaign highlights the myriad ways that the congregation bridges the gap for people who know the church, and raises awareness of the ongoing budget deficit. The campaign this year really sought to engage the whole congregation, and to celebrate the many ways that the church serves the community on a daily basis. Different people representing church activities gave Minutes for Mission at each service during the campaign, and we hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Mission Fair on October 31, highlighting all the activities that Annual Giving supports. A colorful 4-fold brochure was designed to share all of the church's activities in text and images. Special events were organized for Dedication Sunday on November 21, including a processional during worship where people indicated their commitment to the church with a printed token. The 11:00 a.m. service was followed by a celebratory lunch held in Peter Marshall Hall. It was a delightful event and a wonderful (and delicious!) way to cap the official campaign.



*Cupcake Bridge in Peter Marshall Hall before the Celebratory Lunch, with cupcake chef extraordinaire Carrie Schenkel in the background*

Thank you again to all who have pledged for 2011, and for those who haven't, please consider Bridging the Gap, because it's never too late to pledge!

## Final Charlotte Smith Bequest Exceeds \$1.47m

By Cathy and John Schultheis

In late 2009, the Church was informed that we were to receive a restricted gift from the estate of Charlotte Damron Smith amounting to an estimated \$1.2 million. The news of this generous bequest from Charlotte, a member of the NYAPC for 47 years, was shared with you in the March 15, 2010 AVENEWS issue.

Subsequently, three estate payments were received between December 2009 and late 2010 totaling \$1,470,130.36. What makes this gift even more amazing is that, as of December 31, 2010, after the nearly 208-year history of the Church, Mrs. Smith's gift represents 72.84% of our General Restricted Endowment corpus of \$2,018,364.71.

We are indeed deeply grateful that Charlotte, when considering her bequest wishes, included The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in her estate plans. The investment income from her generous gift will help to underwrite the operating expenses and special needs of the Church forever.

## Special IRA Giving Opportunity for Those 70½ or Older

By Evelyn Ying

The 2010 Tax Relief Act extended the Charitable IRA Rollover Provision, allowing IRA owners, age 70½ and older, to make tax-free distributions from their IRA accounts directly to a charity through December 31, 2011. This provision may benefit those making annual contributions to The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church and those considering a planned gift to the Church with an IRA.

Consider the following:

- ◆ Gifts must be made directly to the NYAPC or other qualified charity from IRAs, not from other forms of retirement plans.
- ◆ Gifts up to \$100,000 are eligible.
- ◆ Gifts can count toward the IRA owner's required minimum distribution.
- ◆ Distributions are excluded from the owner's taxable income.
- ◆ Distributions are not counted toward the limitation on allowable charitable deductions on gifts of cash.

(continued on page 11)

**IRA Opportunity** *(continued from page 10)*

For more information, contact Evelyn at 301-495-5912 or [eying@nyapc.org](mailto:eying@nyapc.org).

*NYAPC members and friends are encouraged to discuss with their professional advisors how such gifts would fit into their overall financial plans and eligibility for tax benefits*

**Legacy Giving with Your Retirement Account\***

**By Evelyn Ying**

*Retirement accounts are a simple and tax efficient way to leave a legacy gift. All you need is a change of beneficiary form.*

Historically, 70% of American families give to charity each year out of their annual income. However, only 6% to 7% of American families make any provision for charity in their estate plan. While there may be a number of reasons for this difference, one reason is that many individuals do not realize how easily they can provide for charitable causes after they are gone.

Did you know that you can provide for The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church at your death without even changing your will? You can simply change the beneficiary designation of your retirement account. This is also one of the most efficient ways to give. Here's why:

Retirement accounts typically accumulate pre-tax dollars. The pre-tax accumulation allows for the principal to grow more quickly than if income taxes had to be paid each year. During retirement years, account owners use these assets for living expenses, but income taxes have to be paid as withdrawals are made. Often, the retiree's other income is reduced, so the tax bracket is lower. Therefore, the tax triggered by distributions from the retirement account may be in the lowest tax bracket.

Many times, retirement account owners pass away with significant account balances. These balances are still pre-tax. Whoever receives a distribution will be required to pay the income tax based on the tax bracket of the recipient, which is often higher than the retiree's tax rate. In addition, the estate of retirement account owners may be subject to estate taxes. The combination of income tax and estate tax could cost 80% of the account balance, meaning that possibly as little as twenty cents of every dollar in the retirement account would be available to heirs.

Why not consider the option of leaving some, if not all, of your retirement account to the NYAPC? All you need is a

change of beneficiary form, available from your plan administrator. Every dollar that is passed to the Church at your death will benefit both you and the Church at one hundred cents on the dollar. There will be no income tax or estate tax due on those assets, making it one of the best assets to leave to the Church. With this simple technique, you can continue your generous support of the Church and leave the legacy you desire.

For more information on legacy gift planning, please contact Evelyn Ying, Director of Planned Giving/Special Gifts, at 301-495-5912 or [eying@nyapc.org](mailto:eying@nyapc.org). Or, if you already have made arrangements for a gift, please let Evelyn know.

*\*The Presbyterian Endowment Education & Resource (PEER) Network, of which the NYAPC is a member, provided content for this article.*

**Veterans for Peace Speak to Three Presidents**

**By Rev. John T. ("Jack") Mathison**

At the Veterans For Peace rally in Lafayette Park on December 16, 2010, Daniel Ellsberg was the featured speaker after several other supporters of the drive to leave Afghanistan, including "SAVE OUR CHILDREN". Just the night before, I had viewed in the Thomas Circle Theater the documentary on "Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers."

The last three Presidents of the USA share in perpetuating the tragedy we are in today. President Clinton did not stop the Economic Sanctions, President George W. Bush misled the American public and President Obama has failed to fulfill his pledge to withdraw, but instead sent in 30,000 more troops.

Thousands were on hand, standing before the iron fence at the White House as we sang "We Shall Overcome". In view of sub-freezing temperatures, many in attendance looked forward to going to jail as "it would be warmer!" The police vans were standing by to board the protesters. We spotted one policeman on the roof of the White House while hundreds of others were monitoring the protesters. One protester came up to me and said, "I am about to turn 80!" When I told her that I was 85, she collapsed!

Veterans for Peace adhere to the **pledge of nonviolence**: no vandalism; no alcohol or illegal drugs; no insults or swearing; no running or threatening motions; no verbal or physical assaults; protection of our opponents from insult or attack; open, friendly and respectful words, symbols and actions; no weapons; follow instructions of coordinators; and withdraw if there is serious disagreement.

## Radcliffe Room Memorial

By Bonnie Davis

His name was Michael Brown. His friends called him Mike—except for Elie Robins and those of us who knew him in the Radcliffe Room through Elie. We called him Memphis. Elie started that several years ago when she first met him. She told him his piano playing and his singing sounded like they came out of a Memphis blues joint.

He only came in occasionally on Sunday mornings, and we never knew when he would show up. When he did, whoever was playing the piano would usually scoot over and offer the seat to Memphis. On those mornings, he played and sang. Other mornings, he simply sang, and his incredible tenor rang out over the whole room, causing every conversation to pause and inviting every heart to worship the God Memphis sang to.

On January 24, I went to a memorial service for him at the Third Street Church of God, and there I found out more about Memphis. On those mornings when he wasn't with us in the Radcliffe Room, he was playing and singing for worship services in other local churches throughout the metropolitan Washington area.

Michael had begun participating in the prayer breakfast and worship service at Third Street Church of God Urban Outreach Ministry in 2001 and later was part of its Safe Haven program. He

lived on the streets and in the shelters. When he died he was living in the New York Avenue Shelter.

He became involved with the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless when he began advocating for change around water issues at the New York Avenue Shelter in 2007. Before his death, he was employed by the Compass Group, an advocacy organization.

Michael died alone at Washington Hospital Center on January 12, 2011, around 6:00 that morning. He was 48 years old. The picture of Michael on the flyer that announced his memorial service was taken at the piano at the Third Street church on December 18 when he was playing and singing for the annual Christmas dinner. On December 22, he had a seizure at the New York Avenue Shelter and was taken by ambulance to Providence Hospital. He revived and was sent home, on foot, on December 23 but had another grand mal seizure as he left the hospital. He sustained massive head injuries and was immediately taken to Washington Hospital Center. He never recovered.

Right now to many of us who were touched by his life, it feels like we may not ever recover either. It's hard to imagine that he won't show up again some Sunday and lead us in "This Little Light of Mine" or "Down by the Riverside." Hard to imagine we won't ever again hear him sing "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" or "His Eye is on the Sparrow." Then again, maybe we will.



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