NYAPC Launches New Birthday Fund on Legacy Sunday

by Edith Holmes Snyder

NYAPC observed Legacy Sunday on April 29 with the founding of The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church "Birthday Fund."

During worship services at 8:45 am and 11:00 am, Rev. Roger J. Gench spoke about the importance of legacies and the new fund in his sermon, “The Three-Legged Stool,” and Olivia Lewis gave an inspired minute for mission on why she prefers gifts to the Birthday Fund on the occasion of her 14th birthday. Children of the church learned how Willie Lincoln, son of President Abraham and Mary Lincoln, left all his savings to NYAPC.

Between worship services, members and friends of all ages gathered in Peter Marshall Hall to hear more about how to give to the fund and enjoy a time of fellowship, fun, and crafts with birthday cake and balloons.

The Birthday Fund offers opportunities to celebrate life in a way that enhances the church's missions and community outreach. Members and friends can remember their own birthdays or the birthday of someone they love by giving a dollar for each year of life, or any amount, to the NYAPC Birthday Fund.

Two Choices

The Church offers two choices for a Birthday Fund gift. A gift can be made to the Birthday portion of:

The General Endowment Fund. This gift is added to the capital of the Endowment Fund, itself 100 years old this year. The income the endowment earns helps sustain and grow the diverse ministries and missions of the church in perpetuity. Year after year, such a gift supports the church in all that it does.

A Memorable Palm Sunday Week with Our Partner Church in Havana

by Olivia Lewis, NYAPC Youth Member

Thirteen hours. That’s how much time we spent on the plane and in airports on the date of our flight to Cuba. But I didn’t care because I was excited about visiting our partner church, Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada de la Habana (First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana) for almost a week around Palm Sunday, speaking Spanish, and making new friends.

Our hotel's pleasant conditions and the welcome we received more than made up for the long travel day. No sooner had we stepped out of the airport than did we meet our enthusiastic guide and translator, Carmiña, and our equally friendly bus driver, David. When we arrived at the church, decorated with colorful banners welcoming our group, Rev. Héctor Méndez and his wife, Oneida, were there to greet and take us to our first of many scrumptious meals prepared at the church. I’ll always remember Rev. Méndez’s bell calling us together, prayers in a circle on the balcony, and yummy food by Chef Carlos, Nancy, Enrique and Vicente.

As the Board of Deacons sits down each year to consider which organizations to support, we strive to find ways of applying our church mission to “make our first priority those who are vulnerable: people in crisis, the elderly, the children, the mentally ill, and the homeless.”

Our church serves these communities in so many ways; three of New York Avenue Presbyterian Church’s most prominent ministries—Radcliffe Room, Community Club, 7-2-9—are perfect examples. The Board of Deacons strives to supplement the powerful work our church does day in and day out. We work to ensure that our funds carry out our church’s prophetic mission to minister to all God’s children and that we support a mix of ministry, advocacy, and direct service to those in need.

Open Arms Housing, a non-profit organization in the heart of our city which provides safe and stable housing to women who were formerly homeless, is a perfect example of just this type of ministry. This organization, which the Deacons have supported for several years, serves an under served and vulnerable popula-
McClendon Center
Sharing Space Makes Room For Recovery
by Dennis Hobbs, McClendon Center Executive Director

For McClendon Center staff members, and most of the center’s clients, walking into The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church means coming to a mental health day program. Staff members see the rooms as their work spaces, and clients see the same rooms as places where they attend groups; in fact, 25 different groups meet almost every day.

Church members, however, experience the same space very differently. Sunday school, adult education, committees, receptions and the like all take place in the same rooms that the center uses on weekdays. If only the walls in these rooms could talk!

Only a few of the rooms that McClendon Center leases are designated as exclusive space. These are the staff offices on the fourth and fifth floors. Otherwise, all of the rooms the center uses for therapeutic group purposes are shared spaces. This arrangement works very well for all involved, with modifications needing to be made only occasionally.

Pizza on Good Friday
The most recent change was made on Good Friday. McClendon Center realizes that it is difficult for the church to have a contemplative noonday service while its clients are having lunch directly overhead. The church offered the use of the Radcliffe Room and the center readily agreed to host a pizza lunch downstairs. This seemed to be a great improvement over previous Good Fridays.

Safe Harbor
McClendon Center recently added Room 317 to its lease with the church as shared space. By renting this additional room, the center has been able to begin a trauma recovery program called Safe Harbor. Many of our clients, both female and male, have been victims of domestic abuse, sexual abuse, threats, and many other acts of aggression. The program is patterned after a national model called “Seeking Safety.” This program doesn’t focus on reliving the trauma, but rather on reducing one’s distress and achieving “mindfulness.” By focusing on new ways to live with past trauma, clients can develop a sense of peace. This begins the process of recovering from trauma.

Sharing space with the church, then, really does make room for recovery. By being able to add shared space to our lease, the center can continue to offer new programming that benefits our clients. Also, by making these rooms available to McClendon Center, the church is now able to realize nearly $75,000 in annual rent.

More important, the church continues a ministry that it has provided for many years: giving community groups with a social mission the opportunity to serve people in a welcoming setting. Providing for the underserved and needy means that McClendon Center and The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church share more than just space...we also share a common mission.

Open Arms Housing
(Continued from p. 1)

In mid-May, prominent supporter of Open Arms Housing Tim Shriver (son of Sargent Shriver and Eunice Kennedy and head of the Special Olympics) held a garden party and fundraiser at his home for Open Arms Housing. Both Paul Dornan and Kathy Doan, a member of the Board of Directors, attended.

Transformative Power
At the event, Paul met a woman whose story symbolizes the tremendous and transformative power of Open Arms Housing. This woman, an Open Arms Housing resident for the last two and a half years, has struggled with severe mental illness and before coming to Open Arms Housing, hadn’t had somewhere stable to live for over 25 years. She has just recently graduated from a massage therapy program with high hopes for her future and deep gratitude for the home Open Arms Housing gave her.

Open Arms Housing’s building, The Dunbar, provides homes to 16 women like this woman Paul spoke with at the fundraiser. Each woman is part of the community and is offered supportive services, treatment, and access to an on-site social worker, while also having a welcoming private efficiency apartment with a kitchen and bathroom. Providing stable housing is a critical way to foster the sense of security and well-being that will enable each of these women to thrive and succeed.

And for The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, supporting Open Arms Housing is just one more way of living out our faith and seeking social justice for all people.

Triangle Park Committee Cleans and Plants for Easter
By Marilyn Seiber

On Saturday, April 7, members of the Triangle Park Committee—Courtney and Jim Spearman, Marilyn Seiber, Tina and Will Ashworth—gathered the day before Easter to clean out winter debris from the plant beds, fill in rat holes, plant new spring/summer flowers, spread mulch, and prepare the park and “church garden” for spring growth!

The National Park Service (NPS), per the committee’s request, had spread mulch in the park in preparation for the NYAPC Easter Sunrise Service in the park. The committee plans to host summer coffees in the park after summer worship services, and hopes that church members and friends will use “our park” during the warm spring and summer months. The committee also welcomes new participants in the effort to beautify and plan special events in the park. If you are interested in gardening and helping to maintain the “church park” in cooperation with the NPS, please join us!
What Happens after NYAPC?

by Tara Spuhler McCabe

Have you decided what is next after NYA?
What does it mean to be Vice Moderator?

People ask these questions a lot, and I never seem to be in the perfect space to fully respond. I hope what follows is some clarification and maybe even some answers.

Ordinarily, pastors have accepted a call before leaving their current position. I am not looking for my next call right away. After 12 years, I have a full feeling towards NYA and I need some emotional distance before considering my next call.

Running for Vice Moderator

The vice moderator serves the Presbyterian Church USA at the national level. And all that I may do and say is guided by what happens at General Assembly and how the elected moderator wants to use our strengths in representing the denomination. The vice moderator position was instituted in the 1990s. Typical roles and responsibilities include visiting presbyteries and facilitating conversations around recent decisions from GA, preaching at events on behalf of the denomination, and visiting locations around the world as a representative for the denomination. The position is a service to the denomination, not a paid position.

If Rev. Neal Presa is elected as moderator on June 30, then I will come forward as his vice moderator candidate. The General Assembly will vote on my nomination the next day. If you are interested in seeing the process first hand, you are welcome to come in for the day. You can also watch everything on live stream as the nominations, question and answer sessions, and election will be sent directly to your computer. It will be fun to know you are out there watching and hoping for the best!

Neal invited me to be on the ticket after I had decided to depart from NYAPC. I thought he was joking. I have known Neal for 10 years and he knows I tend to share my faith, thoughts, and opinions. Neal knows NYAPC and its reputation as a vibrant, historic, open and affirming congregation. The hope and leadership that Neal and I offer, if he is elected, is of being faithful children of God as we discern God’s call and claim in our lives as individuals, congregations, and a denomination. He and I are different, yet deeply rooted in a bond that is bigger than us! He is just as much of a church/worship geek as I am!

Should Neal be elected and I be elected as his vice moderator, I don’t intend to search for my next call for six months. I need time between NYAPC and my next ministry. I hope to meet and learn how other presbyteries and congregations are sorting through our relevancy today as members in the Body of Christ who happen to identify as Presbyterian!

But before the election on June 30, please join me and my family on:

June 10 - my last sermon as your associate pastor.
June 24 - a congregational meeting to dissolve our call with one another ... and a little celebration of our relationship as well.

Peace, Tara

Summer Listening Sessions Coming in July

Last summer’s Listening Sessions were so well-received, we will convene again this summer for three sessions on July 8, 15, and 22. Stay tuned!
Spring Cuba Trip

(Continued from p. 1)

The church itself seemed very bright and cheerful. There was the sanctuary, which has many stained glass windows and the beautiful banner from NYAPC hanging from the balcony. My favorite part of the church was the courtyard area in the middle with many interesting plants. During the week, we spent much time on the very comfortable rocking chairs, reading and talking, while taking in the sun and Havana air on the courtyard or balcony above.

This was the tenth visit of NYAPC members and other Presbyterians from the area, but it was my first and I think the first time that a youth member had visited from NYAPC. Others should think about joining a future trip to Cuba! Our days were packed with wonderful church-related activities and opportunities to enjoy the culture and the old cars of Havana, too.

Community Outreach Ministries

We learned more and more about First Havana each day. Similar to our own church, First Havana has many community outreach ministries:

Baseball. We met the baseball teams, parents and coaches of First Havana one evening. The church supports four baseball teams divided by age groups. My brother and I had made a small contribution to team t-shirts from NYAPC two years ago, so it was nice to hear stories about the teams and how much they appreciated our church’s support over the years. They even talked about creating new teams with girls soon, which I think is an excellent idea! That evening was my first of many opportunities I had to speak Spanish on behalf of our group and to many new Cuban friends throughout the week.

The next day, we went to see the baseball teams in practice fields away from the church. Before the practice, all the older baseball players signed three baseballs that they gave to Marilyn Seiber, Karina Saunders from Church of Pilgrims, and me. (One of those baseballs and a team photo are in the first floor entryway cabinet.) In return, I gave the team “manager,” Ivón Esperón, a “Nationals” visor. During practice, the baseball teams even had us practice our swings and run the bases. There were even several foot races and a short walk to the ocean next to the baseball fields with the team afterwards. It was so much fun!

Tai Chi & Other Programs. I’ve seen tai chi in Taiwan, so it was great to see the tai chi class at First Havana and hear the adults tell us how tai chi helped to heal their back and body. Also, we met with the church’s psychologist, Myriam, who told us about two programs: “Your Friendly Phone,” a hotline for anyone who needs advice and help, and the “School for the Elderly,” a weekly social and educational program for the elderly. First Havana sponsors all these programs that serve church members and non-members in the community. Just like our church in Washington, DC, these programs truly help others in the community.

Library. The church’s terrific librarian, Idelsys, introduced us to the library with its many books, movies, and educational and religious resources. The library opens to the street so it is used by many in the neighborhood. That morning, I gave Idelsys several Spanish children’s books that I had read when I was younger to add to the library’s collection. Rev. Méndez explained that many books and 10,000 videos have been checked out since the library started! Kids also do homework and learn English there.

I’m so glad that First Havana has a library for the community, as I use the public library near my home in Silver Spring, Md., all the time, too.

Worship and Community

Palm Sunday was a highlight of our visit. First Havana’s sanctuary was packed and worship was very interesting, especially with communion. First Havana members were very friendly and warm, and our group also participated in the worship service. During the service, Rev. Méndez introduced us, and I offered in Spanish greetings and thanks to the congregation for our group. They waved their bulletins afterwards, which made me feel as if I were home at NYAPC! Marilyn presented Rev. Méndez with our new church history book, Capital Witness, and a shiny new (and loud) bell. In turn, Rev. Méndez presented beautiful plaques to Marilyn (and husband Bill), Betsy Merritt and Jim Bird, for their commitment to the partnership between NYAPC and First Havana. The three of them have made many trips to First Havana, and it was cool to experience the friendships and connections they had already formed from past visits.

A few nights before, we traveled to “Cojimar Mission” in the countryside to worship in a member’s backyard. Public transportation is limited, so First Havana has worship services in these house churches. It was a beautiful spring evening, and after the service, we had drinks and snacks with members. Later in the week, we visited another small church in Guanabacoa outside of Havana. The pastor and his family are all musicians and performed several songs for us on keyboard, drums and guitar. Afterwards, they had fresh guava juice for us, too!

We also attended a service on Saturday night at First Havana that youth and young adults alone put together. Their service was called “Uno más para Cristo” (“One More for Christ”) and consisted of Bible readings and songs sung by the excellent choir. After hearing them perform, I bought a CD of their music, if anyone wants to borrow it.

In addition, we learned more about church members and formed deeper connections. Karina Saunders in our group had a water-color workshop where we painted our dreams for the future. Several church members revealed their dreams of (Continued on p. 5)
Cuba

(Continued from p. 4)

healing the world and being reunited with their families far away. (I told them my dream is to be a writer.)

At that same workshop, my mother met a boy who did not want to paint but said that he loved origami. My mother ended up making many origami creations with him since she just happened to have colorful origami paper with her. It was cool to find someone who loves origami in Cuba, too! Our group even went to a wedding of one of the First Havana members during our visit, which was very special for us.

Sightseeing

Of course, we also had time to walk around Havana, experiencing the history and culture of Old Havana (including a chocolate museum), a cannon shoot ceremony, a Napoleonic museum, Ernest Hemingway’s Cuban home, “La Finca Vigia,” and the studio home of an artist with beautiful tiles and mosaics everywhere. I also loved watching a dress rehearsal of the Ballet Litz Alfonso, which featured fabulous dancers combining ballet with flamenco and Cuban rhythms.

Over the course of this trip I was able to see unique sights, different ways of practicing religion, and the great sense of community that exists in Cuba, all the while having fun and cherishing our international connection through faith. As Betsy, who was on her eighth trip, said, “Every visit has been different and wonderful. On my first trip, I asked Rev. Méndez what I could do to help, and he said, ‘Come back.’”

I hope to return soon and hope others will visit our partner church, too!

NYAPC Hosts 15th Street Women for Bible Study

By Marilyn Seiber

On Saturday, April 28, NYAPC’s Presbyterian Women’s Bible Study Circle hosted the third annual spring joint Bible study” with women from 15th Street Presbyterian Church and The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. Barbara Dornan welcomed the women from 15th Street and offered a buffet breakfast with homemade breads and breakfast treats donated by NYAPC women.

Study leaders from each church led discussions at three tables on the final chapter of the PC(USA) Horizons study of the Beatitudes. As in the past, the two hours of discussions presented different insights, perspectives, and analyses of both the Bible passages and the author’s commentary. This tradition of a spring joint-study has become a highlight of the year’s monthly Presbyterian Women’s Bible study, and we look forward to our next meeting together!
Bob Osborn Remembers…

By 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 Bob Osborn on May 13, 2012, for this project and for the article below.

Born in 1928 in Allentown, Pa., Robert Harmon Osborn comes from a family of teachers. According to Bob, the Osborns hailed from New Jersey when it was still a colony and produced “a long line of farmers, school teachers, and bankers.” His parents moved to Morristown, N.J., where Bob went to high school and his father taught high-school chemistry before going to work for Allied Chemical.

Bob first fell in love with theater in high school, and his attraction to drama continues to this day. He is currently playing the part of Red Rock Cassidy in Days of Our Lives and has had such classic roles as Rick Blaine in Casablanca and Henry Higgins in My Fair Lady. He is a longtime member of the Olli Players, part of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University. Bob also does a wonderful rendition of Rev. George Docherty!

Bob received his undergraduate degree from Maryville College, a Presbyterian school in Maryville, Tenn., where he studied political science. (He later earned a Master’s degree and worked on a Ph.D.) In the early 1950s, Bob came to Washington, D.C. and took the Federal Service Entrance Exam, ending up at the Department of State in the Bureau of European Affairs.

Finding NYAPC

At State he met Gil Anderson in a prayer study group that met early mornings before breakfast. Bob was looking for a church and had heard of A Man Called Peter. Gil encouraged him to try New York Avenue, which he did in the fall of 1952, although he continued his church shopping. He began attending events with the Young Adults at NYA, which had about 30-40 members. Bob also joined the choir. By 1956, Rev. Docherty said to him in the brogue Bob has mastered, “Bobby, you’ve been coming to kirk here a long time. Don’t you think you ought to be thinking about joining?” And join he did, wearing his blue choir robe.

That same year through theater friends, Bob also met Betty. They were married two years later. NYAPC elders, both friends of the groom, participated in the wedding party. The Osborns moved to Arlington and their first son, Rick, was born in 1960. (He’s now in Florida with four children.) Two more sons, Mark and Jim, came along. Both now live and work in the Washington, D.C. area. His sons prompted Bob to become active in base-

“He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands.”

“It was one of the most exciting moments of my life,” Bob says.

Serving the Church

He served with Gil Anderson on Session in the 1970s when that body wrestled with whether to take a stand against places of questionable repute on 14th Street across from the church; in the end, the Session was persuaded that such a stand would infringe on their neighbors’ freedom of speech. Bob and Gil continued to “take stands” on issues, most recently challenging whether the NYAPC columbarium should be located in the Lincoln Chapel.

Bob has participated energetically in a variety of activities at NYAPC, beginning in the early years with the choir under Stephen Prussing, the Young Adults for singles, and the Mariners for married couples—a group that then included the Reeder, the Cooks, and the Hannas.

Bob served three terms on the Board of Deacons and two on the Session. He delivered meals and flowers to shut-ins, made sandwiches for the 7-2-9 program, and taught in the Study Hall program (precursor to the Community Club) where he found that his counseling training came to the fore. He said that the Study Hall was a two-way learning experience—he learned to change his way of dress and formed friendships with those he taught.

He began attending the Goodpasture Class in the late 1970s with Gil Anderson and Sam Iftikhar. Bob had experience writing lesson plans as a trainer for the Army, and he began to teach the class—fulfilling his family’s calling. Gil and Bob were friends for more than 50 years, sharing many NYAPC activities and experiences.

Bob particularly remembers Gil’s steady hand. He cites the time that he and
Bob Osborn
(Continued from p. 6)
Gil were slated to be pallbearers at Sam Iftikhar’s funeral, but they got lost and never made it to the cemetery. Bob was driving, and Gil calmed him down.

Bob to Robber: Come to Church!
One NYA experience especially stands out for Bob. Leaving choir practice on a Thursday evening in 1973, Bob was accosted in his car by a robber who hopped in, put a gun to Bob’s side, and told him to drive around and relinquish his wallet. “Do you really need all that?” he asked the thief, explaining that he would appreciate having some money for lunch the next day. “He actually gave me back two dollars of my own money!” As he drove, Bob realized that the robber did not know the streets of D.C., so he devised a plan to head for a nearby police station.

All the while, Bob urged the man to “come to church” because “God is a forgiving God.” The robber left the car before Bob got to the station, but a patrol car noticed Bob’s erratic, post-robbery driving and pulled him over, only to learn what had happened. The police escorted him to the station for a complete debriefing, and soon the media, too, had heard Bob’s story. Headlines in the next day’s Washington Daily News and Washington Star read: “Gunman Got a Sermon and Gave a Contribution” and “NYA Chorister Tries to Get Gunman to Come to Church.”

Through all of Bob’s professional career—State Department, Foreign Service Institute, Small Business Administration, the Army at Fort Belvoir for 25 years doing training—in his family life, and in retirement, The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church has had a central role and influence. “It’s been so exciting that I couldn’t go to a local church if I wanted to.” Bob’s joy and enthusiasm for life are easily apparent—in his words, life and living are all about being alive!

Birthday Fund
(Continued from p. 1)

The Benevolence Fund. This gift adds to the resources available to increase the Church’s capacity for service in the city, nation, and world. Currently, the Benevolence Fund, founded in 1969, is used for immediate direct aid for emergencies, such as catastrophic illness or evictions, and to support projects or individuals in need.

If the giver does not choose one of these funds, the Birthday Fund gift goes to the Endowment Fund.

The Planned Giving Committee, co-chaired by John and Cathy Schultheis and Director of Planned Giving/Special Gifts Evelyn Ying, developed the Birthday Fund and hosted the birthday festivities on April 29. Participants sat at tables representing birthdays for each month of the year. Children—young and old—made birthday cards, and the assembly read a litany prepared by Rev. Tara Spuhler McCabe. All enjoyed the delicious cake made by staff member Evelyn McMillan that proclaimed “Happy Birthday Everyone!”

Envelopes for making Birthday Fund gifts can be found in the Sanctuary and at the Front Desk. Checks should be made payable to “The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church” with “Birthday Fund” in the memorandum line. Envelopes may be dropped in the “Birthday Fund” box or offering plate, or mailed to the Church. Gifts may also be made online at www.nyapc.org/give. Finally, birthday cards to give to the celebrant are available at the front desk.

Mark Your Calendars ...
June 10 - Ice Cream Social in Peter Marshall Hall
June 24 - Farewell Reception for Tara in Peter Marshall Hall
July 8, 15, 22 - Summer Listening Sessions
August - Watch for news of the annual NYAPC Hawaiian Potluck!
Transitions

Baptisms:
Andrew Raymond Weiss - March 18
Alistair Antares Yoder-Danewitz - April 29
Lyla Abigail Smith - May 20

Births:
Lucy Adele Smith - April 13
Jeremiah Ndoyu - February 24

Deaths:
Anabel Scott - Jan 8
William Palmer - Jan 10
Mary Louise Engel - Jan 23
Shirley Miller - Feb 23
John Worthy - Feb 29
Samuel E Davie - Mar 9
Helen Davidson - Mar 15
Elvera Rehling - March
Dr. Rene Francisco Morente - Mar 21
Jen McIver's father - Apr 20
Catherine Flaum - Apr 20
Enid Green - May 3
Adele Jensen Krug - May 20

Retirements

We celebrated at least two retirements this spring. Clark Orzalli retired from his career in the Navy. Clark grew up in a Navy family, then attended the Naval Academy. His wife Dale also grew up in a Navy family, so both facing a transition to civilian life.

The Calvert Recorder featured Warren Krug upon his constitutionally required retirement as a judge in Calvert County, Md. The constitution allows retired judges to be recalled, so Warren now serves the county three days a week. See the article at www.somdnews.com/section/news09, (search for “Judge Krug”).

Did You Know?
1. Which U.S. President placed the first Christmas tree in the White House and invited the children of the Second Presbyterian Church [the predecessor of NYAPC] over to see it?
   - Franklin Pierce
   - All of the Above
2. Which of the following folk singers have sung in the NYA sanctuary?
   - Joan Baez
   - Judy Collins
   - Pete Seeger
   - Odetta
   - All of the Above
3. Which Supreme Court Justice led the Men’s Bible Class at NYA?
   - Justice John Harlan
4. What great Christmas carol was written by the hymn writer for whom we have another handwritten hymn in the John Quincy Adams Room?
   - “Angels, from the Realms of Glory” [James Montgomery]
   - “Little Lord Fauntleroy” [Frances Hodgson Burnett]