

AVENEWS

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

Bryan Stevenson Joins a Citywide Call for Justice and Mercy

by Paul Dornan

Bryan Stevenson, Executive Director of Equal Justice Initiative and best-selling author of **Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption**, spoke before some 650 people at The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church on Wednesday evening, November 4. Mr. Stevenson's address was the keynote of the evening's "Citywide Call for Justice and Mercy" sponsored by the McClendon Scholar in Residence program. The large and diverse crowd, which represented 88 different congregations and many other organizations, attended raptly to Mr. Stevenson as he spun stories of his efforts over a career of 25 years dedicated to relief for prisoners on death row, mercy for children sent to prison with adults, and justice in the face of mandatory sentencing.



pastors of those churches also led the program, and the choir from N Street Village made a joyful noise both before and during the program. The program ended with a brief question and answer period with Mr. Stevenson, and the entire sanctuary erupted into "Lift Every Voice and Sing" to close our time together.

Afterwards, in the Radcliffe Room NYAPC hosted a resource fair – with cookies and cool drinks -- including 11 agencies and programs that engage in acts of justice and mercy, especially with returning citizens. Meanwhile, Mr. Stevenson, clearly buoyed by the evening, signed his book and met with well-wishers in the Sanctuary.

During his talk, Bryan Stevenson recounted the instance in which an

elderly man accosted him after one of his talks and asked three times in succession, each with greater intensity, "Do you know what you are doing?" And, finally, the old man answered his own question, "You're beating the drum of justice!" It was a moving experience to hear Bryan once more beat the drum of justice. Maybe we'll all hear the tune. To learn more about the Equal Justice Initiative, visit their website www.eji.org.

Bryan Stevenson made the powerful case that: (1) The first step in becoming agents of justice and mercy in the United States is to put ourselves in proximity to those who suffer injustice; (2) agents of justice and mercy will work with all their might to challenge the nation's dominant historical narrative of white superiority and replace it with a narrative that is both far more accurate and constructive; (3) being about the work of justice and mercy involves its own dangers, among which is a loss of hope; Mr. Stevenson argued that we each must protect the hope that is within us; and (4) finally, our search for justice and mercy must be founded on the realization, the thoroughly Christian realization, that each of us is broken and should not be defined by the worst thing we have ever done.

The Citywide Call for Justice and Mercy reflected the leadership of the McClendon Scholar in Residence Council and the ensuing partnership of NYAPC and nine other DC churches, including Emory United Methodist, Shiloh Baptist, St. Augustine's Catholic, Covenant Baptist/UCC, Metropolitan AME, Luther Place Memorial, St. Columba's Episcopal and the Church of Christ, Right Now. The

Susi Stoll Ordained in May

Susi Stoll, who worked at NYAPC as a seminarian some years ago, was ordained and installed as Associate Pastor for Spiritual Care at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She sent along photographs of the ceremony and her new church. She writes to Jack Mathison, "I'm so very grateful that God and this amazing congregation called me to be the Associate Pastor for Spiritual Care. It was so worth waiting for!"



Back-to-School Picnic

The Christian Learning Cluster hosted a back-to-school picnic on Saturday, September 26 at Cabin John Regional Park. After a wonderful potluck meal along with hot dogs and hamburgers, kids and kids-at-heart enjoyed games, the playground, and a ride on the train where we took up most of the front section. The year is well underway for Christian learning opportunities for adults, youth, and children and we encourage you to join in the classes designed to meet a diversity of interests. If you would like to join the cluster to participate in the planning of classes and events like the picnic, please contact David Inoue at davidhinoue@gmail.com.



Alternative Christmas Giving during Advent

The Alternative Christmas Giving will take place this year during Advent, on the Sundays of December 6, 13, and 20. Tables will be set up in the rear of the Sanctuary with information about the following programs: The DC Geriatric Day Care Center, Open Arms Housing for Women, The Njoro Orphans and Vulnerable Children Program in Kenya, Presbyterian Churches in Baghdad and Basrah (Iraq), Homs Presbyterian Church in Syria, Cuba Partners, and The International Medical Corps work in South Sudan. In addition, Palestinian Olive Oil will be sold.

You don't need to wait until Advent to give to these programs. You can go to the church's website at www.nyapc.org and click on **GIVE NOW**, then click on **Alternate Christmas**. You can choose one or several programs, enter the amount you wish to give to each one, and click on **GIVE NOW**. You will then be asked to choose between a credit card or a checking account, and then give the pertinent details. Clicking **SUBMIT** will credit your gift to the chosen program, and you can print the acknowledgement.

For a more conventional approach, you can write a check to NYAPC, with a note in the MEMO line indicating the program or programs you are giving to. If you are giving to all 7 programs **equally**, please note that clearly on the memo line.

Thanks for giving hope to others in this Holy Season!

Immigration Film Fest a Big Success – Now What?

by Fritz von Fleckenstein

The Program

The showing of the film *Unlikely Heroes (Schweitzer Helden)*, about a group of asylum seekers in Switzerland, was held in the Radcliffe Room on Friday evening, October 23, and attracted 53 people. Forty-five of them filled out an evaluation sheet, and 43 of them made substantive remarks in addition to the simple questions. Interestingly, probably because of the wide publicity which the Greater Washington Immigration Film Fest received, and of the work of the local volunteers from NYAPC, 24 of the 45 people said that they were not associated with NYAPC or any of the other 15 sponsors of the Film Fest.

People enjoyed the movie, and laughed in the right places, so they were following the subtitles. One member of NYAPC remarked that he had not expected much from the film and was actually looking forward to the discussion, but after he saw the film, he was really moved by it. The new big screen was wonderful and will be much used in the future for many events. Most of the attendees stayed for the discussion led by Kathy Doan, Executive Director of the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition and Vanessa Allyn, Managing Attorney (DC) of Human Rights First. Kathy's organization deals primarily with people who are in detention facilities, while Vanessa's work deals with immigrants in many different situations.

There were many suggestions for action, including the sheet prepared by the organizers, and other sheets prepared by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. There was an informative sheet, *Ten Things You Probably Didn't Know About Immigrants (see page 4.)* Copies of the movie program are available at the Front Desk. A literature table included handouts from CAIR Coalition, Human Rights First and Immigrants List.

Now What?

Now that the Film Fest is over, we are left with the question – Now What? Vanessa Allyn had described for us the complicated paths that immigrants to the U.S. have to follow in the often vain attempt to achieve documented status in this country. You can see the graphic from her handout on my [Facebook page](#). The most direct way for refugees to get into the U.S. is through the Refugee Resettlement Process. Even this path has a wait time of 1,000 days before one can arrive in the United States. Upon arrival, one is helped by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, gets a green card and can eventually apply for citizenship. Other paths are more complicated, and fraught with uncertainty. One thing that makes lives for immigrants and asylum seekers in the U.S. more difficult is our practice of detaining asylum seekers in facilities that are in every respect prisons.

If you are a lawyer, you can do pro bono work with either [CAIR Coalition](#) or [Human Rights First](#). The rest of us can find many

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

other sorts of volunteer work with a variety of agencies which are listed in the program for the film. Another possibility, which is being explored by the National Capital Presbytery and interested people in a number of churches, not all of them Presbyterian, is to become involved in the resettlement of refugees. (See related story by Marilyn Seiber.) There are moves to increase the number of refugees to be admitted to the United States, following the example of Germany, which intends to offer up to 800,000 people refuge in their country. If the U.S. follows this generous example, there will be lots of work for the churches to do in helping these people get resettled, but it looks like we will have three years to prepare for the influx.

Finally, there is political action. People of faith need to support efforts to end the war in Syria diplomatically, and to urge their Senators and Representatives to support these efforts as well.

Note: All words anywhere in this issue typed in blue with underlining are actually hyperlinks or email addresses and can be accessed by clicking on them.

10 THINGS YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT IMMIGRANTS

1 in 4 people living in the United States is an immigrant or has a parent who is an immigrant.

Asians are currently the fastest-growing immigrant group in the country.



Today, the approximately **41 million immigrants** in the United States represent **13.1%** of the U.S. population, which is slightly lower than it was **100 years ago**.

28% of immigrants over age 25 have a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to **30%** of native born U.S. citizens.



9% of students in the K-12 school system are in English language learner programs designed to help improve their English proficiency.

Immigrants have lower crime, arrest, and incarceration rates than native-born Americans.



26% of immigrants are estimated to be undocumented, a rate that has been declining since its peak in 2007.

Immigrants are less likely to die from heart disease and cancer and have lower rates of obesity, depression, and alcohol abuse than native-born Americans.



Available evidence indicates that today's immigrants are learning English at the same rate or faster than earlier waves of immigrants.

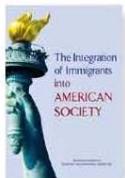
More immigrants now live in suburbs than in cities.



REPORT:

The Integration of Immigrants into American Society

www.national-academies.org/ImmigrantIntegration



Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed Brings Islam to NYAPC

By Marilyn Seiber

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, National Director of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), and his wife Rafia, kicked off a three week Adult Christian Education series on understanding the Islamic faith. Dr. Syeed leads ISNA's Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances in Washington, D.C. He has a great deal of experience with the Presbyterian Church (USA) as his office is in the same building as the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness. He also led a group of international Muslim leaders to Louisville, KY where PC(USA) arranged for the group to stay in Presbyterian homes there.

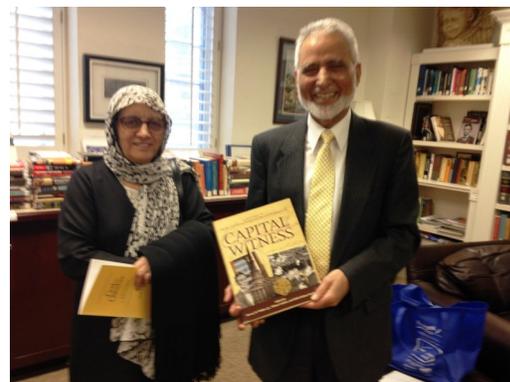
Dr. Syeed is known for his work promoting inter-religious understanding and harmony, as well as intra-faith understanding among various schools of thought within Islam, and has received numerous national awards and degrees for his work. Dr. Syeed pointed out that Muslims in America are the first group of Muslims worldwide to live in a democracy that has not had a colonial relationship with Muslim nations. He said that no other Muslim community in the world has lived freely in a Christian community as those in the United States have. Muslims in the U.S. are therefore in a unique position to demonstrate to the world that Muslims, Christians, Jews, and people of other religions can live together harmoniously.

Dr. Syeed gave a history of the founding of the Islamic faith by Muhammad and its early tenets; the historic struggle that developed between Christianity and Islam; and the effort in the U.S. to use Islam as a political tool since 9/11. As a result of the latter, an organization formed by Christian and Muslim leaders in 2011, "Shoulder to Shoulder," makes clear the need to fight rhetoric, to engage in respectful discourse, and to teach pluralism and working together on an interfaith basis. Dr. Syeed presented gift copies of the "Green Koran"—The Koran's Teachings on Compassion, Peace & Love—to class participants.



Dr. Syeed's Class

Rafia and Sayyid Syeed with a copy of Capital Witness



Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Rev. Dr. Hector Mendez

by Rev. Alice Rose Tewell

From October 24-28, I had the honor of representing you, The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, at the 50th anniversary of the ordination of Rev. Dr. Hector Mendez. Pastor Mendez has been the pastor of [First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana, Cuba](#) for 23 years.

Over 600 people from across Cuba as well as international partners from Brazil, Germany, Chicago, Colorado and Long Island were present. The service of worship was deeply moving, featuring the long history of the church, Pastor Mendez's courageous leadership, and the congregation's deep sense of the Spirit leading us all.

The service began with a processional of the Bible by a youth member of the church. Pastor Hector preached a wonderful sermon on the joys and challenges of his ministries highlighting the role of the international partner churches. From there, those of us representing those international partner churches were able to get up and share our greetings with Pastor Hector.



On your behalf, I presented Pastor Hector with the stunning engraved glass flame from NYAPC prepared by the Cuba Partners. I also presented Pastor Hector with the bags of cards that the children and families made during Gathering Time on October 25th and a copy of the Children's Bible paraphrased by Dr. Desmond Tutu that we give children at baptism and we use during worship play. Before the service, packed in two large suitcases, I also brought gifts of medicine and vitamins as well as many other gifts you had prepared.

From there, most of the church got up and formed a receiving line to thank Pastor Mendez for his long and powerful ministry. After that, we enjoyed music from two of their youth choirs, one featuring more traditional Cuban Christian music and the other featuring the music of some visiting African students.

Starting with my first entry to the church on Sunday and ending with my time there on Tuesday, I was blown away by the hospitali-

ty of the church, the loving kindness shown to me by church members, Pastor Mendez's family, and the staff of the church. Without knowing anyone from the church, I was frequently approached to have conversation, be hugged, and receive greetings of thanksgiving of our church's partnership.



As with those of you who have been on the more recent trips to Cuba, Carmina served as my wonderful host and guide. As I was the only foreigner left at the church on Monday and Tuesday (most of the other groups left early Monday morning), I was given a very personal tour of life for many church members.

I learned about some of their social-service ministries. I was invited to participate in their Tai Chi class, and a delightful Baptist octogenarian, who takes part in many of the ministries of the church, demonstrated her high kick to me with a kick almost up to my nose! I learned that they have two Tai Chi classes, both of which contribute to the physical fitness and hopefulness of their members.



From there, I toured the library facilities where they host children for homework help during the school year and every July have a month-long English class for children and youth. It was emphasized to me that these facilities and programs are open to every member of the community completely for free regardless of whether they attend church services.

I learned about "Your Friendly Phone" service, the first hotline service in Cuba for people to call in about their physical and men-

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50th ORDINATION CELEBRATION CUBA (continued from page 5)

tal health issues, questions and problems. A staff of three — two psychologists (including Myriam who visited NYAPC this past summer) and one doctor listen daily to calls from the community, take drop in appointments, and make referrals. Through their service, community members in need are able to see a medical professional for a longer visit than is available in the hospitals.

I was also able to see their ministries focused on spiritual practices and community nurture. Every day, they keep their sanctuary open with two or three members as staff in case someone stops in and wants to talk. While I sat with them, we had three visitors wanting to learn more about the church.

On Tuesdays, they offer an hour-long prayer group where members share in song, a devotional and intercessory prayer. Please be in prayer for those concerned about their health and health of family members, for those concerned for the youth and younger members in Havana who seem to be without a lot of opportunity and hope, and for those who have been separated by the ocean from friends and family.

It is my deep hope to return to Havana and visit First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana again. I would love for you to see what I saw and hear the stories I heard both of the beautiful side of Havana and, as in any society, the more difficult sides that tend to be pushed into the shadows. I would love for you to see Cuba as I did when it seems as though big change is about to come. (I learned that as of this past September, English is being taught in all schools beginning in the 3rd grade.)

I would love to return to Havana perhaps with a group of older children, youth, and young adults from the church to help with their English learning and baseball camp. I see the potential for a beautiful exchange of cultures and stories about how to live out faith in those cultures amongst the youngest in our churches. I would love to see young people who are already leaders in both churches sit down to listen to each other about our future partnership together.

For videos and more pictures from my trip, please see the [NYAPC church Facebook page](#) and the website. Thank you for the opportunity!

Blessings,

Pastor Alice



Presbyterian SDOP Funds ONE DC Housing Work

by Martha Davis

The Presbyterian Self Development of People Fund (SDOP) this fall awarded a two-year grant for \$25,000 to the local non-profit group ONE DC. It will support community organizing around the “Right to Housing” campaign, plus advocacy for the “People’s Platform” pressing for DC government policies in housing and development that benefit long-time low-income residents.

ONE DC’s mission is to promote economic and racial equity in the city. It is eligible for SDOP funding because it is governed and led by low-income stakeholders themselves through a multi-racial shared leadership team. “ONE DC has a long-time relationship with NYAPC, and we’re thrilled that the SDOP support will reinforce this connection,” said Dominic Moulden, a shared leadership team member. SDOP wrote to ONE DC: “We encourage you to be in contact with nearby churches to share with them the work you are doing in the community and to thank them for their assistance in making it possible (through One Great Hour of Sharing contributions).”

Tenant organizing around a rent crisis at the Mt. Vernon Plaza apartments (930 M St. NW) is an active ONE DC campaign in the Shaw neighborhood. Bush Construction, the property owner, in 2014 negotiated a deal with the DC government to get ownership of this land in exchange for maintaining affordable rents on certain units. In reality, rents on many such units have been increased by \$400/month, which may technically comply with the agreement but are unaffordable to existing families. Because residents were excluded from the negotiation, the initial agreement was not specific enough to help the tenants as intended. A public rally asking for help from Mayor Bowser was held last month. (See photo)

The NYAPC Deacons have for several years funded ONE DC with grants in support of job promotion work. ONE DC’s jobs program priority in 2016 will be starting a



Black Workers Center in Southeast Washington. The center will serve unemployed DC residents, including returning citizens, to find and create positive, dignified work and training, as well as a venue to openly discuss the intersection of race and work in D.C.

For more information on the Right to Housing Campaign, the Black Workers Center, or how to participate in advancing the policy goals of the People’s Platform, go to www.onedconline.org.

Iraq/Syria Refugees Receive NYAPC, Presbytery, Network Attention

By Marilyn Seiber

The plight of Iraqi and Syrian refugees is receiving attention from NYAPC, National Capital Presbytery (NCP), and the PC(USA) Iraq and Syria-Lebanon Partnership Networks. On the initiative of Rev. Alice Tewell and the NYAPC Peace and Justice Committee, NCP's Associate General Presbyter Karen Chamis organized a meeting of area churches, hosted by NYAPC on October 1, to consider how we might support and possibly host Iraqi and Syrian refugees who arrive in metro Washington, D.C. Also present was Miray Zaour, the daughter of a pastor in Syria, who has immigrated to the U.S. for safety's sake. Both Revs. Tewell and Chamis have experience in previous churches or with the Church World Services in refugee resettlement, as have other members of NYAPC such as Nancy Dickinson, who was involved in helping an earlier wave of refugees here at NYAPC and Fritz von Fleckenstein, who helped a Lutheran Church in Ithaca, NY resettle a Laotian family of eight people. The purpose of the meeting was 1) to strategize about ways of encouraging NCP congregations to support refugee resettlement with an emphasis on Iraqi and Syrian refugees; 2) to begin to create a network of concerned individuals who can help support congregations that choose to resettle; and 3) to pool knowledge of the process and current trends around refugee and asylum issues.

The group discussed the current situation, including U.S. law and practice, and past experience and lessons learned with refugees. The group also considered what it might do in the interim before knowing how U.S. immigration regulations might change and where in the U.S. refugees might be assigned. The group agreed that churches might begin with advocacy to support recently introduced immigration bill, **HR 2798, Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act**. We will also begin to assemble a group of churches interested in considering refugee resettlement support. Another important task is to identify people in the congregation who speak Arabic. The importance of fluency in the language of the refugees cannot be overemphasized.

Karen Chamis later told us that Susan Krehbiel from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance said that she has been fielding calls from NCP as well as many other presbyteries, and is thrilled by the response. She concurred that one of the best things we can do at the mid-council level is to provide support to those congregations that hope to sponsor one or more refugees. One key piece of information is that due to the 1,000 day intake process, it will take between two and three years before we see any real influx of refugees. Of course, the process started months ago, so there will be

Blanket Drive

For the second year, NYAPC will participate in a drive for blankets for Syrian refugees. The blanket drive will begin November 7 and last until December 4. NYAPC will serve as a collection point for community blanket donations as it did in 2014. The blankets will be delivered to Syrian refugees in Turkey.

some who cross into our country in the next few months, but it will take time before we are having to deal with any great numbers. The good news is that we have time to gather information, to train, and to equip congregations to welcome folks. Obviously, the bad news is that for many of these people, this means several years in refugee camps.

At the same time, the PC(USA) Iraq Partnership Network's New Arrivals Work Group meeting with the Syria-Lebanon Partnership Network has begun an advocacy plan for U.S. support of Iraqi and Syrian refugees. Teresa Waggener of the PC(USA) Office of Immigration Issues provided information on PC(USA) positions on immigration and its advocacy work, and urged that churches support the Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act. The Network will be sending to Network churches a sample draft letter addressed to U.S. Members of Congress to support this legislation.

One of the key areas where we can make a difference is in helping to educate our congregations as to the plight of these refugees. There is a great deal of misunderstanding about refugees from "that part of the world" - and any work we can do to help remind churches about a faithful response can only help resettlement efforts in the future. Karen Chamis at NCP has started a [Facebook page about refugees](#). Please visit it and add information as you can.

Coordinating National Gun Violence Prevention Organizations

by Jack Mathison

The Brady Campaign, The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, Heeding God's Call to Stop Gun Violence and national efforts responding to the Newtown, Connecticut, tragedy, the Roseburg, Oregon, deaths, and the vigils remembering the Virginia Tech deaths of students and faculty have all resulted in a summons for a national meeting of all gun violence prevention movements.

This summons acknowledges that the U.S. Congress and many state legislatures are receiving proposed pieces of legislation calling for background checks on the purchase of all weapons. As this is occurring, the protests continue on the 14th of every month before the NRA Headquarters on Waples Mill Road in Fairfax, Virginia at 10:00 a.m., and when the 14th falls on a Sunday at 2:00 p.m.

Palestinian Christian Daoud Nassar Leads NYAPC Class

by Marilyn Seiber

On Sunday, October 11, Daoud Nassar, a Palestinian Christian whose family has owned a hundred-acre farm and orchard outside Bethlehem for 100 years, led an Adult Christian Education class at NYAPC to tell his story. In response to continued encroachment of settlements on Palestinian land, the destruction of trees and farms, and the lengthening wall constructed to separate Palestinians from their land, Mr. Nassar and his family have insisted on responding through actions of peace. He and his family established on his land

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DAOUD NASSAR (continued from page 7)

in 2000 the [Tent of Nations](#), an organization dedicated to “a dynamic peace. . . whose mission is to build bridges between people and between people and the land.” Tent of Nations brings together Palestinians, Israelis and international visitors who plant trees and harvest fruit from May to October each year. Tent of Nations has provided classes in English language, computer skills, handicrafts, and other life skills in a nearby Women’s Center. Young people gather on his land every summer for camps to meet together and participate in music, art and drama.

Mr. Nassar’s family farm dates to the Ottoman Empire, when his grandfather registered and paid taxes on 100 acres in 1916. Since 1991, the Nassars have fought in Israeli courts to prevent the Israeli Government from confiscating their land and have been successful so far only because of land documentation. The farm is now surrounded by settlements of 45,000 people. Settlers have blocked roads to Nassar’s land, cut trees, and tried to build roads through his property. In 2002, settlers destroyed 250 olive trees. Israeli officials are building a wall deep into the land to try to separate the farm from Bethlehem which is eight miles northeast of his land. The only access to Bethlehem will be a tunnel that will take a day of travel to reach. Mr. Nassar and his family are Lutheran Christians who worship in Bethlehem. He fears that they may be blocked from accessing their church.

Mr. Nassar seeks to answer Palestinian violence, resignation, and emigration in response to Israeli actions with a transformative approach. He refuses to be enemies and seeks to “invest frustration constructively” through a bridge of understanding. The Israeli Government has cut off water and electricity and refuses building permits. Hence, the Nassars have gone solar, have cisterns for water, and are building underground.

In 2014, Tent of Nations received over 7,000 visitors. Mr. Nassar says that the most important motivation for his actions is his Christian faith. One cannot overcome evil with evil. He and his family fight violence with love. It is not easy work, but he gets energized with the support he has received worldwide. He says that faith,

Cuba Partners Network Meeting in October

by Marilyn Seiber

The PC(USA) Cuba Partners Network convened its annual meeting in New Orleans, October 14-17, 2015, with **reconciliation** as the theme for discussions. In addition to Rev. Daniel Izquierdo, Secretary General of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba and pastor of Luyanó Presbyterian Church in Havana, five Cuban pastors attended representing the three Presbyteries in Cuba. Of the five, Rev. Edelberto Valdes was also touring the U.S. as a PC(USA) International Peacemaker. During the meetings, the Network had the opportunity to review and comment on a draft report to the General Assembly that resulted from a GA Overture in 2014 requesting joint consultations between PC(USA) and the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba to explore new possibilities for doing mission together in the context of evolving economic and political change in Cuba and new relations between the U.S. and Cuban Governments.

With this in mind, the theme of “reconciliation” was especially appropriate. Rev. Izquierdo—who preached in NYAPC’s pulpit in

October 2008—said that for Christians, reconciliation is a spiritual discipline that requires prayer. Reconciliation is a slow process requiring trust, listening, and being open to understanding the other; it does not mean forgetting the past. Prayer is central to reconciliation, in prayer we start to understand. As part of understanding, the Cuban pastors presented a panel discussion on current changes in Cuba, both economic and political, both current and future. As an example of current changes, some parks have been designated as “hot spots” or wifi centers that Cubans have dubbed Heads Down Parks—everyone in the park is looking at a phone or computer. They all emphasized that change will be slow but that challenges for the churches to cope with it will be enormous.

In this context, Rev. Izquierdo highlighted priorities for the Cuban Presbyterian Church: 1) the need for building improvements for churches that are crumbling and are in need of expansion; 2) the transformation of the Presbyterian camp to a Center for National Activities for the Presbyterian Church for not only summer camp, but conferences and meetings; and 3) how to get more people working for the Presbyterian Church when traditional seminary training is six years and more lay leaders are needed. He also cited funding needs for the Synod, the equivalent to PC(USA)’s General Assembly.

Rev. Dr. Hunter Farrell commended the Cuba Partners Network activities and related networks to the changing face of PC(USA) World Mission. He said that mission regains relevance, especially by confronting the generational challenge and opening the door to young adults. Throughout the Network meetings, participants gathered for worship, communion, and singing Cuban hymns.

Iraq-Syria News

by Rev. Elmarie Parker, PC(USA) Regional Liaison to
Iraq, Syria, Lebanon

(Rev. Elmarie Parker visited NYAPC in March 2015.)

Dear friends and partners in Christ’s Service at New York Avenue,

Greetings to you all in our Lord’s name! I pray this finds you all well. It has been very good news indeed to hear from Marilyn Seiber of your commitment to work as a congregation on behalf of Syrian and other refugees seeking shelter in the United States. Thank you. And, thank you for your continuing prayers for and partnership with our sisters and brothers in both Syria and Iraq.

I’ve recently had opportunity to speak in person with Rev. Mofid serving with the church in Homs, Syria. With his usual warm smile, he shared the progress that has been made on sanctuary repairs. Already the congregation is meeting in the restored fellowship hall for worship, and in November they will be able to move back into the sanctuary for worship—the first time since their sanctuary roof was destroyed by rebel rocket fire in 2012. In addition, in cooperation with funds coming from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the congregation has been able to help 9 families restore their homes in the Christian

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DAOUD NASSAR (continued from page 8)

Quarter, another three are close to completion, and another six homes have just begun the restoration. By the end of this project 39 homes will be restored—39 families will be able to return to the Christian Quarter and begin to rebuild their lives, 39 families will have had their hope encouraged to know that their future holds more than the destruction brought about by war. Rev. Mofid shared how this kind of practical work remains essential to helping Christian families find a way to STAY in Syria and be part of rebuilding their country. In addition to this work, the congregation continues with its school ministry—over 800 students are enrolled this school year with 90% of those students being Muslim. Education remains one of the church's most basic ministries to contribute to the development of a civil society where there is respect for all people regardless of religious affiliation, political party, ethnicity, or gender.

In November I'll be with the Presbyterian Church in Baghdad for nine days. A team of four others from the United States will be joining me. Together we will join with church leaders from all three of the Presbyterian Churches for several days of workshops focused on topics requested by the church in Iraq: using drama in young adult ministry and exploring the use of house church in areas where new followers of Jesus are asking to grow as disciples. We will also be meeting with leaders from other parts of the Christian family in Baghdad and taking in-depth time with the ministries of the Presbyterian Church in Baghdad. Please pray for this time of mutual learning together.

In addition, Scott has just returned from two weeks in Northern Iraq where he had the privilege of staying and visiting with families who were displaced by the advance of ISIS over a year ago. In the midst of their very humble circumstances, these families offered Scott generous hospitality. He will be sharing what he learned and experienced through www.findaworld.org. As you have time, take a look and continue to learn of both the hopes and concerns of displaced families in Iraq. There are also (and more will follow) both educational and worship resources on the site. In 2016, Scott hopes to have this same kind of time with displaced families in Syria.

Thank you again for your prayers and partnership. I continue to look forward to working together.

In Christ's Peace, Elmarie

Frontera de Cristo Helps with Largest Art Installation in History of US/Mexico Border

by Mark Adams, U.S. Coordinator, Frontera de Cristo, PC(USA)

It is hard to put into words what an amazing experience participating in the largest art installation on the border has been for our community of faith who live in the shadow of a 20 foot steel wall that serves to divide our bi-national community not just physically, but also psychologically and emotionally.

Sister Lorena Ocampo, of the Lirio de los Valles, said: "The balloons lifted our eyes up from the ugliness of the dividing wall of hostility to the beauty of the sky . . . the wall disappeared and we could focus on the beauty of God's creation that covers us all here on the border and God's intention for us to live in peace and harmony with creation and one another."

When we journeyed out after worship on the Mexican side with a group of folks from both countries (many who could not legally go into the United States) and of all generations, seeing the balloons soar above the wall filled me with hope and courage to continue seeking to live into the reality of what God has done in Jesus Christ to "tear down the dividing wall of hostility and create one new humanity out of the two."

We are grateful for your partnership in our ministry and continue to need your prayers, encouragement and support as we continue to live into the reality of God's love.

On behalf of your ministry on the border, Mark.

Frontera de Cristo was blessed to be invited by [Postcommodity](#), an Indigenous artist collective, to participate in the installation of Repellent Fence, a series of 26 balloons that spanned the US/Mexico border one mile into the U.S. and one mile into Mexico.

One of the artists, Kade Twist, said of FDC's participation: "It became clear to us, very quickly, that Frontera de Cristo was an organization that we needed to be working with. They were everywhere and had strong, generative relationships on both sides of the line. Not only did they know everyone, but they had the respect of everyone. And it was obvious that Pastor Mark Adams was someone we could trust, and everyone he introduced us to was equally trustworthy and respected. Mark was just as much of a diplomat as he was a pastor. He is old-school in that manner, so we were drawn to him.

"It was also pretty clear that Frontera de Cristo was doing the work that governments on both sides of the line didn't have the capacity or the will to perform, and we saw tremendous courage and value in the work they were doing, and how they performed this work. From our perspective, Frontera de Cristo represented the community self-determination ethic and DIY ethic that we wanted Repellent Fence to embody. They were willing to move mountains with the community, if that's what the community needed.

*"So we plugged the Repellent Fence into their network and worked closely with pastor Mark Adams to make the Repellent Fence relevant for the community on multiple levels. It was one of those rare moments where everything that Postcommodity, Frontera de Cristo and Agua Prieta wanted from Repellent Fence were mutually beneficial. Everything fit. It was an ideal partnership. In this most challenging environment, which is the *frontera*, we were able to move mountains together as a means of advancing the self-determination of indigenous peoples and all the people of the *frontera*."*

Frontera de Cristo people viewing the installed balloons.



Frontera de Cristo people after they have inflated the Scare-Eye Balloons.

History Happens . . . at NYAPC

Peggy Evans

by Edith Snyder and Marilyn Seiber

(As part of the NYAPC History Committee's "Bicentennial Interviews Project," Marilyn Seiber and Edie Snyder interview long-time NYAPC members for the Archives files. They interviewed Peggy Evans on October 10, 2015 for this project and the article below.)



After 58 years as a member of The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Margaret (Peggy) Evans offers two principal observations about this triangle of salt and light in Washington D.C. The first: "If you stay at NYAPC long enough, you will be changed. This church opens our eyes to so many things happening in the world. NYAPC changes in response to events and movements, and we change with it."

Second, "You don't have to go somewhere else to meet new and interesting people. People who like ruts leave," says Peggy. The church's pastors and members reflect this tenet of our faith: "We are, all of us, reformed, always reforming."

Embracing change and eschewing ruts, Peggy has remained in Washington since she arrived in 1955, largely because of this church. She has helped NYAPC form and strive toward the goal of becoming "an inclusive, justice-seeking church" and participated fully as NYAPC traveled this path to insist on equality for all, protest unjust wars, and advocate for a sustainable environment. Peggy was a member of the Session for 18 years between 1973 and 2002 and acted as Clerk from 1988 to 1991 during many of NYAPC's critical decisions on these issues. She also served as a Trustee from 1983 to 1985, where she chaired the Investment Committee.

Around the World to NYAPC

It took time for Peggy to find her way to New York Avenue—one could say she had to travel the world to discover the church. Peggy grew up in Ohio, the daughter of a professor of philosophy at The Ohio State University (OSU) who was also an ordained Presbyterian minister. Graduating from OSU in 1952, Peggy took a job as registrar for a campus OSU was founding on Guam. While on the island, she attended services at the Navy Chapel, where she was recruited the first Sunday to play the electric organ. The keyboard was hers every week for the next two years. A frugal person, Peggy saved enough to be able to travel around the world on her way home to Ohio, spending two and a half months touring with two teachers, friends from Guam. She was just 23.

Returning to the United States, Peggy enlisted in the Navy and attended Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island. Once commissioned, she was assigned to the Atomic Biological and Chemical Warfare Office in the Navy's Bureau of Ships in Washington, D.C. The United States was in the middle of the long Cold War with the Soviet Union.

By 1956 Peggy was living in Alexandria, Virginia, and still searching for the right church choir to join. One Saturday night she went to the movies, where she saw "A Man Called Peter," the life story of Rev. Peter Marshall. The next morning, Peggy found her way to NYAPC. She recalls that the church was packed and she got the last seat—but was able to meet Choir Director Stephen Prussing, who invited her to attend choir rehearsal the following Thursday night. That evening, Peggy joined the choir of more than 100 voices with three others—Alice French, Eleanor Pratt, and Nancy Sturtevant. Peggy and Eleanor remain lifelong friends.

Choir Tales

Peggy ultimately sang with the NYAPC choir and choral groups for 50 years. She explains that the choir was "an organization of its own" within the church with its own character. "We did so much in addition to Sunday worship services. Steve directed us in variety shows and Gilbert & Sullivan" and the choir regularly went on tour. Member Annie Jackson managed the sheet music for the large choir and kept it in order in a system of folders affectionately known as "Annie's Ark." Annie wrote weekly practice instructions, thanking choir members for their attention at the conclusion of them with her own phrase, "Sanctuary Much!"

Peggy particularly remembers one variety show performance when she and Virginia (Ginge) Peddle, Nancy Cook, and Barbara Clark sang "Button Up Your Overcoat" while dancing the Charleston in 1920s costumes. Rev. George M. Docherty heard one of their rehearsals following Sunday worship and was appalled. Longtime NYAPC member Millie Mugridge, a friend of Mrs. Mary (Jerry) Shirlaw Docherty, advised her of her



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PEGGY EVANS (continued from page 10)

husband's disapproval. Mrs. Docherty made it a point to watch the rehearsal and told him that the skit was great. "Rev. Docherty never said another word against it."

Peggy recalls other "Millie stories" that illuminate New York Avenue's history. For example, when NYAPC was searching for a choir director to replace Charles Dana Beachler in July 1950, Millie thought the Trustees weren't doing enough to find the right candidate. She took it upon herself to write to renowned choral conductor Robert Shaw, who recommended his protégé Prussing. Steve subsequently served as NYAPC's choir director for 38 years!

Millie also originated NYAPC's practice of putting a rose on the communion table to celebrate a birth in the church family and was effectively "the original NYAPC Triangle Park Committee" because she grew and tended roses in front of the church for this purpose. Peggy notes that Millie even enlisted the D.C. police to watch her garden and ensure that no one else picked the flowers. Initially, the roses celebrated births of babies to choir members; now this tradition applies to all members and friends of the congregation.

During the 1970s President Richard Nixon often "brought church to the White House," and on two occasions the NYAPC choir sang for these worship services. Peggy recalls the choir in their robes waiting in front of the church for limousines to pick them up to drive the short blocks to the White House. At the same time, young people who had come to Washington to protest the war were sitting on the floor at the church getting ready to demonstrate there. "So while some from the church were outside the White House protesting," says Peggy, "the church choir was inside the White House singing."

Rev. and Mrs. Docherty

Rev. Docherty and his first wife, Jerry, accomplished a great deal during his long and fruitful ministry at NYAPC. Among many accomplishments, it was Docherty's friendship with Rabbi Norman Gerstenfeld of the Washington Hebrew Congregation that led to the donation to the church of Abraham Lincoln's draft Emancipation document now displayed in the Lincoln Parlor. Rev. Docherty and Rabbi Gerstenfeld spoke before each other's congregations, the NYAPC choir sang at the synagogue, and the two men enjoyed playing golf now and then. Rabbi Gerstenfeld told Rev. Docherty that he had a friend, Barney H. Balaban, who owned a precursor to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and wondered to whom he might give it. Rev. Docherty volunteered the church as a home for the document.

Peggy remembers a warm, yet somewhat removed Rev. Docherty. "He never called me by my name; rather, I was always 'my dear.'" She describes NYAPC's minister as "conservative Biblically, but not socially." In this, he was undoubtedly influenced by Jerry.

When Peggy first came to NYAPC, the church was just beginning to develop and expand its social ministries. At that time, the Park Level was a basketball court, and young people

came to the church after school to study and play there. "NYAPC was trying to form a parents' club, and a group of us went in pairs to homes around the church to invite mothers and fathers to meet at the church," says Peggy. "A number actually came. All of this took place before the formation of what is now the Community Club."

Mrs. Docherty was both very active in these efforts and generally supportive of the African American community near the church. Because Peggy played and had studied piano with Steve Prussing for several years, Jerry asked to her to accompany worship services at a storefront church located between 7th and 9th Streets, N.W. Peggy's church and work worlds came together when the man who greeted them at the storefront church was the same gentleman who cleaned the office where she worked on G Street and with whom she spoke before attending choir practice and other activities at NYAPC.

Peggy remembers when Rev. and Mrs. Docherty and Associate Pastor Jack McClendon journeyed to Alabama to participate in the march for civil rights in Selma. "It was Mrs. Docherty who decided to go to Selma," she says. "Their trip was a surprise to the congregation because it was a last minute decision." Many in the congregation were upset, and after the march, a large meeting packed Peter Marshall Hall. Peggy recalls that Mr. and Mrs. Stott, who owned a stationery and art store across the street from the church, were among those who did not approve of the Dochertys' and McClendon's participation in the march. However, it was Mrs. Stott who said that while she disapproved, she "respected that they had a right to do it." By saying this, "she calmed people," Peggy says, and helped return reason to the debate.

Other NYAPC Activists

Peggy always admired Jack McClendon and considered him a real scholar from 1957 when she took a class he taught on Christianity—"presumably for new members." She was Clerk of the Session when he retired as associate pastor and was honored that Jack took her to lunch to ask whether she thought with Rev. Rob Craig's arrival it was time for him to leave NYAPC. At the 1991 celebration of his long service to the church and community, Peggy offered this appreciation of Rev. McClendon's tenure: "Imagine sitting through thirty-four years of committee meetings, board meetings, and congregational meetings and realize how many times a decision was made in complete opposition to what he believed was right. He may go home and cuss, but the next day he comes back and asks questions. . . . Even though he knows what he believes, he wants to know why others believe differently. And not only that, he listens to their point of view."

Peggy remembers other activists post-Docherty. Before the renovation and reconstruction of 14th Street, prostitutes used to walk around the church, looking for customers. They had first occupied the Dupont Circle area, but were forced to move to K Street and then spent evenings around NYAPC. Their presence and activity made it difficult for members and others to attend evening meetings and activities at the church. One night, NYAPC Parish Associate Elayne Amityyah Hyman organized a

(continued on p. 12)

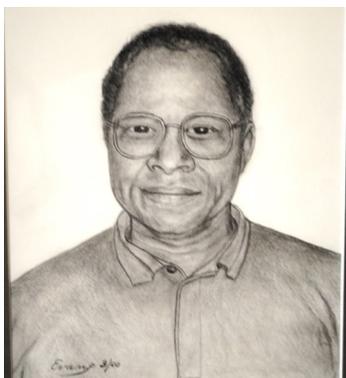
PEGGY EVANS (continued from page 11)

group of members to march around the block with a police escort. Their business interrupted, the prostitutes soon moved elsewhere.

Life Beyond Church

When not at NYAPC, work filled Peggy's life. "I was so lucky," she says; "Every person I worked for was a genius"—from Dean L. O. Andrews of the Territorial College of Guam from Ohio State and Commander Carlson who had worked with Admiral Hyman G. Rickover to Dr. Jacinto Steinhardt who led a group of mathematicians from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Robert M. Silliman, famed inventor and consulting radio engineer. When Mr. Silliman retired at the age of 80, Peggy went to work for Robert Gazzola, partner to John Quinn in the law firm of Quinn, Racusin & Gazzola in Washington.

Following her own retirement at age 69, Peggy has taken dance and art classes at the Dance Factory and Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, Virginia. Her portrait of Bobby Russell, longtime chef in the military and later at NYAPC, was chosen for a juried show at the Church of the Pilgrims Presbyterian Church. Peggy also drew cartoons for Ave-News for more than 10 years.



Peggy is optimistic about the future of NYAPC, in no small part because it continues to evolve and to attract people who are not afraid to change, as Peggy has always done.



Plaster cherubs once topped the pillars in the Sanctuary looking down at the choir. During a 1960s renovation, about 10 of these were salvaged. One cherub resides in the Docherty Center on NYAPC's first floor; Peggy purchased another and had it made into a table that graces the entryway in her home.

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★ **TRANSITIONS** ★

★ **Births:** ★

★ Conrad Stephen Hoffman, July 25 ★

★ **Baptisms:** ★

★ Oliver William Laslett, November 8 ★

★ Dylan Lauer, November 29 ★

★ **Marriages:** ★

★ Spence Gibbins to Cleveland Mosby, ★

★ October 3 ★

★ Devon Noellert to Neal Baer, October 31 ★

★ **Deaths:** ★

★ Toni Davenport, July 1 ★

★ Leonora Marquis, July 13 ★

★ Marcia Thompson, September 10 ★

★ Blonnie Thompson, September 14 ★

★ Neill Veazey Joiner, October 23 ★

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Myriam Takes NYAPC Peace Candle to Cuba

Myriam Alvarez, the "Friendly Telephone" psychologist on the staff of First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana who visited NYAPC July 21-28, 2015, took an NYAPC peace candle to present to the congregation. During her report to the congregation on her visit with us, she told about our "traveling peace candles" and then lit the candle and placed it on the communion table. The glow of peace continues!

Visitors to NYAPC worship services who have taken candles this quarter are:

- Myriam Alvarez, First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana, Havana, Cuba
- Susan Shore, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, VA and Presbyterian Church in Blacksburg, VA



2015/08/16 11:15

Leonora Marquis Remembrance

by Paul Dornan

I have known and admired – and, yes, loved -- Leonora Marquis for over 25 years. We first came into contact here at New York Avenue Church when we were both engaged in setting up a national conference on the Church and Serious Mental Illness that was held at Catholic University and drew over 200 people from twenty states. During the planning and execution of that project, Leonora displayed many of the qualities that I have always found so appealing – her energy, her enthusiasm, her steady attention to detail, her willingness to call anyone at any time and ask them to do nearly anything, her eye for just the right visual complement to whatever she was thinking, her gift for hospitality, her compassion for those who suffer or enjoy less in worldly gifts than she had enjoyed, her faithfulness.



Chalmers & Leonora Marquis

This building bears the lasting marks of Leonora's imagination and stewardship. Just walk in the first floor entryway, stroll into the Docherty Center, amble over to the Lincoln Parlor, the John Quincy Adams Room, Room 127. Check out the artwork in Rooms 511 and 520 on the 5th floor. Go down to the Park Level – observe the parents' space near the elevators, the supply cabinets in the kitchen. Everywhere, where we are at our best in attractiveness and hospitality – and we are occasionally at our best – you will taste the fruit of Leonora's contribution to this, her community of faith.

Now, a shrinking violet cannot effect such a visual impact on a place like New York Avenue, and Leonora was emphatically not a shrinking violet. She had standards, and she let you know when they were not being met – and she helped you understand why standards are so important. When I walk into a Christian Education space at New York Avenue and occasionally observe that everything isn't perfect, I recognize that our church has many uses and that good things are happening, yet I also feel what I'll call the "twinge of Leonora" too. God created us in such a way that we respond to beauty. It is in our DNA, and it means something that the carpets are as clean as they can be, that peeling walls are repainted, that cracks are sealed, that lights actually light. It is one more way to say that our children are important, that our youth are important, that our adults are important – and that beauty enhances and enriches the learning experience.

As our brothers and sisters at Fondren Presbyterian Church in

Jackson, Mississippi, indicate, Leonora learned her calling as a Christian educator on the job. By the time she came to us, she brought a wealth of experience and expertise and imagination to her work both as Christian educator and chair of the Christian Education Committee. To our adult program she brought her dedication to varied and well-supported and publicized programming and her willingness to orchestrate the programs, call strangers and manage and master the details. To our children and youth, she offered her ability to recruit and equip able and caring teachers, identify appropriate curriculum and provide the program support to make the program work. Perhaps her most notable innovation was the Midsummer Church School, which brought a wealth of information and inspiration to New York Avenue one weekend each summer. Leonora kept alive the notion that Christian education is a fundamental piece of this church's life.

Leonora and Chalmers were active participants in New York Avenue's 7-2-9 and Meals on Wheels programs. They brought steadfastness and energy and compassion to every activity in which they participated. It therefore comes as no surprise that Leonora was at the very forefront of integrating her Presbyterian church in Jackson during the 1960s. In more recent years, Leonora and Chalmers focused much of their political energies the Democratic Party of Northern Virginia.

Did I mention that one of the hallmarks of the Leonora – Chalmers union was hospitality? If you had the honor and pleasure of being invited to Leonora and Chalmers's house, you would know you were welcomed – warm fellowship, delicious food (Leonora loved to cook), every item on the wall or floor selected with care, each from a trip she had taken with Chalmers, each with a story. There were all-church and CE picnics on the shores of Lake Barcroft. There were tours of the wonders of Lake Barcroft on the Marquises' pontoon boat. I don't know whether Leonora loved bagpipe music as much as her hubby, but she certainly beamed as he played.

Leonora's last years were not easy ones. She didn't feel well. Her beloved Chalmers was in a nursing facility, and she was lonely. She worried about family. She found she couldn't physically attend the church to which she had given so much. The last time Barb and I visited her, though, those were not her preoccupations. She was so pleased that we had come; she asked us about our family and all that was going on at New York Avenue; she expressed her gratitude about the life she had been given, her wonderful Chalmers, her caregiver. It was the best – and the most gracious – that we had seen her in a number of years. I'll remember her that way.

One summer, perhaps 15 years ago, Leonora asked our son, Andrew, to help her and Chalmers build a stone wall at their house. He did, and the wall has withstood at least 15 years. Leonora called that edifice "Andrew's Wall." Now both Andrew and Leonora are gone, and I think of the wall as just one physical reminder of this church, of the friendships it engenders and nourishes and of those two wall-builders who have now joined the cloud of witnesses.

Njoro Mission Trip August 6-19, 2015

by Rev. Dr. Beth Braxton

“Through Christ’s fullness, we have received grace upon grace.” John 1:16

Eight gifted persons representing three National Capital Presbyterian congregations journeyed together on this trip of amazing grace: parish associate Beth Braxton and husband Bob, Susan Grooters and Kathryn Sparks from the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church; nurse Susan Kipp and her daughter Lindsay Kipp from Burke Presbyterian Church; and senior pastor David Milam and Daniel Faubert from Saint Andrew Presbyterian Church.

Despite dire warnings from the U.S. State Department, by God’s grace the team traveled the six thousand miles on KLM/Delta through Amsterdam and on to Nairobi, Kenya, with nary a mishap! Saturday, August 8, our first night in Kenya we spent at the Milele Guest House of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.

Graced with an unexpected light rain, on Saturday we squeezed twenty-four pieces of luggage and eight of us Americans plus host and guide Jeremiah Nduyu as well as the driver Peter into one standard Kenya 15-passenger van and began the journey westward to and across the great Rift Valley and on to Njoro where the OVC (Orphans and Vulnerable Children) committee and thirty-three orphans waited to welcome us.

After we had introductions, singing and tea, we were off to our host homes of church members of the Njoro Presbyterian Church of East Africa (P.C.E.A.)

Sunday was the team’s first full day in Njoro and was filled with surprises of God’s grace. For the earlier service, all of us were together at Njoro Church. This service is in English. With five musical instruments (flute, clarinet, trumpet plus two acoustic guitars) the team did a spirited rendition of “How Great Thou Art.” Kathryn Sparks danced Psalm 100, the Old Testament lesson; and the whole group dramatized the “Parable of the Prodigal Son.” Rev. Milam preached the sermon for this early service.

After that worship, we divided into three groups for the next Sunday service and experience. Since the 2013 mission trip, Njoro P.C.E.A. had started two new congregations. Bethlehem Congregation is a rebuild of the legacy historical timber framed church building some distance away. Beth preached, and Bob played his guitar and sang.

At Salem (“SAH-LEM”) Congregation, Susan Kipp brought the message, and Susan Grooters played her clarinet;, and Kathryn danced.

Remaining at the Njoro main church building were Rev. Milam, Daniel and Lindsay. This later service is conducted in Kiswahili, and the session clerk, Sammy Mungai translated for Rev. Milam.

This first Sunday afternoon was filled with good Kenyan food and fellowship. One group hiked the considerable distance to the

gates of Egerton University, while others were fellowshiping in homes and preparing materials for the upcoming Vacation Bible School of five days.

Moments of grace fell on us throughout the whole Vacation Bible School week. Monday through Friday we followed this schedule:

Daniel was the time keeper, and he blew his trumpet for the change to each next activity. Kathryn led Crafts; Lindsay and Daniel led Recreation; and Sue Grooters and Rev. David led Music.

8:45 to 9:15	Worship	led by Rev. Beth, Rev. David, Rev. Kariuki, Cathy the Social Worker
9:15 to 10:00	Home room groups for Bible discussion and age-appropriate activities:	
	Group #1 (7 – 11 yr.)	Bob (guide), Kathryn and Lindsay
	Group #2 (12 – 15 yr.)	Susan Kipp (guide), Rev. David
	Group #3 (16 – 17 yr.)	Rev. Beth (guide), Sue Grooters and Daniel
10:00 to 10:30	Tea	
10:30 to 11:15	Activity 1 (rotating among Crafts, Music, Recreation separately)	
11:15 to 12 noon	Activity 2	
12 noon-12:45	Activity 3	
1:00 pm	Lunch	

Crafts included: making covers for journals, coloring mandalas and creating designs for T-shirts. Recreation included: games of soccer, spud, jump rope, duck-duck goose and others. Music was devoted to learning to read music and play the recorder, one for each of the children 7 to 17.

Monday afternoon our team met indoors with the Njoro OVC Committee. We heard and received a written report from Francis Muchemi, chair of the committee, a report on the Chicken Project by Jeremiah Nduyu and a report on the students from Catherine Wambui the social worker. Another presentation by the Chair was the preliminary proposal (a vision) for sustainability of the funding for OVC on the Kenya side.

Tuesday afternoon we visited Pokea (“receive”) Farm. James Karanja is a member of Njoro P.C.E.A. church and breeds and raises internationally recognized prize-winning heifers. He graced us with his powerful faith-and-life testimony – from street child to educator to businessman dairy farmer and geneticist, all of which he told us with theological underpinning on

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NJORO TRIP REPORT (continued from page 14)

stewardship and energetic singing of “Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia!” We ended with tea and conversation and made the move of team belongings to Egerton University conference center, where we resided the remainder of the week.

Probably the most meaningful experiences of grace came on Wednesday afternoon when we were divided into four groups for walking, each to the homes of three or four (or five) of the OVC students. A member of OVC Committee and some of the children accompanied us on the visits. Sue Grooters and I were with guide Jeremiah Nduyu, and we visited the home of Jeremiah Wanjau, Simon Edepan and Elizabeth Wambui. The students Jeremiah and Simon live with single mothers and have many siblings (eight and seven, respectively). The student Elizabeth is an only child, living with a grandmother. The boys’ homes had no electricity or running water. Each family was most grateful for the chickens. Several months ago, Simon’s mother had all of her chickens stolen, and she started all over again! She was amazing! For these single mothers, the chickens and the eggs the hens give are their only source of income.

A most touching moment during my time in Njoro, a true moment of God’s grace, came when student Jeremiah’s mother handed me a bag containing seven eggs – in gratitude – as we were leaving her *shamba* (small farm). A moment or two earlier she had told us that she gets about fifteen eggs a week, keeps five eggs for the family to feed upon and she sells the other ten eggs for ten cents each! She had just given me over half her income!

One of the other groups shared a grace-full moment in their home visits. Stephan Mwangi, the youngest of the OVC children, held tightly to Bob and Kathryn’s hands through the whole afternoon of visiting five homes, walking the entire four miles. During this whole time they said, “He did not stop singing!” Bob said he was singing the gospel hymn, “At the Cross.” For those who were not raised Baptist as I was, these are the words: “At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burning of my heart rolled away. It was there by faith I received my sight and now I am happy all the day!”

Thursday we cut short the Vacation Bible School program just for that one day, because we were scheduled to meet at the office of the Nakuru (County) member of Parliament, Hon. Mary Mbugua. Most of the OVC Committee members led us. Honorable Mary Mbugua told us of her many projects to help those with disabilities and of teaching simple skills like making yoghurt and tomato sauce in the sub-Counties. She is a dynamic woman who graciously served us fruit juice and also led us in singing “Blessed be the Name of the Lord” just before we were leaving.

Friday, after our regular Vacation Bible School schedule – worship, discussion, activities, lunch – we had “Presentations and the Cutting of Cake.” Older students played on the new recorders what they had learned; the older female students did an African dance as well as the liturgical dance Kathryn Sparks taught them, while the younger students sang “Morning Has Broken.” Then we exchanged gifts with much ceremony and many photos. Rev. Kariuki’s wife Hellen had baked and decorated two cakes that in the Cutting were made to be fifty pieces, enough for each

person present to partake. Those with camera phones and regular cameras took many group photographs. People gave and received many hugs. There were tearful goodbyes – as we lingered, basking in “grace upon grace” we had been receiving.

Two of the younger girls came to me and said, “Thank you for what you have done for us.”

“What have we done for you?” I asked.

“We have a bag with two pencils and pens and a tablet, soap and sweets; we are so happy!” they responded. And danced away.

One of the participants said to me in the airport upon leaving, “This trip has changed my life.”

Another participant said, “I got my joy back in Kenya!”

And another participant said, “The best part of the trip for me was to witness and be a part of a vibrant ‘lived’ faith in God. Everywhere, we prayed and sang. Love for God was all around us, in everything we did. We prayed before eating (even before taking tea) and before traveling anywhere. We prayed unceasingly, and ‘Bwana asifiwe’ (Swahili for ‘Praise God!’) was a common greeting. I wish there was some way to live this in America, to say ‘Bwana asifiwe’ to everyone we meet in our lives in America.”

Words of experiencing “grace upon grace.”

“I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ,” (Philippians 1:3-6)

P.C.E.A NJORO OVC PROGRAM

Indigenous poultry project

by Jeremiah Nduyu

Introduction

In February 2010 a baseline survey was carried out by Fritz of NYAPC and J.P Nduyu of P.C.E.A Njoro to determine the most appropriate Economic Strengthening Activity to support the OVC program. After visiting various institutions such as Heifer International, Farm Africa, Farming System Kenya and so forth, indigenous poultry was selected. A proposal was done in September 2010 and approved by NYAPC our development partner. This has been on-going since then.

We as a church and the implementing agent, wish to sincerely thank the following for their financial and moral support. Our development partners, New York Avenue Presbyterian church, individuals and other churches in the National Capital Presbytery, the P.C.E.A Njoro session and the OVC management committee, and finally special thanks to Fritz von Fleckenstein, Kirsten Kingdon and Rev. Beth Braxton for their support.

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CHICKENS (continued from page 15)

Household Economic Strengthening Activity

This is a process of assisting and building the capacity of vulnerable households to mobilize and manage resources enabling the households to meet the basic needs of OVC and other members of the household to ultimately become self-sufficient. The desired outcome is an increased and sustainable income and other resources for OVC households which are used to meet their basic needs and ensure sustainability. The indicators that will be used to measure the success of this activity are a) the proportion of households with increased and sustainable income and b) the percentage of OVC households able to meet the basic needs of their members.

Capacity Building

In order to make the activity worthwhile several seminars have been held to build the capacity of OVC and their households in practical skills. The following topics have been covered among others: a) poultry management skills, b) disease identification and control methods, c) vaccination techniques, and d) poultry feeding, including important ingredients and homemade feed preparation. Currently, we are educating the households on the availability and structure of existing Savings and Loans programs, namely a) Table Banking, b) making of monthly budgets, and c) SILC (Saving Internal Lending Communities).

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of the Economic Strengthening Activity is a continuous process where data is collected to assess the progress of the project towards achieving the set goals. All the new parents enrolled in the program received chickens and a house, households are visited to assess the progress of poultry project, and they are given an SILC (Saving Internal Lending Communities) seminar.

THE FINAL GROUP

In the year 2014, five children left the program and were replaced. The new guardians needed to be empowered. We requested funding and received \$1,450 (KSH 127,400), which was collected in 2011 and initially intended for use in the milk-goat project. The five new households were empowered economically by being issued with chickens and a house to start off the project.

Benefits from the chickens are both an economic benefit, as quite a number of households are now economically empowered and are able to meet the cost of some basic needs without difficulties, and a nutritional benefit, as the majority of households consume products from the chickens. They feed on eggs and white meat, good sources of protein. They also sell eggs to buy foods such as fruits and milk to supplement their diet. Other benefits include self-employment and manure to improve soil fertility in the kitchen garden.

Challenges faced by the families include theft of chickens, freedom of movement of the chickens, which often escape, purchase of feeds which are expensive, death of chickens due to predation,

space to keep the chicken house, and diseases. Despite the challenges, most households have succeeded. Only eight families are without chickens at this time. Some representative stories:

Phyllis Wambui—Elizabeth Wambui's Grandmother

Phyllis was very much excited as she explained how since she was empowered economically through the chicken project, her life has taken a different dimension of gearing towards success always. She says she has been selling chickens around the neighborhood and is able to meet most of the household felt needs. She has also been selling eggs to a neighborhood shop for the same purposes. During the previous season of planting, she did not have ready cash to purchase seeds. Phyllis sold four chickens (2 cocks and 2 hens at KSH 1200 and KSH 800 respectively) on the 14th of March, and bought maize (corn) seeds. She managed to plant her farm on time. She has also been selling chickens and uses the money to purchase feeds and medication. She has been selling the chickens every time they reproduce to a large number.

Catherine Wambui—Jeremiah Kamau's Mother

Catherine appreciates that she is one of the program's beneficiaries through the poultry project. She also appreciates that apart from being given chickens, she was given a house where the chickens will be spending the nights. Catherine was happy as she explained how she has commercialized the poultry project by selling chickens and earns an income from the same. She sells and also buys breeds that she does not have. Every time the chickens have reproduced to a large number, Catherine sells them and remains with a few and proceeds with the process. During this year's planting season, Catherine sold one cock at KSH 1,000 and bought bean seeds. Jeremiah's mother always sells eggs before Saturday so that she can afford to give Jeremiah bus fare to be able to come to the program.

Anne Murimi—Monicah Kavindu's Mother

Anne Murimi gets an income from the sale of eggs and at times from the sale of chickens. She has a contract with a hotel where she always supplies eggs. Anne says that the chickens have helped her a lot in many ways which include cooking for Monicah Kavindu every time she goes to visit her in school.

Salome Wangui—James Mbugua's Mother

Salome Wangui has been one of the successful parents in the project. For some time she has been facing challenges on where to keep the chicken house -- she was forced to take the house to an in-law's place. The chickens were not doing well there. By this time, she had stopped selling fruits in the market, since this business had come from the sale of chickens, for reason of almost being blessed with a new child in the family.

Salome had remained with only five chickens; rearing them became a challenge for her in that she was not able to monitor them from afar. Due to this, she spoke to her mother who was keeping milking goats. They agreed that she sell the five chickens and buy a milking goat, then take it to her mother who would assist her to

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(CHICKENS continued from page 16)

feed it. She disposed of the chickens and bought one milking goat. The goat was fed for three months and sold to a butcher. She used the money to buy two other goats. The two goats have reproduced and she now has five milking goats. Salome has transformed her chicken project into goat keeping.

She is happy and says that this challenge about the chickens came about so that she can realize another opportunity which is the milking goat. She says that the goat gives her higher returns in that the price of selling a goat is higher than that of a chicken, she also gets milk from the goats. In future when she gets a place to keep the chicken house and the chickens, Salome says she will replace some chickens and proceed with both the projects i.e. goat keeping and poultry rearing.

Conclusion

As we had previously stated in the report, seminars have been held to empower the parents/guardians and to show them the need of working together in order to support one another. They have agreed to join up and form a support group i.e. a self-help group, where eighteen parents/guardians are active participants. The group has been saving money and borrowing from their savings for the last two months.

We are grateful to God who has enabled us reach this far. Thank you to our brothers and sister from the USA for your continued support. The program has achieved 90% of the original interventions and therefore can be rated a success. However we need to put more effort to achieve the remaining 10%.

Letter from Indonesia

Farsijana and Bernie Adeney-Risakotta,
PC(USA) Mission Co-Workers in Jogjakarta, Indonesia



(Farsijana and Bernie visited NYAPC on furlough from Indonesia in 2009, and made quite an impression on the congregation at that time. Bernie was in a unique environment, where he taught at the Christian University, the Muslim University and the Government University in Yogyakarta. Later, he was instrumental in creating The Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), the first ecumenical Ph.D. religion program in the world. Farsijana works with villagers in Muslim and Christian

villages, encouraging communication between the religions. They are a truly remarkable couple.)

Dear Family, Friends and Colleagues,
We were horrified by news of the Paris terrorist attacks, which

reached us while we were in Hanoi as guests of Vietnam National University. I presented a paper comparing views of religions in Indonesia and Vietnam. During the U.S.-Vietnam War, my father once commented, "Communism cannot be overcome with violence." Our Vietnamese colleagues at VNU are Communist Party members and war heroes, but also religious believers and thoroughly disillusioned with Communism. One predicted that the Communist Party in Vietnam will collapse within 10 years, the way it collapsed in Eastern Europe.

I wonder if terrorism can be stopped by violence. The great majority of Muslims are not terrorists, but people from any religion can become terrorists if they lose hope of living in peace, with justice and dignity. Our mission is to seek reconciliation, justice and peace between Muslims and Christians and help our neighbors, especially women and children, escape from poverty. Farsijana's House of Authentic Sense (HAS) is working with Duta Wacana Christian University to bring hope to our Muslim neighbors.

Mother Ngatirah is a brave, hard-working Muslim woman from one of the poorest villages in Indonesia. Since her family had no income, she started cooking snacks made from bananas and yams to sell in the market. People loved her snacks, so she organized her neighbors to help find the ingredients and prepare the foods. She now has 20 Muslim women working with her on food preparation and distribution. For 12 years she tried to get a government permit to sell food, but without success. Without the permit she cannot sell outside her immediate neighborhood or get access to funding and wholesale prices for ingredients. Time and again she was refused the permit because she failed to meet hygienic standards. She cooks in her own traditional kitchen, with a dirt floor, open fire, thatched roof and open access to her family, neighborhood kids, chickens and other animals.

Farsijana visited Ngatirah in her home and promised to help her get the permit. Ngatirah joined the cooperative run by HAS, which also gives her access to small loans and access to wholesale prices. She was overjoyed when a team from the Architecture Faculty of Duta Wacana Christian University (DWCU) visited her kitchen and drew up plans for a legal, hygienic kitchen so that she can prepare safe, healthy, environmentally friendly food and get a business permit. The Biology Faculty of DWCU dispatched students in ecological waste management to help Ngatirah deal with her garbage. The Dean of the DWCU Business Faculty (who is Chairman of the Board of HAS) gave a workshop for village entrepreneurs. They are helping Ngatirah manage her finances so that she can pay back her small business loan from the HAS Cooperative and keep track of her expenses. The DWCU Product Design Program will help Ngatirah and her neighbors package their products to make them more appealing. Finally, students from the DWCU Information Technology Faculty will help them set up web pages to market their products over the internet. The women are not receiving charitable handouts, but rather information, skills and support to be independent.

Farsijana and I are both involved in "up-stream solutions", to prevent hatred and violence from ever occurring, rather than just dealing with the anguish after tragedy strikes, like it did in Paris. By the grace of God we are trying to bring reconciliation, justice and peace to our Muslim neighbors. Women and children in one of the

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LETTER FROM INDONESIA (continued from page 17)

poorest villages in Indonesia are gaining hope and learning that Muslims and Christians can love and help each other. Indonesia has 220 million Muslims, more than the whole Middle East put together. Yet very few Indonesian Muslims are going to Syria to fight with ISIS. Ironically, far more Europeans than Indonesians are joining the terrorist ranks of ISIS. There are many reasons for this, including that many Indonesian Muslims and Christians consider each other brothers and sisters, not enemies. Another reason is that many Muslims in Indonesia have hope for the future. Violence and death is not an attractive life plan, if you have hope.

Still, ISIS and other radical groups are trying to recruit in Indonesia. One of my former students from the State Islamic University was involved with a notorious Islamic school which has graduated many terrorists, some of whom were put to death for involvement in the Bali bombing. When he came for dinner at our home, he introduced himself to Farsijana as “Bernie’s terrorist student.” His son went off to fight for ISIS and was killed in Syria a few months ago. My former student is trying to distance himself from radical Islam and has reached out to me again, asking when we can meet. How do I feel about this? We will meet soon. Perfect love casts out all fear. I love him, although not yet perfectly.

Before we left for Vietnam, almost 80 of my Muslim students from Muhammadiyah University Yogyakarta came to our house for a discussion and dinner. Farsijana, her sisters and friends cooked all day. The students were so curious about our Pondok Tali Rasa (a home for binding people together in our feelings, thoughts and senses). Some of the kids are from very strict, conservative Muslim families who are worried about the effects of “Western immorality and liberalism”. In our home they are learning that Christians are not their enemies. We care about many of the same things. We do not have to agree with each other in order to respect and learn from each other.

The Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS) is nearing its 10th year. Most of our students and graduates are professors, teaching in Muslim, Christian and Buddhist universities around Indonesia and in many countries. They are the teachers of the teachers, training religious leaders who not afraid of people who are different from them. We are not trying to kill terrorists, like my student’s son who died fighting for ISIS. Rather we are just trying to obey Jesus’s first and greatest commandment: to love our neighbors.

Our work in Indonesia is supported by the Presbyterian Church USA. We will be visiting universities, churches and friends in the USA during June, July and August 2016. Please contact us if you would like us to visit you or if you would like to know how you could be more involved in our work.

Salam hangat,
Bernie and Farsijana Adeney-Risakotta <http://www.icrs.ugm.ac.id>

Baghdad Presbyterian Church Floods—Again

by Marilyn Seiber

Heavy rains in Baghdad in late October flooded the Presbyterian Church in Baghdad with two feet of water, an event that has

happened repeatedly, most recently in the last two years when the generator was flooded before Christmas. The following are photographs and an updated report from Rev. Nuhad Tomeh, former PC(USA) Director for Middle East Mission in Louisville. He has been in Erbil, Iraq and has spoken with the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Baghdad, Rev. Farouk Hammo. His message was sent on November 3. On November 5, Rev. Farouk Hammo sent a letter describing the situation in the church. Both letters are reproduced below.

Dear All,
Greetings from Erbil! Early this evening I talked with Assis (Pastor) Farouk Hammo. Here is what he informed me of and I am sharing this with you all.

He reported that the water is all pumped out from the four halls of the church including the office and the library, but the mud is still not all cleaned up. They will soon be cleaning all areas. The second step is asking some expert engineers to come up with a temporary preventive plan of action to be implemented before the rainy season to prevent water from coming into the lower parts of the church premises again. Then by April and March they will make major plan to deal with the problem of rainwater and city service water permanently from flooding the lower part of the church ground.

This last step will take a long time and big funds and this where you all are asked to raise funding. For the first step I have informed Assis Farouk that The Outreach Foundation and I approved to use the funds designated for the generator to be used for the temporary preventive plan and will work on more funding for the generator soon. Assis Farouk will be updating us all and with photosets regularly as they proceed with the first step.

While in Erbil I am in daily conversation with Elder Aman Daoud of the Baghdad Church who in turn is in daily contact with Assis Farouk and others in Baghdad to follow up.

Your prayers are need for Iraq and all its people. May God’s peace return to this troubled region.

Nuhad



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BAGHDAD FLOOD (continued from page 18)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

Greetings in the awesome name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

We were well prepared for the rainy season much better than previous years, but did not expect torrential rains so heavy and intense like never before which came in a sudden burst during women's services Wednesday October 28th and went on for many hours. By midnight the church



grounds and premises were all under flood water (+/- 40-50 cm); the national electricity power went off early, and our electric generators got under water level, too, thus we could not use them. A team of ten dedicated individuals worked hard for two days to pump water from the premises using a fuel-operated 9 horse power water pump, pumping water from the premises far-away to the main road almost 60-80 meters away.

Cleaning was still underway Thursday till Sunday noon just to clean the ground but not others as mud and dirt covers all around everywhere. Now, we consider the subject of replacing the old and ageing generator as a very secondary thing at this time till fixing this problem.

The ground of our premises is lower than the main road and both the national rain water drainage and sewage systems are out of order in Baghdad since 2003 which turns rain & other waters toward our side. Thence, we need to uplift the ground of our halls and office attachments to solve this problem. This needs plus \$60,000 and we need to raise this sum well before commencing next May-2016. But till then we need to protect our premises and keep them dry and clean to proceed with our ministries and services and the revival time which is already on, especially as many weather broadcasting bureaus are expecting a very rainy season in 2015/16.

I already called a builder to build barriers (steps 30-40 centimetres high) in front of every door in the premises ground to prevent flood waters from getting into halls till early summer time when we have to raise the grounds of these halls. I have emailed sets of photos to Rev. N. Tomeh reflecting part of the damages that took place already. Most of our church members and all boards houses as well came under flooded water level which even worsens the scenario. The eastern side of Baghdad is lower than the western side and that's the problem. Our church is in the eastern side.

Brothers and sisters, we need your support to help us fixing this damage and then to raise the halls floor next year. This is besides your prayers and supplications to heal the hurts of many families who have lost much of their furniture, documents, electric appliances, carpets and clothes due to this disaster. Thank you.

May the almighty Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ bless you richly always, Amen.

Sincerely Yours,

Rev. Farouk Hammo, Senior Minister, Baghdad- Iraq



Christianity's History and Current Situation in Iraq

Elder Yousif al-Saka, Presbyterian Church of Baghdad

Elder Yousif al-Saka of the Presbyterian Church in Baghdad, who visited NYAPC as a PC(USA) International Peacemaker in 2008 and again in 2010, has written to NYAPC to provide an update on the situation of Christians in Iraq and Christianity's history there. He has provided many disturbing photos of ISIS terrorism that we will not publish here but are available upon request.

Dear Christian friends at New York Avenue,

According to history, the first Christianity had ever spread in the world, was among the people of Mesopotamia (Iraq today) at the hands of the apostle St. Tomas (one of Christ's twelve disciples). That happened during a missionary trip to India, in which he was martyred. Later on, his followers continued his mission and founded there the very first churches, built monasteries and consecrated bishops and priests at the centers of the old cities. That is how the Aramaic old Eastern church was first established, then the Eastern Assyrian church afterwards.

Many countries had adopted Christianity at that time, by their kings and rulers before the West and European states did. Plenty of those churches' ruins as well as other Christian places were discovered all over Iraq to give a bright proof of the widely - spread Christianity among the people of Mesopotamia during the early centuries. Unfortunately, however, negligence and destruction had deeply influenced those ruins, as it is happening nowadays in the new Iraq, where negligence and stealing the entire civil-life aspects.

Regression of Christianity started in the beginning of the seventh century, after the waves of the Islamic conquests that came from the desert of the Arabic Jazera (Saudi Arabia today); to dominate the whole area of the middle-east and vast areas of the ancient world bringing with it the new religion, Islam.

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CHRISTIANITY IN IRAQ (continued from page 19)

Conversion into the newly conquest's religion took place forcibly and forcefully by the power of the sword, but sometimes was due to cajolery. The remains of the faithful people, who refused the stresses to convert their religion, were gathered and took shelter among harsh geographical areas such as the mountains in the north of Iraq. Some of them had coexisted and endured hard life in the light of the new reality, enduring the negative mentality of the rulers, and the savageness of the so many conquering people during one thousand and four hundred years.

What concerns us today is what happened after 2003, that is, after the American invasion on Iraq and its devastating consequences on the Iraqi society; when millions have fled or displaced their homes to form the biggest mass migration in the history of Iraq and the world as well. That is because of the bad administration, total lack of security, wide activities of terrorists, and the sectarian gangs on the ground. Obviously Christians have taken part of all of that, due to the split-up of Iraq as a state, in so many tragedies. It is well known, according to theology, that minorities are the most to be influenced, when a society exposes ordeals, catastrophes and lack of security.

From this point, the suffering of Christians was begun, for they represent a part of the Iraqi community and a minority too. Obviously these negative things have reflected upon their churches and the services of the entire sects; where churches suffered of lack of believers as a result of the continuous bleeding of fleeing people. Newsweek, the American magazine, said in its volume of October 2015, that there is a British report warning that Christianity in Iraq is encountering extinction within five years if the situation remains as it is, and highlighted the ordeal of Christians in Iraq because of instability of the security situation and the political regime which was established by the Americans after 2003. In addition, the percentage of the migrating Christians has reached 80% of their population before the invasion, and that Christianity itself is on the way to be vanished from Iraq within few years.

According to the *Catholic Herald* newspaper, the British prime minister has read it and expressed his regret ...! It is necessary for those who review the events of Iraq, to stop before the toughest event that shook the whole civilized world; the domination of radical Islamic groups (ISIS) over one third the area of Iraq since a year left. They impose terrorism over many Iraqi cities, including the city of Mosul (Nineveh, as was mentioned in the holy book) the second largest city in Iraq. There they started to apply the rules of Al-Shiria of radical Islam, and ordered Christians to convert into Islam, to pay a capitation (tax), or death. Consequently, all Christians fled from the city while their properties have been confiscated by ISIS. Thus, Mosul became completely Christian-free after it contained the largest population of Christians in Iraq for hundreds of years. Also it was a result of the massacres committed by ISIS like killing, raping, female slavery to be sold at a special market especially for the non-Muslim girls, and mating Muslim girls deliberately to their fighters, even the minor girls couldn't evade from them.

Here we ask . . . what is the price of invasion? Blood streams because of the unleashed activities of terrorists and the sectarian gangs over Iraq soil . . . Millions of displaced . . . prevalence of crimes and abductions . . . millions of orphans and homeless children . . . millions of widows without assistance . . . diseases and epidemics widely-spread due to lack of healthcare and destruction of the infrastructure . . . Termination of the civil society and sending it back into preindustrial era. That was some of the price . . . and the list goes on . . . Now . . . the question is who paid the price? Answer . . . The Iraqi people and Christians on the top.

Please pray for Iraq and its people.

Elder Yousif Al Saka



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