

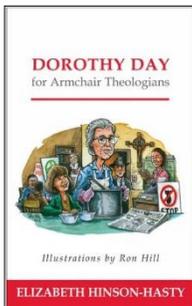
AVENEWS

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

Two Scholars Booked for Fall McClendon Scholar Program

by Theo Brown

The McClendon Scholar-in-Residence Program recommends you add two books to your summer reading list.

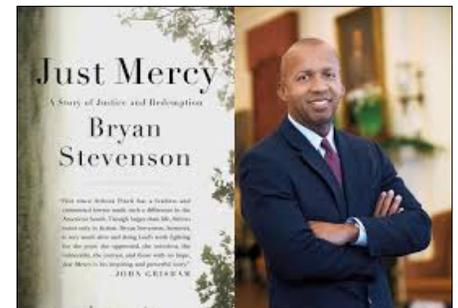


Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty, Professor of Theology at Bellarmine University, will be scholar-in-residence for the weekend of Sept. 19-20. She is a Presbyterian who has recently written *Dorothy Day for Armchair Theologians*. She will

speak about the need for Christians to combat poverty and challenge us with examples from the life of Dorothy Day.

On Wednesday, Nov. 4, Bryan Stevenson, Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative, will speak at NYAPC. As a result of his best-selling book, *Just Mercy*, and many media appearances during the past few years, Bryan has become one of the leading voices in our country calling for criminal justice reform. We are working with numerous other churches to promote his appearance and anticipate a very large crowd for his presentation.

Do some reading and mark your calendars to be ready for a fascinating and inspiring fall!



First Havana Psychologist Visits NYAPC

by Marilyn Seiber

From July 21-27, Myriam Alvarez, psychologist on staff of our partner church, First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana, visited the United States, Washington, D.C., and The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church for the first time.

Myriam came to the U.S. at the invitation of the Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs to celebrate the 20th anniversary of "Your Friendly Phone," a first-of-its-kind hotline telephone service of First Havana that is open to everyone free of charge. Myriam has been the psychologist for the program for 15 years. She also developed and leads another of First Havana's mission programs, the School for the Elderly. The school offers a weekly

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Immigration Film Fest Oct. 22-25

Immigrant Stories in Features and Shorts from North Carolina to Germany

by Fritz von Fleckenstein

The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church and 15 other locations will screen movies that spotlight immigrants and refugees around the globe. These are the most significant new films from some 140 titles considered. All were peer-reviewed by local teams at 11 sponsoring groups. NYAPC's team included Kathy Doan, Jim Turner, Ian Elder, Marsha Renwanz, Stephanie Simpson, Rosemary Segero and Fritz von Fleckenstein.

Final selections can be found at the electronic box office Eventbrite. Tickets can be purchased ahead of time at \$6 for adults and \$4 for children. Early ticketing is recommended since many venues have limited seating. Post-film discussions among the filmmakers, immigrant experts and the audience will explore the films' themes. A full program will be printed in English by El Tiempo Latino and will be available in the entryway and the Sanctuary at NYAPC.

There will also be a youth showing and discussion of the films *Lessons of Basketball and War* and *DREAMers Among Us* at UDC on Saturday, Oct. 24 at 1:30 p.m. which is free to all high school and college students and to any adults accompanying those students. You can also purchase an Event Passport for \$125 that allows you to

attend any and all showings of films in the Festival, including the Gala Showing at UDC on Saturday evening.

Of the films reviewed at NYAPC, two have been chosen for the Fest. One of them will be shown at NYAPC on Friday, Oct. 23 at 6:30 p.m. -- *Unlikely Heroes* (*Schweitzer Helden* in the original German) is a story that takes place in Switzerland. Kathy Doan, executive director of the CAIR Coalition, will be the leader of the post-film discussion.

According to promotional material, "In *Unlikely Heroes*, Sabine, a housewife who has recently separated from her husband, suddenly finds herself alone over the Christmas season. In order to gain recognition from her family and friends, she decides to stage the story of William Tell with a group of asylum seekers, an endeavor for which she is hardly prepared in many respects. When news of the performance hits the media, Sabine goes to her limits – and beyond – to ensure the success of the play. Only then does she realize that what really counts is quite another matter."

Readers are also invited to explore the new feature, Honor Roll of America's

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Capital Pride Parade Pictures

by Fritz von Fleckenstein

The June 13 Capital Pride Parade this year was particularly significant for Presbyterians, since the General Assembly had voted in 2014 to allow marriages by LGBT people to be celebrated in PC(USA) churches, and a sufficient number of presbyteries had ratified this vote in 2015. So, it was a celebration that was particularly joyous.

Although only two people from NYAPC were present to march with the More Light Presbyterians, many other churches sent many people, as you can see in these pictures.



Marsha Renwanz and Fritz von Fleckenstein were holding the NYAPC Peace and Justice sign, but only Marsha is included in the picture.

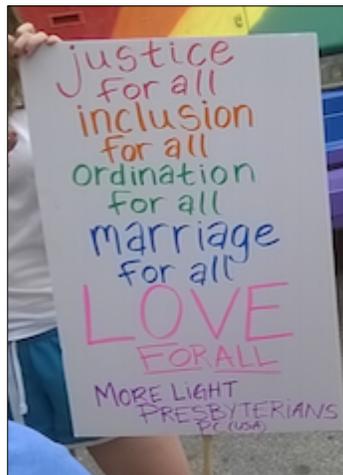
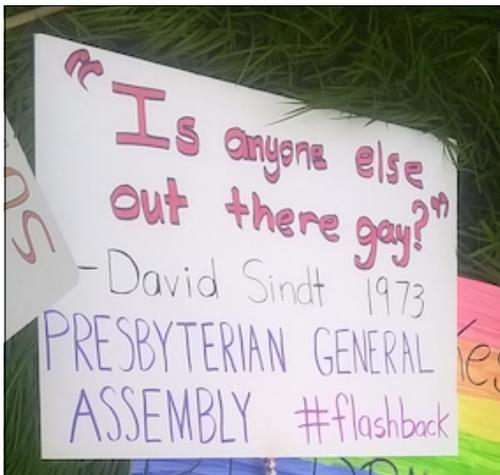


Marsha Renwanz and a fellow participant hold one of many signs in the parade.



There were also flowers to distribute to the crowds, and bubble machines blowing soap bubbles. People at the side of the road wanted to touch us, give us high fives and hug us. It was, as usual, a wonderful celebration.

This was indeed a parade of signs, beginning with a plaintive one from the past, and a more celebratory one:



Film Festival

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Immigrants, on the ImmigrationFilmFest website. For a small contribution one may name an immigrant, country of origin, occupation and the name of the nominator. Take a peek and see who you know on the Honor Roll.

Fritz von Fleckenstein represents NYAPC on the Coordinating Committee of the Immigration Film Fest. Eleven other congregations have joined forces to produce the four-day event. The Unitarian Universalist Association's Fund for Social Responsibility, the Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice, Capital Region, and the DC Humanities Council have all contributed funding for 2015.

Join the Board of Directors of the New York Avenue Foundation

Greetings members of the NYAPC Family,

I am writing to extend an invitation to anyone interested to join the Board of Directors of the New York Avenue Foundation ("NYAF").

NYAF is a charitable organization that raises funds to support the programs of Community Club and other charities that benefit the youth of Washington, D.C. Our grantees provide a wide range of services including scholastic and tutoring programs, educational scholarships, creative writing programs, performing arts productions and support for incarcerated and returning citizens. We focus on providing grants to Community Club and small and emerging charities whose programs provide focused individualized attention to their participants. In 2014, NYAF made \$61,000 in grants to Community Club and other groups.

The Board meets approximately ten times a year on Sundays. The time commitment is not demanding. This is an excellent opportunity for anyone who is seeking an opportunity to be of service to both NYAPC and the community at large. For me, working with NYAF has been one of the most personally fulfilling of my activities at NYAPC. If you would like to join us or have any questions, please feel free to contact me at brishim@gmail.com or (202) 747-4099.

- Brian Schimming

AVENEWS

The Newsletter of
The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church

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Parish Associates: Beth Braxton, J. Gary Campbell, Frances Taylor Gench, Linda LeSourd Lader

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

The Gilding of the Finial - July 25, 2015

Man Basket test run



Completed gilding - a bird's-eye view



Cuba Corner...

- **Rev. Daniel Izquierdo, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba (IPRC)**, visited Washington, D.C. June 14-21. The first three days were for consultations between PC(USA) and the IPRC. Rev. Izquierdo was in Washington for five days for other meetings and research that were arranged by Marilyn Seiber, including lunch with General Presbyter Wilson Gunn. He was hosted by and preached at St. Matthew Presbyterian Church in Silver Spring. On June 24, Rev. Izquierdo held a discussion in New York at the United Nations' offices of the World Council of Churches and the Presbyterian Church (USA). Rev. Izquierdo last visited and preached at NYAPC in October 2008.
- **Rev. Alice Tewell, Associate Pastor of NYAPC**, will be NYAPC's official representative to the Oct. 25 celebration of Rev. Héctor Méndez's 50th anniversary of ordination to ministry. The celebration will be held during the worship service of the First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana. Rev. Tewell will offer prayers and greetings from NYAPC during the service. Other representatives from U.S. churches will also attend.



- **The Cuba Partners Network** will hold its annual meeting in New Orleans on Oct. 14-17, 2015. Rev. Daniel Izquierdo will be the official Cuban representative to the meetings. The theme this year is "reconciliation." Marilyn Seiber will represent NYAPC, and others from NYAPC are encouraged and welcome to attend.
- **Meet Isaac Mayol Talavera**, age 94 and an integral member of the volunteers at First Havana for 24 years! His "artistic name" is Isaac Belmar. During his professional career, he worked in theater as an artist and later became the



director of a theater. But he is not Presbyterian: he is a member of the Baptist Church and is the oldest Baptist in Cuba. In 24 years of service to First Havana, Isaac comes to the church every Sunday to decorate the sanctuary with flowers and the paraments and communion-table cloths. Isaac also decorates the church for Christmas and Easter. He is shown in the photo with Susan Tilt who brought a gift of new paraments to First Havana during one of NYAPC's visits. Rev. Héctor Méndez describes Isaac as a man of very strong faith and very ecumenical!

Myriam Alvarez

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class of socialization, exercise, and lecture topics for seniors over 60 years old.

During her stay with us, Myriam was able to meet and speak with many members of NYAPC and National Capital Presbytery (NCP). She had breakfast with members of NCP's Global Mission Network and lunch with Presbyterian Women. And Church of the Pilgrims Presbyterian Church hosted a wine and cheese happy hour in the Pilgrims' garden.



NYAPC's Adlai Amor hosted Myriam for lunch at the National Press Club. On Sunday, Myriam led an Adult Education class and gave greetings from First Havana during the worship service. Following worship, she met with members for coffee and refreshments in Triangle Park. Myriam also had time to tour Washington, D.C., including the Capitol, Library of Congress, the monuments on the Mall, the White House, and Arlington Cemetery. It was brief but wonderful visit!

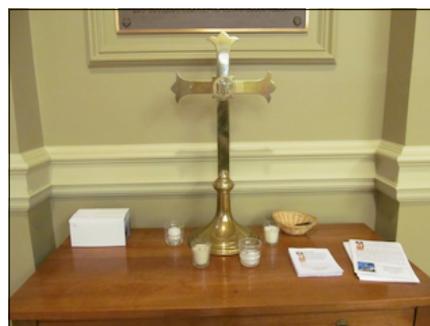


NYAPC Peace Candles Travel

by Marilyn Seiber & Catherine Cannon

This quarter, the small votive "peace candles" that visitors may take to their home churches have traveled to Kentucky, Illinois, Oregon, and South Carolina. Our visitors and their churches are:

- Jim and Shari Steuart, The Presbyterian Church, Danville, KY
- Rev. Nancy Jo Dederer, First Presbyterian of Homewood, IL
- Earl and Carol Stanfield, St. Andrews Presbyterian, Portland, OR
- Almeda Ruger, First Presbyterian, Rock Hill, SC



The Peace and Justice Committee asks everyone to encourage visitors to "take a little peace" home with them!

“Cuba Coffee in the Park” Another Success

by Marilyn Seiber

The annual summer “Cuba Coffee in the Park” sponsored by the Park and Cuba Partners Committees coincided on Sunday, July 27, with the visit of Myriam Alvarez from First Havana. With beautiful weather, delicious food, and Cuban music, Myriam was able to meet and talk with NYAPC members. Thanks go to Courtney Spearman, Sonia Wall, Anne Laroche, Aryn Meyers, Beth DuMez, Esther Moring, Evelyn Ying, and Katherine Leiden for wonderful treats, fruit, and beverages, setting up and cleaning up! We all had an enjoyable Cuba Coffee in the Park!



NYAPC and Its Partners: What Are Partnerships and Networks?

by Marilyn Seiber

The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church has developed relationships with Presbyterian Churches and programs around the world. NYAPC also has joined the PC(USA) partnership networks for each of the four countries with which we have become involved. So what are these partnerships, what does NYAPC do, and what are the networks?

NYAPC Partnerships

The first thing to understand is that each partnership or relationship in the different countries is distinct, both in character and activities. Here is a brief explanation of each:

Cuba—NYAPC’s relationship with the First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana began in October 1998 when Rev. Héctor Méndez preached on World Communion Sunday at the invitation of Rev. Rob Craig and the Session. In December 1999 after Rev. Craig visited First Havana, both Sessions of the two churches voted on a Resolution to become Sister churches. In May 2005 the Sessions adopted an Understanding of Partnership, and Rev. Gench and Rev. Méndez exchanged signed documents during the worship service in Havana. Hence, the NYAPC partnership with Cuba is under the auspices of the Session.

Kenya—The NYAPC relationship in Kenya has its roots in a partnership between National Capital Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa that was later cancelled by the PCEA. In 2005 an NYAPC Elder proposed that the Peace and Justice Committee’s Alternative Christmas program provide funding for a study of orphan and vulnerable children (OVC) in Njoro. In 2006 the Session gave its blessing to this venture of orphan education and support in Njoro and designated the Board of Deacons to be the overseeing entity for the program and its funding. By 2014, there were 35 children enrolled in a program of education, books, and feeding. The PCEA Njoro OVC Committee manages the program, and the Deacons provided \$18,612 in 2014.

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History Happens ... at NYAPC Doug and Cecelia Porter

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 Doug and Cecelia Porter on July 28, 2015, for this project and for the article below.

Douglas R. and Cecelia Hopkins Porter love The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. "It was always New York Avenue," says Cecelia, as Doug smiles and nods in agreement. Intellectuals and musicians, each in his and her own right, the Porters are well acquainted with houses of worship throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, having played as substitute organists for many of them. Nonetheless, NYAPC is their church home, and a home to which they have given immeasurably, as individuals and together.

Over the course of 78 years for Cecelia and 56 for Doug, the Porters have contributed their time, talents, and knowledge to the music program of NYAPC—from the concert of Bach, Liszt, and Chopin that 17-year-old Cecelia played to earn the necessary funds so the church could purchase a Steinway grand piano, to Doug's chairmanship of the Organ Committee from 2004 to 2009, whose work culminated in the magnificent instrument that today graces the Sanctuary.

The Porters have participated in church governance on all the Boards of NYAPC: Doug as a Deacon (1965-1970), Trustee (1999-2004), and Elder (2011-present), and Cecelia as a Diaconal Minister (2011-present). Cecelia also served on the church's History Committee and helped recruit Music Director Stanley Engebretson to NYAPC in 1991.

Cecelia was NYAPC's Junior Choir Director from 1963-1966, while Doug served as her accompanist. That choir included longtime member Mary Ann Davis's then 8-year-old daughter, Margaret Ann Davis Butterfield, who is now a professional singer. The couple sang in the church choir through 1997.

Cecelia has been an active member of NYAPC's Cuba Partners, making three trips to visit our sister church, First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana, and Doug joined the group and the journey earlier this year. And together, the Porters authored "Music at NYAPC: In the Service of the Lord," the comprehensive chapter



on this subject in the church's latest history, *Capital Witness*, published in 2011.

Performer, Scholar, and Critic

Doug and Cecelia are Presbyterians, born and bred, and music has shaped their lives. Cecelia grew up at NYAPC, while Doug spent his childhood and youth at Westminster Presbyterian in Lansing, Michigan. Cecelia played the piano and flute, and Doug sang in the choir and played the piano and organ. They met at NYAPC in the Radcliffe Room at a Young Adults gathering in the summer of 1962 and were married on June 8, 1963. They raised their four children at NYAPC, and celebrated the life of their oldest, Rebecca, here in 2009.

Cecelia's parents joined NYAPC during Rev. Joseph R. Sizoo's pastorate from 1924 to 1936, first coming to the church with her mother's sister, Margaret. Throughout her family's decades at NYAPC, Cecelia finds that the spirit of the church has never changed. While NYAPC has responded and adapted to the times and historic events, "the church has, from its earliest days, been outgoing, welcoming, caring, and nurturing."

Her earliest memories are of Sunday School in sixth grade when children would climb the 1859 church building's

spiral staircase, located approximately where the Docherty Center is now, to the upstairs classrooms. On one occasion, Cecelia remembers encountering Peter Marshall Jr. "traipsing down these steps," but she did not know who he was at the time.

Cecelia credits church school teachers Margaret Corman for the junior high and William Fee, senior high, with fostering in their students the preparation and intellectual curiosity they both demonstrated each Sunday. She recalls stimulating weekly discussions and delightful annual picnics in Rock Creek Park with Ms. Corman and genuine scholarship in Fee's class. "It was with Mr. Fee that I first learned about Yahweh."

A graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York, Fee had studied Hebrew and Greek and regularly gave challenging reading assignments to his NYAPC charges. Cecelia became good friends with a circle of girls under Mr. Fee's tutelage, including Judy Friedenstein Davis (graduate degree—Union Seminary NYC), Mary Ann Pakosh Cureton (graduate degree—Princeton), and Elizabeth Sugg Brand, all of whom were involved in music.

Cecelia herself began singing alto in the adult choir under NYAPC Director of Music Steven Prussing when she was 10 years old. By age 12, she accompanied hymn singing on the piano during Sunday school and later played for worship services. Mr. Fee took a personal interest in Cecelia's musical talents, regularly attending her piano recitals. Cecelia remained friends with early mentor Steve Prussing throughout his 38-year career at NYAPC.

The product of DC public schools, Cecelia graduated from Coolidge High School in 1954 at age 16 and took a year off to practice piano, remaining active with the choir and at church. It was during this year that she played the concert at NYAPC to raise money for the Steinway grand. Cecelia next studied piano, flute, and music history and theory at Peabody

Conservatory. She then attended Radcliffe/Harvard University in her quest “for a liberal education,” graduating with an A.B. and honors in 1960.

Harvard then selected Cecelia for a year’s scholarship paid by the German government (among the programs to reimburse the United States for the Marshall Plan) to study at the Hochschule fuer Musik in Berlin. She was in Europe to witness history when the Berlin Wall went up and spent her year in Germany watching people flee from East to West Berlin. Cecelia returned home to attend Columbia University in New York City for a two-year Master of Arts program in musicology.

It was during her Columbia studies that she met Doug at NYAPC while on summer break. Their first meeting was far from auspicious; “I told Doug he had no historical perspective,” Cecelia laughs. Doug replies, “I was crushed; I was hard at work on the organ, piano, and singing at the time. But I asked her out, and she said yes.” When Doug drove Cecelia back to New York at the end of the summer, her view of him had changed completely. “I knew he was the man for me.”

Following their marriage in 1963, Cecelia went on to join The Washington Post, taking time off to raise four children and earn a Ph.D. in Musicology at the University of Maryland in 1975. In 2000 she won a Fulbright Senior Research Grant to Vienna, Austria. Cecelia also taught music at Sidwell Friends and has served on the music faculties of George Washington University and the University of Maryland.

Her writing career at The Washington Post as a classical music critic began just days before President Kennedy was assassinated, and she continues to review for the Post today. Cecelia has published two books on music history: *The Rhine as Musical Metaphor: Cultural Identity in German Romantic Music*, published by Northeastern University Press, and *Five Lives in Music: Women Performers, Composers, and Impresarios from the Baroque to the Present*, published by the University of Illinois Press.

When the latter book profiling five women composers and performers—each from a different century—was published in 2014, Cecelia gave a series of lectures on her subjects in the West Garden Court

of the National Gallery of Art in Washington where their music was also performed.

Having been Music Director of the National Presbyterian School, 1981-1989, Cecelia later studied the organ with the Church’s organist, becoming a frequent substitute organist in the DC area. Cecelia wrestles daily with whether to practice piano or organ or to write. “Writing usually wins out,” says the livelong scholar. “I love being a sleuth and discovering things.”

Performer, Planner, and Author

Growing up in Lansing, Michigan, Doug was the eldest of four children. His father worked for Oldsmobile, and his mother was very artistic. The Porter family lived just 150 feet from Westminster Presbyterian Church, and Doug remembers the pastor as “very learned man” who shaped Doug’s understanding of church as a thoughtful and intellectually challenging place.

In fact, most of Doug’s activities outside school centered on Westminster. He recalls attending Sunday School and church “all the time” and sang in the choir with his father and younger brother. Like Cecelia, Doug played piano for the Sunday School. He began taking organ lessons with Westminster’s organist and soon moved on to study for four years with the organist at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in downtown Lansing. It wasn’t long before Doug began playing the organ at venues throughout the city.

Doug attended Michigan State University, initially studying engineering but soon moving to urban planning. He was also a member of the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) while in college, and for seven years after graduation spent two weeks of every summer at a U.S. Army base to fulfill this commitment. While he was in college, Doug served as the organist at the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in East Lansing.

After graduating with his B.A., Doug took a job in planning in Toledo, Ohio. However, limited professionally without further education, he soon undertook a two-year master of science degree in urban planning at the University of Illinois. As he had while he was in college, Doug continued to play the organ, occasionally at the local Presbyterian church where he also sang in the choir.

During this period, Doug met George Marcou, a planner from Greece and MIT alumnus, who was forming a planning and development practice. Marcou asked Doug to join the consulting group in Washington, D.C., when Doug finished his master’s degree. And so it was that Doug relocated to the nation’s capital and, in his search for a church, found NYAPC. He joined the church in 1960 and roomed with member David Brown until Doug married Cecelia.

Doug spent several years as a principal with Marcou, O’Leary and Associates, traveling throughout the country to assist in planning for growth and change. After Westinghouse acquired the firm, Doug then began consulting on his own, as well as teaching at Catholic University. Doug next joined the Urban Land Institute, where he focused on ULI’s public policy research program for 12 years, publishing many articles and books and becoming a nationally recognized expert on ways and means of managing community growth and change.

In 1992, Doug formed his own consulting company, the nonprofit Growth Management Institute, which he closed two years ago. In this practice, Doug was particularly concerned with integrating land use patterns, transportation systems, and environmental features to create livable communities. In the course of his work, he advised such localities as Coweta County, Georgia; Maryville and Blount County, Tennessee; and Palm Beach County, Florida, on a variety of growth issues. Doug also served as an adjunct professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Virginia and at the Berman Real Estate Institute of the Johns Hopkins University.

Doug has written innumerable articles in professional and popular journals, and authored, coauthored, or edited many books. Among his books are *Making Smart Growth Work* (Urban Land Institute, 2002); *The Practice of Sustainable Development* (Urban Land Institute, 2000); *Managing Growth in America’s Communities* (Island Press, 1997); *Collaborative Planning for Wetlands and Wildlife: Issues and Examples* (Island Press, 1995); and *Housing for Seniors: Developing Successful Projects* (Urban Land Institute, 1995).

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Letter from Rev. Elmarie Parker on Baghdad, Basrah and Homs Churches

by Marilyn Seiber

Rev. Elmarie Parker, PC(USA) Regional Liaison for Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, visited NYAPC with her husband, Rev. Scott Parker, March 22. The following excerpts and photos from her letter of May 31 report on her visit with the Presbyterian Churches in Baghdad and Basrah, Iraq and in Homs, Syria. Dr. Zuhair Fathallah, Elder of the Basrah Church, visited NYAPC in 2013.

To Friends of The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church:

Greetings to you from Lebanon! I pray this finds you well!

My visit to the Presbyterian churches in Baghdad and Basrah in Iraq with the PC(USA) Middle East staff and in Homs, Syria with the PC(USA) Syria/Lebanon Partnership Network in May and April, respectively, was a powerful experience for all of us, and I want to share my impressions with you.

Baghdad/Basrah: Rev. Farouk and Dr. Zuhair in Basrah both send their greetings and thanks to the NYAPC for your on-going partnership! It was GREAT to be able to visit with the Baghdad Church in person—a wonderful congregation with a very clear sense of strategic vision for their work during these difficult days.

In addition to aiding displaced families, they are also working to equip leaders for the church ... not just limiting themselves to the Presbyterian Church, but working with other parts of the church family through-out the city of Baghdad. This is part of how they are contributing to strengthening the church to stay.

The congregation in Basrah remains a gift as well. Their young pastor from Egypt left at the end of February. They were hoping he would return, but it's looking very, very unlikely. So, they were pretty discouraged about this at the time we were with them. They continue with their Kindergarten ministry (as does Baghdad). Please continue to keep both of these congregations in your prayers as well!

Homs: It was a delight to worship with the Homs congregation—what an amazing group of people (around 160 families). The fellowship hall at the Senior Adult Home was packed. This is where the congregation is worshipping until their church building is restored. The Senior Adult Home is one of the ministries of the congregation. The sing-

ing filled and spilled over from the room—a true joy. And Rev. Mofid kindly included all of the visiting team in the worship service, in one way or another.



After worship and fellowship time (lots of Arabic coffee!), we walk to the school run by the church. It is next door to the Senior Adult home. Sunday is a work/school day in Syria (the weekend follows the Muslim pattern of Friday/Saturday instead of the Christian pattern of Saturday/Sunday). So, we were able to experience the classrooms full of children. We were greeted in perfect English by the students.

The Elder who serves as the principal of the school has kept the school open through out all of the violent troubles in Homs. His calm presence has helped nourish the courage for others to stay and serve. Today there are around 800 students attending, both Muslim and Christian (majority of the students are Muslim).

Next we drove to the Old Quarter of Homs—the Christian Quarter, where the Presbyterian Church Building is located.

They've made good progress on the repairs. The fellowship hall has been repaired and repainted. This is where they met for worship on Easter. The Sanctuary roof has been repaired on the exterior. They're still working on repairing the ceiling and other interior details. They hope to be finished with all of this in time

to worship again in the Sanctuary for Christmas. Please see the attached photos.

We visited as well with the pastors/priests of the other six churches in Old Homs. Powerful stories all. Very clear that there is a strong love and fellowship among these pastors and their congregations. There is much that has been cleaned up already in Old Homs—the main streets have all been cleared of rubble and ruin (often one wheel barrow at a time). Very early on, after people started returning in May 2014 (that's when the cease-fire was signed), a young couple and their children started painting colorful murals on the bullet-riddled walls of Old Homs. Their work has grown into an artistic movement of amateur and professional artists committed to helping people

remember the past life and color of this area.

They call themselves "Colorful Fingerprints." What a powerful form of creative resistance to the power of evil.

OK...thanks again for all you do to continue to hold up the life and work of the church in Syria and Iraq.

*In Christ's Peace,
Elmarie*



NYAPC Books Arrive for Homs Church

by Marilyn Seiber

After two months in transit, the NYAPC gift of books to the Presbyterian Church in Homs, Syria and to Rev. Elmarie Parker finally arrived!

Rev. Parker, Regional Liaison to Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, who visited NYAPC on March 22, reported in late May that the copies of Capital Witness and Stories in Stained Glass presented to her during her visit had been delayed in Lebanon's Customs office for inspection. The books were released and arrived at the Synod Post Office in Beirut.

As it turned out, both Rev. Parker and Rev. Mofed Karajili, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Homs, attended a Pastors' Retreat, and she was able to present the books, along with photographs and a copy of *Ave-News*, to Rev. Karajili.



Letter from Dr. Zuhair Fathallah Presbyterian Church in Basrah, Iraq

(In October 2013, Elder Dr. Zuhair Fathallah visited NYAPC as a PC(USA) International Peacemaker. Since then, NYAPC has remained in touch with Dr. Zuhair and his church as he continues to lead and administer church business during times that they are without a pastor:

The Peace and Justice Committee's Alternative Christmas program has been an instrument to support the Basrah Church and its mission work. The following letter of news from Dr. Zuhair was sent to members of the Iraq Partnership Network, and below is his letter printed with permission.)

Greeting to you from all of us.

Basrah is a quiet city, thanks God, away from the fighting zone, but 35% of the volunteers fighting ISIS are from Basrah, and you can imagine how much their absence effect the economy of the city.

The church activity is only a prayer day on Friday, because we don't have a real pastor for the congregation since year 2000. Yes, we had ordained pastors but for short time and they were not a real pastor. Now the whole congregation is not happy to participate in any activity inside and outside the church. What we need is now an elderly mature pastor to guide the church during this time. I have been doing the administrative work for the last 22 years and pastoral work for the last 10 years; it's time for me to get retired.

I am sure you are doing your best to support refugees from anywhere to settle in the US. It's our Christian teaching, but

this also means that the original holy land will be without Jesus followers within the next 10 years, and all Christian heritage and churches will be lost forever. My question is why the US, Canada, Australia, Germany and France are accepting immigrants so easily? Why don't they help us to get our land back and settle there? I can't understand politics.

All NGOs and Churches are concentrating on Kurdistan only, why don't they look south, there are lot and lot of refugees who took refuge in the southern cities, hardly getting help. I wish if church organizations will start work at the south so they will know about the caring followers of Jesus. The problem is not food only; education, health and sanitation is important as well.

I am sorry for this long letter but I feel so bad about the whole situation.

Thank you all and God bless you.

Zuhair Fathallah

YOU Can Represent NYAPC at Iraq/Syria-Lebanon Network Meetings in Louisville

The Peace & Justice Committee will cover Registration/Room/Board for you to represent NYAPC at the annual Iraq Partnership Network meeting, Sept. 15-17, and/or the overlapping Syria Lebanon Partnership Network meeting Sept. 17-19.

There will be a joint meeting of the two networks on Sept. 16-17 for the New Arrivals Working Group to consider how to assist newly arriving refugees to the U.S. from these countries.

Meetings and lodging are on the campus of the Louisville Presbyterian Theo-

logical Seminary in Lodge Hall. Total cost for both Network meetings for registration, room and board is about \$435 which Peace and Justice will reimburse (Iraq, \$200; Syria Lebanon, \$235). Both Networks have requested that an NYAPC representative attend the meetings.

For questions or registration forms, contact Marilyn Seiber:

mjs1wan2@bellatlantic.net

703-893-1559

Registration deadline August 20.

News of Presbyterian Churches in Iraq

The following excerpt from the Iraq Partnership Network newsletter describes the visit of the PC(USA) Middle East staff and Regional Liaison Rev. Elmarie Parker with the Iraq Church, May 3-14, 2015. This provides details of what the Presbyterian churches in Kirkuk and Baghdad are doing to cope with the refugee crisis as well as their work with Orthodox and Catholic Churches to coordinate efforts. The report is written by Rev. Elmarie Parker.

It was an excellent trip! We were able, for the first time, to travel to Baghdad and visit in person with the congregation there. We also spent time in Erbil (with the core group of a new church that the Presbyterian Church in Iraq hopes to start there); in Kirkuk with the Presbyterian Church and the displaced families they are hosting; in Dohuk with our other Presbyterian workers serving in N. Iraq; and in Basrah with the Presbyterian Church.

The current relief needs remain immense, particularly in the North of Iraq, but also in the Baghdad area. Funds to the UN are not coming in from member nations, and donors to NGOs are growing weary. We spoke with two Syriac Ortho-

dox priests assisting thousands of displaced families now staying in Erbil and Dohuk. The two private NGOs that have been helping them let them know at the end of April that as of the end of May they would have no more funds to give.

What now? Though most displaced families are now in some kind of reasonable shelter, the on-going issues of food security and especially providing for health care needs are huge and multiplying concerns. There is also the issue of education for children, and of course, the issue of how one can only live in limbo for so long.

The question “what do we do now” is being asked by everyone. Families have no income because they have lost their businesses or places of employment. Where and how do they start over? This is the longer-term piece the church in Kirkuk and Baghdad are wanting to engage.

We visited with displaced Assyrian Orthodox and Catholic families staying with the Presbyterian church in Kirkuk and also staying with an Ancient Church of the East congregation in the mountains of Dohuk (about 5 hours from Kirkuk). We visited with Bedouin families (who became farmers 40 years ago). They too had been driven out of their homes and from their farmland by ISIS. We visited

with the core group members that will be part of forming a new Presbyterian church in Erbil.

We visited with PCUSA workers based in Dohuk city and while there, one of us assisted a group of Christian churches and NGOs in counting swamp coolers bought through pooled funds (including funds coming from PDA and giving from other Presbyterian individuals and congregations) to assist 27,000 Yazidis through the summer heat as they now live in a displaced persons camp.

The church in Baghdad is also aiding displaced families. In addition, they are working on leadership development, not just in their congregation, but in hosting workshops to which they invite all of the churches in Baghdad - Catholic, Orthodox and other Protestant Churches.

They shared several topics that they are asking for partnership with the PCUSA to help build capacity: leadership development, new church development, especially the house church model (they are seeing non-Christians come to faith and want to equip them to grow as house churches); using drama to better engage their young people; equipping teachers to work with students with disabilities (all three congregations emphasized this again); and creative children's and women's ministry development.

Cecelia and Doug Porter

(Continued from p. 6.)

Committed to NYAPC

Doug and Cecelia's life at NYAPC has been rich with friends as well as music. Among their closest friends was the late Rev. Dr. Jack E. McClendon. Jack was an integral part of Cecelia's growing up in the church, as he was for Doug and Cecelia's children—Rebecca (born in 1966), Liz (1967), Bart (1971), and Lawrence (1972).

Jack was the NYAPC's Young Adults' pastor and attended evening worship services with them. Cecelia remembers Jack's early support of her talents and career. Their children liked to hear Rev. McClen-

don preach, and he encouraged Rebecca in her participation in Community Club. Cecelia recalls that when Liz got married, Jack invited himself along with Rev. Roger J. Gench, who officiated at her wedding on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

As Roger drove, Jack, a lifelong smoker, puffed away, all the while advising Roger how to drive. When the Porters lost their beloved Rebecca, Cecelia received her annual handwritten birthday card from Jack, reminding her that he “had been with me through all life's tragedies and celebrations.”

Just as Jack McClendon was committed to this church and its people, so the Porters have been and are to this day. A story they told illustrates their devotion to NYAPC. In the midst of the quandary in

the 2000s over what to do with the church's aging organ, Doug and Cecelia spent hours discussing the issues—not only with other members of the congregation and a host of experts, but also with each other.

“We would walk the dogs and debate such questions as whether, and if so, how many, ranks from the church's earlier and then current organs should be incorporated into the new instrument,” says Cecelia. “I would play the devil's advocate so that we would consider the issue from all sides.” Most folks would use such walks to remove themselves and relax from the cares of the day, but not the Porters. New York Avenue is fortunate in Cecelia and Doug's deep involvement in and caring for this church for so many years.

Networks

(Continued from p. 5)

Iraq—The NYAPC relationships with the Presbyterian churches in Baghdad and Basrah had their impetus when NYAPC hosted elders from the two churches who visited as PC(USA) International Peacemakers in 2008 and 2013, respectively. The Peace and Justice Committee, on behalf of NYAPC, then joined the PC(USA) Iraq Partnership Network as a means to facilitate communication with the two churches, although NYAPC continues direct relationships with both Presbyterian churches in Baghdad and Basrah and the two elders and the pastors when possible. Hence, the relationship with Iraqi Presbyterian churches is under the auspices of the Peace and Justice Committee. For two years, the Board of Deacons has made a donation to the Iraq Partnership Network.

Syria—In January 2014 a delegation of Syrian clergy came to Washington, D.C. to describe the effect of the civil war on the religious community. They asked audiences where the Christians in Europe and the United States were, and why they were not reaching out with support of prayer and actions. Because one of the pastors was from the Presbyterian Church in Homs, in March 2014, the Peace and Justice Committee decided to seek a relationship of prayer and support with the Homs church, and made contact with the pastor through the PCUSA Mission Co-Worker for the region. At the same time, on behalf of NYAPC, the Peace and Justice Committee joined the PC(USA) Syria Lebanon Partnership Network in April 2014.

Relationships and Activities

NYAPC's relationships and activities vary greatly among the partners.

In Cuba, we seek "to do mission in partnership" as prescribed in the 1985 agreement between PC(USA) and the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba. We learn about each other's mission programs (baseball, "Friendly Phone," library, tai chi in Havana; Radcliffe Room, Community Club, 7 to 9 in Washington, D.C.) and support them as we can. We wave bulletins now at NYAPC and have a Birthday Fund. We visit each other—NYAPC delegations annually with pastors, music director, elders, members; First Havana with pastor, elders, music director. NYAPC has also hosted officials

of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba—the Moderator, Stated Clerk, General Secretary—and the Rector of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas. We pray for each other and communicate as we can. As Rev. Méndez has said, as two historic churches in our nations' capitals, our primary mission is to work for reconciliation among our people, governments, and churches.

In Kenya, we visit the orphan program in Kenya to meet the children, teach summer classes with them, play games, do art projects, and to learn about their communities and relatives, their dreams and favorite activities. We watch their growth and progress, receive reports and photos of the children, and consult with the Njoro managers about the direction and needs of the program. The children are lively and inspirational and give us new resolve to be supportive and part of their lives.

In Baghdad and Basrah, Iraq, war precludes us from being "partners on the ground," but we support the churches' mission programs financially through the annual Alternative Christmas program. These donations helped the Baghdad church open a pre-school and kindergarten. The Peace and Justice Committee has also made "emergency donations" to the Baghdad church when a storm destroyed its generator before Christmas. The NYAPC children and congregation have sent Christmas cards to the church children and adults in both congregations. We communicate through emails with Christmas and Easter greetings.

In Homs, Syria, we have begun communications via email with the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Homs. We have exchanged brief histories of our churches and photos of our churches and congregations. We have sent copies of NYAPC's Capital Witness and Stories in Stained Glass to the congregation, along with Christmas cards from our Sunday School children to theirs and to the congregation. We also support their mission program and church rebuilding through the Alternative Christmas program, and Peace and Justice sent a donation through the Syria Lebanon Network for the Homs church mission effort to help refugees with housing and fuel during the winter.

PC(USA) Partnership Networks

PC(USA) Partnership Networks generally have a two-fold purpose: 1) to bring together PC(USA) churches with partner-

ships in the same country to share experiences, projects, and ideas for enhancing partnerships; and 2) to provide information on the partner churches and a forum for developing approaches to solving problems and providing support to the overseas churches. Each network—as the partnerships it represents—has a distinct character and program.

The Cuba Partnership Network is probably among the oldest and most "developed." An NYAPC elder has served on the Steering Committee. Every fourth year, its annual meeting is held in Cuba. NYAPC pays a voluntary \$50 dues to the Network to allow it to plan annual meetings, which several NYAPC members have attended.

The Kenya Partnership Network also meets annually with NYAPC representation. These meetings allow members to compare projects and programs in Kenya and to plan for future joint events.

The Iraq Partnership Network keeps in close contact with the now three churches in Iraq (two closed) and provides information to member churches on the war and refugee situation, how the churches are affected, and what is happening with their programs and membership. The Network meets annually, but NYAPC has not yet attended. The Network with the PC(USA) Outreach Foundation has sponsored trips to Iraq for partner members.

The Syria Lebanon Partnership Network was just reconstituted in April 2014, and is seeking to develop a program of support for the partner churches in Syria and Lebanon and to develop ways and means for U.S. churches to become involved in partnership support. The Network with the PC(USA) Outreach Foundation has led a recent visit to Lebanon and Syria to meet with churches.

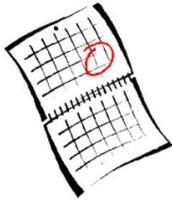
Kenya Orphans & Vulnerable Children Program

Social Worker sends BioData of the Children

Cathy Wambui, Social Worker and Director of the program, recently gave Rev. Beth Braxton a book with all of the BioData of the children. This book is now online at the NYAPC website, and can be accessed here:

<http://www.nyapc.org/kenya-partnership/2014-njoro-kenya-orphans-biodata/>

Mark Your Calendars ...



Thursday, Sept. 3 - New Tutor Orientation, Community Club.

Thursday, Sept. 10 - Choir Rehearsals, Community Club resume

Sunday, Sept. 13 - Two Services, at 8:45 and 11:00, resume. First Sunday of Sunday School.

Saturday & Sunday, Sept. 19-20 - Dr. Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty, author of *Dorothy Day for Armchair Theologians*, at NYAPC as McClendon Scholar-in-Residence.

Sunday, Oct. 4 - World Communion Sunday; Choir Sing-with-Us Sunday

Oct. 22-25 - Immigration FilmFest (*Unlikely Heroes* at NYAPC Oct. 23, 6:30 pm).

Friday-Sunday, Oct. 30-Nov. 1 - All-Church Retreat at Meadowkirk

Wednesday, Nov. 4 - Bryan Stevenson, author of *Just Mercy*, speaks at NYAPC as part of the McClendon Scholar-in-Residence Program.

Help Wanted

Feel Called to Teach Sunday School or Lead Worship Play? We have openings in all of our classes and could use your help! Please speak with or email Associate Pastor Alice to discuss where you might best serve. Thank you!

AveNews - Join the production team or become an editor! If you have interest in or experience with editing, publishing software, graphic design or writing for a publication, the board seeks you. For more information, contact Fritz von Fleckenstein, vonfleck@starpower.net, or Meg House, meghouse8@gmail.com.

Care and Prayer: After many years of service to you, Jay Davenport and Jim Davidson are moving on to work in other ministries of the church. We have one volunteer who will be working on the list moving forward. We are looking for one or two people to help. Jay and Jim are willing to do the training! Work remotely or in the office.

If you would like to volunteer for this very worthy ministry or have questions, please email or call Associate Pastor Alice Tewell, alice.tewell@nyapc.org, 202-805-3720.

