

AVENEWS

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

Renovation Update: Work on the Exterior Begins May 1

by Edith Snyder

Late last month, NYAPC's Board of Trustees signed a contract with Grunley Construction Company Inc. to renovate and repair the exterior of the church building. This is phase one of the church renovation project, which also includes a new heating and air conditioning system and ultimately refurbishment of the building's interior spaces. A Grunley project manager was scheduled to be on site at NYAPC beginning April 21, the day after Easter, with actual work on the H Street facade brick restoration and limestone repair set to commence May 1.

Once the H Street side of the church is complete, crews will move to the New York Avenue side of the building. The church's portico and east side or face will be restored and repaired during July to avoid interfering with June and August weddings the church has scheduled. This July timeframe is also when the portico

and steeple will be encased in scaffolding to enable this work. Grunley further plans to begin railing, sidewalk, and door restoration in May, again starting on the H Street side and moving around the building, and will also work around the summer's weddings.

Design of exterior windows to protect the sanctuary's stained-glass windows will be accomplished in the first few weeks of May. These windows will be fabricated through June and installed in July and August. When completed, this portion of the renovation will make it possible to see the sanctuary windows from outside the church. The entire phase one of the church renovation project is scheduled to be finished in September. The Trustees thank the congregation for its support and appreciate everyone's patience while this exciting work proceeds.

Our Cuban Partnership

Snapshots of a Spiritual Journey

by Spencer Gibbins

After many years of hearing about the Cuba Partnership with the First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana, my partner Cleveland Mosby and I decided to participate in the annual visit members of our congregation make there.

Leaving on Sunday, Feb. 16, we had a night in Miami in order to fly out on an early charter flight to Havana on Monday. We joined Marilyn Seiber (trip coordinator extraordinaire!), Betsy Merritt and Jim Bird of NYAPC along with 11 members of the Leesburg Presbyterian Church (including Pastor Debbie Parsons) and a couple (one a pastor from PC(USA), Louisville). The Leesburg group joined us this year to ascertain whether they wish to partner with a church in Havana. Heavily laden with OTC

medicines, office supplies, sheets and other staples of everyday life that are virtually unobtainable in Cuba, we negotiated the long lines in Miami for charter check-in, customs and security with minimal hassle and were off to Cuba!

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The Community Club Class of 2014

by Paul B. Dornan

On Thursday, May 22, Community Club, NYAPC's one-with-one tutoring/mentoring program, will celebrate its 53rd awards program. That evening, we will in particular commemorate the growth and accomplishments of 26 young people from the program who will be graduating from D.C. public high schools this spring. This is one of the largest graduating classes in the history of the club. Although many D.C. public schools are represented at Community Club, there are concentrations of students in any given year since most students come to us by word of mouth, from student to student; for example, this year nine students attend McKinley Tech; seven go to Wilson; three to Banneker; three to Hospitality and one each to School Without Walls and Roosevelt.

All our students have applied to college, and only a few are still awaiting acceptances. Perhaps four or five will go on to community colleges, although none has so far committed to that honorable path. Many seniors will be heading off to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, such as Howard, Hampton, Virginia State, Virginia Union, Norfolk State, Fisk, Benedict, Clark Atlanta, Bethune-Cookman, Delaware State, Shaw and Alabama A&M. Many have received acceptances at other public and private colleges and universities, such as Wisconsin, West Virginia University, the University of Pittsburgh, Virginia Commonwealth, Roanoke, Northern Iowa, Drexel, University of Miami, Trinity and Georgetown.

Senior Tyriek Mack will be attending Wisconsin-Madison on a full-tuition Posse scholarship. Another Posse finalist, Lynette Robinson, is leaning toward Fisk. Marquise Williams has scholarship offers from Benedict, the University of Miami and Clark Atlanta and was accepted as well at Davidson. Briana Mason, who has a passion for the culinary arts, got into her first choice, Johnson and Wales. Emmanuel

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Cuba Corner...

by Marilyn J. Seiber

Meet Carlos Candelaria & Nancy Bueno!

Chef Carlos Candelaria and his wife Nancy Bueno are well-known First Havana staff who are central to NYAPC visits—they prepare delicious meals for us every day!! Carlos was born in Pinar del Rio Province west of Havana. He received a degree in education, and prior to his being a part-time chef at First Havana, he worked as a teacher of labor education at a secondary school. In addition to working as a chef, his hobby is raising chickens and rabbits.



Nancy was born in Havana and also has a degree in education. Before joining First Havana's staff in the kitchen, Nancy was a primary school teacher. Nancy enjoys watching television.

Carlos and Nancy have two children. Their daughter Lucy studied sociology for three years at the university in Havana and now studies English. She works as a waitress at a private restaurant, or paladar, owned by members of First Havana. Their son Carlos is studying for pre-university and enjoys baseball and soccer.

Carlos and Nancy are enjoying the results of the recent renovation of the kitchen at First Havana with three beautiful new sinks, tiled walls, a stove, and more workspace!

NYAPC Children Make Easter Cards for First Havana's Children

On March 9, NYAPC's Sunday School children made Easter cards for the Sunday School children at First Havana. The cards were carried to First Havana on March 22 by a delegation from Fourth



Presbyterian Church in Chicago—in plenty of time for Easter! The cards not only send Happy Easter wishes, but also show the children at First Havana that NYAPC children are thinking of them.

Rev. Héctor Méndez to Preach at NYAPC on World Communion Sunday

Rev. Méndez will preach at NYAPC on Oct. 5, World Communion Sunday. This Sunday is also the traditional day of collecting the annual Peacemaking Offering, an appropriate event on this Sunday of worldwide communion that will highlight

Cuban Council of Churches Pastors Visit D.C.

by Marilyn J. Seiber

On Feb. 25-28, six pastors from the Cuban Council of Churches visited Washington, D.C., to meet with members of Congress and Administration officials. This is the second time in three years that such a delegation has come to Washington to promote reconciliation between the U.S. and Cuban Governments. Their visit was sponsored by the World Council of Churches and organized with the help of the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness, the Latin American Working Group (LAWG), and the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). NYAPC and Church of the Pilgrims supported their visit by providing home-stays (Beth Dumez and Marilyn Seiber) and hosting a reception and pot-luck dinner.

The members of the delegation included two Presbyterians who have previously visited NYAPC: Dr. Reinerio Arce Valentin, current moderator of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba and rector of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas; and Rev. Joel Ortega Dopico, current president of the Cuban Council of Churches and pastor of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Varadero. Other delegation members were Bishop Griselda Delgado, Anglican Bishop of Cuba; Pastor Maria Yi, Quaker;

Rev. Rhode Gonzalez, Pentecostal; and Rev. Raúl Suárez, executive director of the Martin Luther King Center in Havana.

The delegation had a full program of meetings on the Hill including with Sen. Jeff Flake (Ariz.), Rep.

the partnership between NYAPC and First Havana and the hope of reconciliation that such a church partnership works to facilitate between our two governments.

PC(USA) Cuba Partners Network to Meet in Chicago, Oct. 1-4

The Cuba Partners Network will hold its annual meeting at the Cenacle Retreat House in Chicago, Wednesday-Saturday, October 1-4, 2014. The cost is \$75 for the program fee and \$98 per night for a single room at the Cenacle that includes all meals. All are welcome to attend.

Jim McGovern (Mass.), and the staff of Senators Tim Kaine (Va.), Heitkamp (N.D.), and Tester (Mont.). Senator Flake was gratified that his previous assistance had enabled the release of retirement funds from U.S. accounts for retired Cuban Presbyterian pastors. He said that he would make efforts to remove Cuba from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism. Rep. McGovern advised U.S. churches that now is the time to be impatient with the Administration to remove Cuba from the terrorism list and to lift embargo restrictions. The Cuban church delegation's presence in Washington, D.C., is a powerful statement, he said, and U.S. churches should take advantage of this opportunity to push the Administration for reconciliation. "Churches have the moral authority, and I hope you use it. This is the time," Rep. McGovern said.

Meetings at the State Department with the Office of the Coordinator for Cuban Affairs did not go as well. State representatives were not encouraging and, in fact, seemed to have hardened positions on current U.S.-Cuba policies.

Church of the Pilgrims Presbyterian Church hosted with NYAPC assistance a well-attended reception and dinner for the Cuban guests. In addition to church members, guests included Office of Public Witness Director Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson II and International Issues Director Catherine Gordon; Rev. Luis León, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church; and officials of sponsoring organizations CWS, LAWG, and WOLA. Finally, author and writer-in-residence at Johns Hopkins University, Tim Wendel, presented to each of the Cuban pastors signed copies of his recent book, *Habana*

Community Club

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Thomas, who was featured as an All-Met athlete, was accepted at Georgetown, where he hopes to attend. Many more awards will likely be forthcoming.

Molly Smith, the class leader for the class of '14, writes, "It has been amazing to watch this group of kids grow up over the last five years from eighth graders who, in some cases, were struggling with basic academic and social skills, to wonderful young men and women who are responsible, organized and have such confidence in themselves and determination to achieve great things." We hope that members of NYAPC will join with Community Club in cheering these fine students on at the Awards Ceremony on Thursday, May 22, at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. See what the volunteers of your ministry to the young people of this city have helped to grow and flourish!

Gracious Hospitality

by Cathy Schultheis, Nurture Committee

On a recent Birthday Fund Cupcake Sunday, members and friends of all ages were gathered for fellowship after 11:00 worship: cupcakes and birthday greetings being enjoyed on the H Street side, coffee and cookies on the NYA side.

One of our young families approached the coffee table—the parents getting coffee at one end, the older child taking a cookie and stepping back, leaving the younger child standing on his tip toes at the middle of the table, trying to see the cookies on the table. At the opposite end of the table, one of our Radcliffe Room guests, a frequent visitor to the Narthex fellowship, was enjoying a cold glass of water. Seeing the young child's frustration, he put down his cup of water, picked up the silver cookie tray and, to the delight of the child, lowered the tray so that the child could choose his snack.

That act of gracious hospitality that was experienced in the Narthex has warmed my heart many times since that Sunday. Our homeless guest felt secure and welcomed enough to become a host and offer hospitality and nurture to a young child of the church. Those of us who witnessed this gracious act of hospitality in the Narthex give thanks for NYAPC and those who serve God's children here, the young and the not-so-young, the members and the guests.

National Presbyterian Stewardship Kaleidoscope Conference

by Cathy Schultheis

I was privileged to attend the March 2014 Stewardship Kaleidoscope Conference for elders, pastors, presbytery staff, and volunteers. The theme of the conference, "Equip, Energize, Emerge," was based on Ephesians 4:12, "to equip the saints for the work of ministry."

A major concept presented for study is that bountiful generosity within the church is based on stewardship as a journey, grounded in gratitude, revealed in prayer, and lived in faith. I would be glad to share with members what we learned at this amazing conference. Just give me a call.

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

Join "Summer Choir" in June

Love to sing but can't make Thursday rehearsal? June is the perfect time to sing with the choir! We won't practice Thursdays; instead, we'll meet Sunday mornings at 9:15 for a quick rehearsal before the 10:00 a.m. service during June. For more information, speak to Stan Engebretson after worship, talk to any choir member, or email meg.house@verizon.net. We look forward to singing with you!

Birthday Fund Cupcake Sunday

Members and friends with March, April and May birthdays are invited to the Narthex on Sunday, May 18, after both services to receive birthday greetings and a cupcake from the Planned Giving Committee.

Your birthday is a special gift from God. Consider acknowledging this special gift by sharing your blessings with a contribution to the Endowment or Benevolence Funds.



Cuban Partnership

(Continued from p. 1)

I went with few expectations but much curiosity. We were fortunate to have the “old hands,” Marilyn (15 trips), Betsy (10) and Jim (8) to give us realistic expectations, calm anxieties and provide useful tips and information. We were comprised of one Roman Catholic, one Episcopalian and 14 Presbyterians (including two pastors) and made it through the entire week without forming one committee! Our group of 16 proved to be a delightful, warm and supportive assemblage of people and one of the joys of the trip. I would also like to emphasize that the “facts” and opinions expressed in this narrative are mine and not “official” in any way nor necessarily shared by other members of the group.

Arrival at First Havana

We were met at the Havana airport by staff from our host church, La Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada de la Habana (First Havana) with a small bus rented for our use for the week’s visit. Catching glimpses of the city as we rode to the church provided a foretaste for the week ahead. First Havana is, indeed, an urban church like NYAPC, situated in a crowded and noisy older neighborhood of downtown Havana. Unlike NYAPC, however, the streets are very narrow and filled primarily with pedestrians, bicycles, street vendors and occasional motor vehicles threading their way through the often dense crowds. We met the pastor, Dr. Héctor Méndez, and his wife, Sra. Oneida Padilla, as well as the church staff with whom we would be working all week. Three of them, Carmina (translator and shepherd!), Leinad (photographer), and David (our bus driver), would become permanent and beloved members of our group as we traversed Havana and visited or met with other churches and missions or participated in activities during our long and often tiring days. We had our first meal at the church, which would provide lunch and dinner for us during the week except for two dinners and a lunch in local restaurants. We then retired to our tourist hotel for the night, about 20 minutes away. Thus began a week of discovery, spiritual growth and reflection that would be life-altering for me.

In a summary such as this with an extremely packed week of activities, it is impossible for me to adequately describe all events, experiences and insights in any

sort of chronological or logical order. Therefore, I give you “snapshots” of my experience that I will carry with me forever. Rev.

Méndez, on Tuesday morning, gave an orientation to Cuba—a land of contradictions, where you cannot buy aspirin or acetaminophen in a pharmacy but can receive medical care in a world-class medical facility

free of charge. We saw examples of this all week: “Five star hotels” (for tourists) where the sidewalks on the grounds were crumbling and toilets or faucets in the restrooms didn’t work. Glorious architecture in public buildings. Palatial homes divided into small apartments. Apartment buildings literally falling apart while still inhabited. Chevys, Fords and Plymouths from the Fifties shining like jewels but emitting clouds of blue exhaust fumes that gave busy areas of downtown air quality ratings off the scale!

Doomed vs. Successful Partnerships

Rev. Méndez described ways in which partnerships between U.S. churches and Cuba churches were doomed to failure: if the Cuban church expected only financial support; if the U.S. church expected only a week of tourism; if the U.S. church expected to come to “rescue” or educate the Cuban church (“the helping hand strikes again!”). True partnership is reciprocal and both partners learn and are nurtured by the other. This is certainly the case for NYAPC and First Havana.

During the week we participated in and/or observed many exciting and valuable programs that could be adapted for U.S. churches. For example, First Havana has a “school for the elderly” (acting as a vehicle for education but also for mutual support); Tai Chi classes for the elderly (wonderful exercise and fun, too!); a “Friendly Phone” service operated by a church staff psychologist for providing short-term and crisis care; a second psychologist providing various therapies, including art, to work with persons in crisis; youth programs including choirs and baseball teams (a real draw for young people in Cuba);



and a library open to the community to use, including children during school breaks. All this in addition to traditional

pastoral and worship activities, including a choir made up of Angolan medical students studying in Havana who incorporate their own traditional language, hymns and dance into the Cuban service. What an active and innovative church!

Another smaller church in a more outlying section of Havana that we visited, Guanabacoa Presbyterian Church, sponsors a program (“Love, Love”) for 10 local families in which they are taught to raise sustainable crops and animals such as chickens and guinea pigs, which they can consume and also bring to market. The same church started an AIDS ministry in 2007 (“Campaign for Life”) and has served 80 individuals—medically and in teaching them how to live with HIV. Another very small church, the Fernanda Presbyterian Church, is striving to serve an industrial, poor section of the city and is in the process of expanding to a larger facility.

In each of these churches and in First Havana’s house mission in Marianao, a Havana suburb, we were able to meet and talk with enthusiastic and stimulating pastors as well as church elders and congregants. We were also privileged to meet church members in their homes, including a Bible study in the garden of one. These visits were psychologically and spiritually uplifting and gave me much more insight into commonalities and differences in our two countries and cultures.

In traveling between churches we were able to see the Havana that most tourists do not. We did, however, manage to make some time for the more traditional sights and sounds of Havana. Chief among these for me were: Old Havana (some renovations, very touristy with shops and galleries); the Mercado (large market primarily for tourists buying art and curios); the Museum of the Revolution (a real eye-opener in depicting the Cuban point of view of the events of 1959); an International Book Fair held at the military base

at Morro Castle; and the home of Ernest Hemingway, as well as a visit to Cojimar, the small fishing village out of which he sailed to fish and the bar he returned to there.

Community Impact of First Havana

The real “sleeper” in the events scheduled for us was the visit to the Ballet Liza Alfonso, a school founded by Ms. Liza Alfonso who grew up in First Havana where her mother is still a member. First Havana helped her start the company, providing help, use of copy machines, and other forms of assistance. Ms. Liza Alfonso said she started the dance school as a way of “giving back,” an outgrowth of growing up at First Havana. Dancers there begin at age six and continue until 18, learning all forms of ballet and dance,



from Spanish flamenco to classical ballet with many combinations and variations.

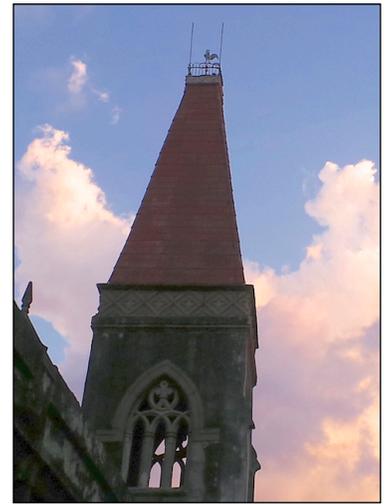
This troupe of youngsters and young women “blew us away” with their professional performance done in a large room with only natural light and no music due to a power shortage (Cuba, remember!). Undaunted by such a handicap when performing before a group of visiting Americans, they danced, oh, they danced, to the clapping of their instructors to keep the beat. A favorite memory.

Other memories include dancing to a professional band in the atrium of the church after an exhausting day. This band, some of whom are members of First Havana, frequently play during worship services and is the group for which Stan and NYAPC raised money several years ago to enable them to record their first CD. We enjoyed a musical program performed by young people of the church; coffee early in the morning over at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba looking out on their manicured grounds; and Sunday worship in a packed sanctuary including the choir comprised of Angolan medical students and a smiling, self-possessed lady of 101 years!

Impact of the Mission Trip on Me

People ask me, “How was your trip to Cuba?” I don’t really have a coherent answer. A myriad of thoughts and feelings flood my mind in attempting to answer that question. I loved the group I was with, the staff and people of First Havana and other churches, and felt the warmth and admiration of the Cuban population for the U.S. I realized the vast differences between people to people contacts and government to government politics. I learned so much, experienced so much and was stimulated by so much. Yet my insights gained included the realities of living in Cuba today and the nearly universal stress shown by persons who must work very hard just to live at a minimally acceptable level where shortages, lines, food scarcities and crumbling infrastructure make daily existence difficult at best. I was encouraged by the warmth of the persons whom I met, the vigor and enthusiasm of their faith community and their strength in adversity. I was very concerned by what seems to be a diminishing level of hope that things will improve for them.

I close this kaleidoscopic narrative by paraphrasing part of a speech made by a member of the Leesburg group, Wayne Helge, who was presenting Reverend Mendez and his wife, Sra. Padilla, with a gift from the Leesburg congregation. He cited the fact that the word “esperanza” in Spanish means both “waiting” and “hope.” I see the people of Cuba waiting and hoping. I trust that such partnerships as that of NYAPC and the First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana will help tilt the scales a bit toward the hope and away from the waiting!



New Books in the Sizoo Library

by Tom Dunlap

The Difference Heaven Makes: Rehearing the Gospel as News, by Christopher Morse. A discussion of how and where to find the kingdom that Jesus spoke of. This is an exploration of what heaven is and where it may be found. It invites the reader into a careful reading of the gospels, particularly the parables and the poetry.

Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life, by Karen Armstrong. In an increasingly interdependent world, Armstrong is calling for a return to compassion between and inside countries. With a TED grant, she created a conference of the six largest faith traditions, who agreed on the importance of calling all the people of the world “to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion, ... to a return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate.” She shows the values linking Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism,

especially on the theme of compassion for all. It is a well-written and persuasive book.

Healing the Heart of Democracy, by Parker Palmer. In the midst of all of our current divides and crises, Palmer reflects on how to heal and re-inspire us. He believes that with faith and compassion our democracy can heal itself and grow stronger and more diverse. A reviewer says, “In this book, Palmer brings together the wisdom of a lifetime. ... It is a manual...for recovering the heart, the very core, of ourselves and our democracy.” (Krista Tippett – *Speaking of Faith*)

The Meaning of the City, by Jacques Ellul.

Living into Hope: A Call to Spiritual Action for Such a Time as This, by Joan Brown Campbell.

The Miracle of Mindfulness by Thich Nhat Hahn.

NYAPC Increases Involvement with PC(USA) Middle East Network

by Marilyn J. Seiber

NYAPC, through its Peace & Justice Committee, recently joined the PC(USA) Syria-Lebanon Network and has increased its activities with the PC(USA) Iraq Partnership Network with which it has been involved for several years.

Pastors from Syria

On Jan. 26, The Westminster Institute in McLean, Va., and Barnabas Aid, with which it is affiliated, hosted five Christian leaders from Syria, including Rev. Dr. Riad Jarjour, Presbyterian pastor from Homs, Syria and formerly general secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches (1994-2003). The purpose of the visit was to raise awareness about the threats against Christians in Syria and the growing plight they face. They emphasized that they are not “Christians in Syria, but Syrians who are Christians.” They remain in Syria to continue their leadership in the church, but they asked, “Where are all the churches in Western Europe and the United States and what are they doing to support us?” At the very least, they asked for our constant prayers.

As a result of their visit, NYAPC’s Peace & Justice Committee joined the PC(USA) Syria-Lebanon Network and has been communicating with Rev. Elmarie Parker, the PC(USA) Regional Liaison for Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, who is based in Beirut, Lebanon. As its first activity related to Syria-Lebanon, the Peace and Justice Committee sent copies of National Geographic’s *A Little Peace* (read to the NYAPC children by Rev. Katie Cashwell) to Rev. Parker and Rev. Riad Jarjour with cover letters telling them that we are praying for them and we have not forgotten the plight of Christians in the region.

Presbyterian Delegation to Basrah, Iraq

On March 11, an eight-person delegation organized by The Outreach Foundation, affiliated with PC(USA), traveled to Basrah, Iraq, for a 10-day visit. The Presbyterian Church in Basrah (National Evangelical Church of Basrah—in Iraq, Evangelical is understood to mean Presbyterian), Rev. Magdy Reffat, and Elder Dr. Zuhair Fathallah, who visited NYAPC in October 2013 as a PC(USA) International Peacemaker, hosted the delegation. The delegation met with churches in Basrah as well as with the Presbyterian pastor from

Kirkuk. The Presbyterian pastor from the Baghdad church was unable to travel to Basrah. The Kirkuk pastor said that “Christians have been in this place since the first-century church. This is our land, but now because we are a minority, we feel like outsiders in our own land. Despite the small numbers in their congregations, these Presbyterians sponsor pre-schools and kindergartens, outreach to women in prisons, and have FM Christian radio stations.”

Through the outreach delegation, the Peace & Justice Committee also sent two copies of *A Little Peace* with letters of support to the Presbyterian Churches in Basrah and Baghdad. The Outreach Foundation encourages members of NYAPC to travel with them to Iraq on their next visit.

A Note from Dr. Fathallah

Dr. Zuhair Fathallah, elder at the Presbyterian Church in Basrah, who visited NYAPC in October 2013, wrote to U.S. friends in February 2014:

“We had a very nice Christmas service in the church, then we all joined together for Christmas lunch in the hall, we were blessed by each other.

[Rev.] Assis Magdy case is the thorn in the flesh, still we can't get a residence [visa] for him, every time we start with an official to help us, we failed, and funny enough all the officials know about him and they are keeping it as it is, he is going to stay till after Easter and leave us, hopefully we can get him a new visa.

The ladies of the church and the KG [kindergarten] are doing a lot of work in the community, they were visiting the children with autism and difficulty in learning institute and presenting them with toys, also we did a visit to the Children Hospital for cancer with toys and candies as well, and we hope to do a visit to senior citizen home next month by God will. The KG is getting a nursery now for those kids about age

Docherty Center Meditation Room

by Paul B. Dornan

Are you aware that there is a small meditation room within the Docherty Center on the first floor of the church? That thought came to mind as the Ministry and Mission Task Force reported to the Session the results of its efforts to elicit feedback about how our church building could more effectively fulfill the missions and ministries of the congregation in preparation for the next capital campaign.

Embedded in that report, the result of an effort during 2013 to engage members of the congregation, church boards and committees, staff and affiliated organizations about how the church building could be improved to fulfill more effectively NYAPC’s mission and ministries, was a specific recommendation: Create a dedicated space for meditation on the first floor of the church.

The fact is that there is such a space! When the Docherty Center, including our library, was created during a renovation in the 1990s, a small room with a door and a window replicating one of the sanctuary windows was established in the center for meditation and quiet respite. It is a restful, remarkably secluded place with a chair, a kneeling frame and a small table.

The space, of course, doesn’t advertise itself, so many may not know it even exists. So, please, by all means use it. And, if you are seeking direction for your time of quiet, there are many books available in the library for your guidance. If you stop by during the week and the Docherty Center is dark, just ask the entryway attendant for the key, and you may find the respite you need. Also consider the Lincoln Chapel for your time of quiet seclusion from the busy-ness outside its walls.



History Happens ... at NYAPC Charles William West

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 Chuck West on March 30, 2014, for this project and for the article below.

Imagine 11:00 a.m. Sunday morning worship services at NYAPC, and you will see Charles William West serving as head usher at the back of the Sanctuary—a role he has fulfilled since the early 1990s. Chuck took up this position at the initial suggestion of Rev. Robert H. Craig and in lieu of the more formal position of beadle in the Presbyterian church—the member of staff or layperson who leads the congregation to worship by bringing the Bible into the pulpit.

For nearly 25 years, Chuck has greeted members and visitors as they enter the church. By welcoming them and answering their questions, he strives to set the stage for the worship service that follows. He also checks to be sure the Bible is open on the Communion table and facing the congregation. And as a retired florist and a longtime supplier of floral arrangements for NYAPC, Chuck ensures that the flowers are in their proper places.

A Life Filled With Flowers

In fact, Chuck West's life has always been filled with flowers. Growing up in Goldsboro, N.C., he walked his family's farms with his father, Auburn William, and marveled at the variety and beauty of the wild-flowers that flourished there. As a teenager, he worked part-time in a floral shop owned by the parents of a high-school friend. Later, during a vacation to Washington, D.C., Chuck stayed with friends in Takoma Park and happened to wander into a flower shop in Silver Spring where he met the owners and was immediately offered a job. He had never thought of leaving home, but with the support of his mother, Laura, took the plunge and moved north.



Within two years, Chuck had saved enough to open his own business, The Flower Shop, on 14th and H Streets, a half block from NYAPC. He rose in his profession and was honored three times as "Designer of the Year" in 1977, 1978, and 1983 by the Florists Association of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Delaware. Chuck also won the President's Trophy for a floral float he designed for the 1988 Cherry Blossom Festival and had the thrill of riding on his float, a wedding-themed "A Moment to Remember," in the parade.

Longtime NYAPC member and Sunday school teacher Gertrude Niemeyer bought flowers at Chuck's flower shop, and his neighbors on Capitol Hill, Rev. Jack McClendon and NYAPC member Mary Prothro, would stop by to visit. Chuck recalls that Jack persisted in asking, "When are you coming to church?"

Ultimately, Chuck did come to NYAPC, became a member, and served two terms each on the Board of Deacons and the Session. When he joined in 1984, Mary

Prothro served as one of his sponsors, and Revs. Arthur McKay and McClendon baptized him. Chuck remembers being quite ill that day. When he knelt to be baptized and receive the sign of the cross, he fainted. Jack steadied Chuck and hastened his recovery by whispering, "Do you want to wear the water or drink it?"

Growing up in Goldsboro

Chuck was born on April 5, 1942—Easter Sunday that year. His mother called him her Easter bunny until she died. His family's house in Goldsboro stood on a rural road; the nearest neighbor was a mile and a half away. While his home and the open land around it are gone now, Chuck still stops at the top of a nearby hill when



he visits Goldsboro to remember where he grew up.

His parents were distant cousins—both had the same maternal great-great-grandmother. Auburn was in the timber business—cutting and selling trees—as well as tobacco farming. Chuck recalls that his father could look at a tree and estimate how many board feet would come from it. When Auburn died in 1961 at the age of 53, Chuck was 18 and had just graduated from high school. He had planned to attend Guilford College, but instead stayed home to run the family business. His brother Marion, who is 14 years older than Chuck and lives in Raleigh, N.C., was not interested in timber and tobacco; nor was his sister, Christine, who resides in Mt. Olive, N.C., and with whom he has remained close.

Chuck grew up in a Quaker church; the church was an easy walk from his home. The Baptist church, meanwhile, was five miles away. Chuck found the Quaker meeting house was more like a Methodist church. His parents and sister ultimately became Baptists, but his brother joined the Disciples of Christ. The family joke became that Marion was "the only Christian in the group."

During his time at NYAPC, Chuck met his partner of 25 years—Rev. Robert Schmidt, an Episcopal priest originally ordained in Texas, but then denied the opportunity to serve his church. "We would come to the 11:00 a.m. service at NYAPC and then attend the service at the

(Continued on p. 9)

What's New in Njoro?

by Rev. Beth Braxton

- Four new vulnerable children in the Saturday program
- A newly signed Memorandum of Agreement
- A new social worker on staff

In February, on our way to Nakuru, Kenya, for the International Mission Conference, Bob and I spent a few days in Njoro with our partners from the PCEA Njoro Parish, hosted by Rev. George Kariuki and his wife Hellen. The highlight was spending the entire day with the children in the Saturday OVC Program.

The day begins around 8:00 a.m. as the children gradually arrive from their homes, some walking as far as four miles, for “gathering time,” both outdoors and inside. The new social worker, Cathy Wambui, who was just hired at the end of January, was attending the program for a second time. Together we did get-to-know-you conversations and exercises. Mid-morning the children have a snack of porridge and two rolls. Then two teachers lead two groups—one for primary children and one for high school students—in homework and extra skill development. For lunch, the two cooks prepare nutritious food—and plenty of it!—rice and stew, cabbage, a banana and a mango. Recreation follows—time for flying kites, hula hoops, soccer, and “hanging out.” Before the children lined up at 3:30 p.m. to get maize meal for their families and head home, Bob and I passed out the gifts we had brought for each child: a zip-locked bag containing toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, wash cloth, and sweets.



Late Saturday afternoon the Njoro Church OVC Committee met with us, and we signed the first Memorandum of Agreement—both parties had been working through email to finalize it. This is presently a four-year commitment to build relationships, pray for each other and provide resources for nurturing 35 orphan and vulnerable children through this Saturday Program and the work of social worker Cathy Wambui, newly hired (and most

competent!). After signing the document there were speeches, prayers and of course tea to mark the occasion.

On Sunday I preached at both worship services: the 8:30 English service and the

10:30 Swahili service with a teacher translating. This service ended at 2:00 p.m.—and the sermon wasn't really that long! But the music and prayers were glorious with 600 people full of the Spirit. Monday we visited the homes of the four new children who have come to the Saturday Program. Let me introduce them:

Daniel Njenga is fifteen years old and in third grade. He lives in a one-room cinder block structure owned by the County Council of Njoro with his mother, an older brother and two younger sisters. When we visited we saw a blanket dividing the sleeping area from the cooking area. There was no table or chairs. None of the children had had breakfast the morning of our visit. Daniel's mother has back problems and cannot work.

Samuel Ndungu is in fourth grade. He lives in a timber-constructed one room “apartment” with an outdoor kitchen with his grandmother, who is a seasonal laborer.

She may get 200-250 shillings (or about \$3.00) for two days of weeding. Samuel's mother has six children, each with a different father. She doesn't seem to care well for the children and is often absent. She now lives nearby with the father of her youngest baby.

Simon Ongaki is six years old and in first grade. He lives in a large one-room cinderblock house, given free of rent by the owner of the land. Simon's father is older and paralyzed and his mother is much younger than

his father. There are five children in the home. When we visited we observed a five-year-old caring for an 18-month old, who was crying. There was oilcloth and cardboard dividing the room. The father receives a disability check from the government.

Peter Njorack is in eighth grade. He lives in a one-room house made of mud and sticks with his grandmother Lilian and her daughter, Peter's aunt, and her toddler. Peter's parents died of HIV/AIDS. They have a small plot for growing vegetables.

Changed by Njoro

by Rev. Beth Braxton

The song that was in my head as I was writing this article was *Thank You for Giving to the Lord* from a contemporary Christian album. A number of years ago, a newly ordained elder gave it to me as a gift for what I had meant in her life. I was humbled. The chorus is: “Thank you for giving to the Lord, I am a life that was changed!”

Yes, I am a life that has been changed by the Njoro congregants who have given their lives to God in caring for the orphaned and vulnerable children. Engaging with these children, my life has been changed! I find myself struggling with the disparity of resources available to these children and to our children here in the USA. My faith is challenged and strengthened by the Kenyans who open their homes and their lives to us. Sharing their faith in a God who they trust completely to provide and guide them and us in this endeavor of caring for some very special children is what makes our time together so rewarding.

I hope many of you, members and friends of NYAPC, will plan to engage and learn from our Njoro partners on a future mission trip; start saving your pennies now!



Glory, Glory Hallelujah! Churches Celebrate Unity at Choral Celebration

by Meg House

When God spoke creation into being, the Hebrew could mean that he sang to create the world, said Rev. Lionel Edmunds of Mt. Lebanon Baptist in introducing his choir at the Palm Sunday Choral Celebration on April 13. Rev. Joe Daniels of Emory Fellowship Church, in introducing his choir, pointed out that Jesus doesn't sing in the gospels ... until his last words, which were from the Psalms.

Mt. Lebanon and Emory joined NYAPC and Luther Place church in the second annual Choral Celebration, celebrating the coming together of these four churches to address issues of race and class in the District of Columbia. On a beautifully warm Palm Sunday afternoon, while cherry blossom traffic swirled around the city, the four churches gathered at NYAPC to sing praises together.

Each church choir presented two selections. The service closed with a congregational hymn, *Lift Every Voice*, and then with all four choirs gathering together, accompanied by drums, keyboard, piano, and bass, singing a hymn from the African Methodist Episcopal Hymnal, *Glory, Glory Hallelujah*. The congrega-



tion joined in the singing and clapping.

Rev. Gench and a lay leader from Emory closed the service with a double benediction, quoting a poem by Langston Hughes.

*"Looks like what drives me crazy
Don't have no effect on you--
But I'm gonna keep on at it
Till it drives you crazy, too."*

The service was the final event for the four churches during Lent. Each church also hosted a discussion, based on Taylor Branch's book, *The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement*, addressing issues of race and class. The collaboration between the four churches continues, however. On May 16-17, Taylor Branch will come to speak at NYAPC (see box).

Chuck West

(Continued from p. 7)

Church of the Ascension and Saint Agnes. Robert taught me theology, and I taught him Southern history." When he was pastor, Rev. Edmund Jones and Jack McClendon would come to Chuck and Robert's home to talk theology. When Robert died in 1993, deacons from NYAPC served as pallbearers, Chalmers Marquis played the bagpipes, and Rev. Alice Anderson offered prayers during the service and at the interment. The Christ candle used at Advent and Easter was given to NYAPC in Robert's memory.

A Traditionalist at Heart

Chuck has seen a lot of change at NYAPC—"some for the good and some not." A traditionalist at heart, he prefers

the more formal liturgy of the 1980s and early 1990s. Chuck appreciated Interim Minister Rev. William J. Fuerstenau's introduction of the phrases "This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God." following scripture readings.

Chuck likes to see the church work to bring the outside world in. For this reason, he favors noonday as well as evening and Sunday worship services, particularly on key liturgical days, such as Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday, to attract people working near the church.

As our interview ended, we could hear *Amazing Grace* being sung somewhere in the church. "I love that song," said Chuck. "It is the last song my mother heard on the radio as she died at age 92. The words of *Amazing Grace* demonstrate the Christian faith, no matter the denomination."



Heeding God's Call Expands

by Jack Mathison

The Advocacy Day hosted by NYAPC resulted in enlisting Elder Ed Best from Maryville, Tenn., to protest before Realco Guns on Marlboro Pike in District Heights, Maryland. His wife, Caroline Best, spent the time visiting representatives on Capitol Hill, hoping that Jim Atwood's rallying cry for support of gun legislation would overcome the opposition by the NRA.

In addition to members and friends protesting on the 2nd and 4th Mondays from 5:00 to 6:00 PM at Realco Guns, an even larger group protests before the NRA Headquarters on Waples Mill Road in Fairfax, Va. Most recently the powerful NRA lobby has blocked the appointment of President Obama's candidate for Surgeon General.

Branches of Heeding God's Call have expanded from Philadelphia to Harrisburg, Baltimore, greater D.C. and into Ohio with nucleus groups underway across the country striving to reduce the 10,000 plus handgun deaths annually in the USA.

Taylor Branch To Visit NYAPC

On May 16, author Taylor Branch will speak at NYAPC on "The Next Years: The Civil Rights Movement for Today and Tomorrow." His lecture will explore what miracles, social, political and economic, must still be wrought if we are to become God's Beloved Community—and what lessons the Civil Rights Movement holds for us as we proceed toward that greatly-to-be-wished-for goal. Join us Friday evening for the lecture and then Saturday morning, May 17, for small group discussions about these important issues.

Transitions

Baptisms:

William Rice Campbell; Born: July 8, 2013, Parents: Donald Edge Campbell and Melissa Rice Campbell

Weddings:

Carrie Schenkel and Stephen Reasonover, Feb. 1
Dena Iverson and Michael DeBonis, Feb. 15

Deaths:

Greg Cole, Jan. 18
Patricio Benavides, Jan. 31
Patricia (Gibbons) Inglis, February
James Hazlitt, Feb. 3
Lois McCollough Dauway, Feb. 4
Jack Hanna, Feb. 4
Vernona Turnbull, Feb. 12
Maria Von Steuben, Feb. 15
Kenneth Mahler, c. Feb. 17
Cindy Maus, late February
Grandfather of Liana Razafindravay, late February
Alda Roque, March 1
Mary Nell Clark's uncle, March 3
Doris Dandridge, March 13
Ellen Eager, March 16
Maria Hernandez, March 23
Bruce Whitener, April 7

Calendar

Sunday, May 11: Mother's Day;
Celebrate OVC children of
Kenya

Friday, May 16 – Saturday, May 17:
Taylor Branch at NYAPC

Sunday, May 18: Youth Sunday

Thursday, May 22 – Wednesday

May 28: Francis and Jennifer

Muchemi of PCEA Njoro, Kenya in Washington (at NYAPC on Sunday, May 25)

Sunday, May 25: Begin one service at 10 am for the summer

Sunday, June 1: Book Signing of book about Presbyterian Border Ministry by Rev. Parrish Jones

Saturday, June 7: Capital Pride Parade (More Light Presbyterians meet at Church of the Pilgrims late afternoon)

Sunday, June 29: Luncheon to Celebrate Rev. Katie Cashwell

Looking Ahead ...

Saturday, Nov. 15 – Sunday, Nov. 16: All-Church Retreat at Meadowkirk.

