Sen. Chris Coons and Panel Discuss Partisan Divide
by Meg House

Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE) and a panel of leaders from across the political spectrum responded to the question “How Can Christians Help Bridge the Partisan Divide?” at the most recent McClendon Scholar Program on Nov. 27. The evening combined a look at the very difficult divisions we face in our nation with inspiration from Lincoln, Thanksgiving, and what brings us together as Christians.

Sen. Coons, who is an ordained Presbyterian minister, candidly discussed his experiences working in the Senate and reflected on the very difficult work ahead. He said bridging the divide will mean being uncomfortable. “I never thought I’d be starting my day praying for Donald Trump,” he said. He often feels “utterly inadequate to the challenges of the day,” and if he feels this way, he added, “I can only imagine how Lincoln felt.”

A Radical Redefinition of Neighbor
What makes it easier? Coons’ reflections on Thanksgiving provided some hope. He drew parallels between divisions around the Thanksgiving table and our nation’s divisions. There’s a tension, he said, between our Norman Rockwell image of Thanksgiving (and our nation), and the reality of our lives. But Thanksgiving can also show us how to come together, he said. In Delaware, one group organized delivery of 6,000 dinners. “At the core of the American Spirit is not division but a willingness to roll up our sleeves and get to work.” At the end of the day, the core message of Thanksgiving is like the message of the gospel, said Coons: “a radical redefinition of neighbor.”

How can this work in the Senate? Coons pointed to his experiences at the weekly prayer breakfast as one key. It’s a rare moment of sharing, of spending time without lobbyists or staff. But, he noted, “My job is to fight for my interests. I’m a gladiator, a hired partisan. … The things I hear on the Senate floor would make the disciples weep.” He referred to Jonathan Edwards’ “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” where Edwards describes each of us as like a spider hanging over a flame, held up by a thread. “The only thing that holds us up is this strong thread of grace.”

Forgiveness: Uncomfortable and Necessary
“If we could see each other with the eyes Jesus sees us, we would forgive each other,” he said. And yet he returned to how uncomfortable this can be, describing his response to Lindsey Graham after his inflammatory insults during the Kavanaugh hearings. The first few times Graham called the office, he refused the call. But then he thought, “How can I possibly ask others to forgive while I refuse to call back my friend Lindsey Graham because on one day in one place he hurt my feelings and offended me?”

Coons ended his portion of the program by reflecting that there have always been divisions. Paul’s epistles speak to the deep divisions in the early Christian movement, and today, “We weaponize bits of scripture that let you know which I am, good or bad. … We allow these things to divide us with a depth … that would make Jesus weep.”

Discomfort will be part of the road to healing. We (continued on p. 2)
must forbear with one another in ways that are uncomfortable,” he said, concluding by quoting

Colossians 3:12-15:

As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

The program continued with a Q&A with facilitator Carolyn Lukensmeyer of the Institute for Civil Discourse. In the discussion, Sen. Coons criticized politicians’ focus on reelection and the how political party has become tribal identity for many. He encouraged people to connect locally and to forgive their representatives when they cross the aisle to solve a problem. Has he reconciled with Sen. Graham?” Lukensmeyer asked. “There’s still work to do,” Coons acknowledged, adding that he can’t dwell on the issue, that he has a job to do. He concluded “I can’t forgive Lindsey Graham on my own. That takes faith and looking at the two of us from a kingdom perspective.” He told a story of travelling with a survivor of the Emmanuel AME Church shooting, who carries a Bible with her, its pages tinted pink with blood from that day. And yet she has forgiven Dylann Roof.

Panel Discussion
Carolyn Lukensmeyer then moderated a panel discussion including Pete Wehner (former Bush administration official and New York Times columnist), Melissa Rogers (director of faith-based initiatives under President Obama), Tim Goeglein (vice president of external affairs for Focus on the Family) and Rev. Jimmie Hawkins (director of Office of Public Witness for the Presbyterian Church (USA)).

The four discussed the source of the current political divide, tracing it back historically to the time of the Clinton presidency. Other factors include how our population has “sorted” itself geographically, the fracturing of the mainstream media, the growth of social media, and the lack of anyone “on top” trying to bridge the divide. In addition, they said, faith has been coopted by politics, distorting the Christian message. The panelists discussed working to remember the parts of the Christian message that bring us together versus break us apart, and in the political realm, focusing on the issues we agree on, such as criminal justice reform. The group also discussed the importance of grace, vulnerability, hospitality, and learning to listen to learn, not just to respond.

You can find the full Sen. Coons speech, Q&A session, and panel discussion at the McClendon Scholar in Residence page on our website: www.nyapc.org/mcclendon-sir (scroll to the “previous programs” section.)
Contents
Sen. Chris Coons and Panel 1
Ethiopean Icon from the lobby 3
Center Updates 4
Christmas Pageant 5
Peace Candle 5
Astrid Brigham's Stewardship Minute 5
Hurricane Rebuilding 6
Youth Choir in Worship in October 6
Peacemaking at the 223rd General Assembly 8
Choir Sings Vivaldi’s Gloria 8
Ellen Davis on “Prophetic Possibilities” 9
TRANSITIONS 9
2019 Advocacy Training Weekend 10
Christmas Greetings from OVC Program 10
Results of the Peacemaking Offering 10
MLK Event on Jan. 13 11
Sanctuary Committee News 12
Cuba News 13
Carmina Belasco Visits NYAPC 14
Cuba Partners Network Conference 14
Baghdad Presbyterian Expands School 15
OPW Leads Ecumenical Group to Cuba 15
Matthew’s Journey 16
Nhoro Exam Results 17
Wendo Retreat 17
Nhoro Mentoring Program 19
BID Flyer for Center 20

Note: All words anywhere in this issue typed in blue with underlining are actually hyperlinks or email addresses and can be accessed by clicking on them.
Downtown Day Services Center Updates
by Rev. Alice Tewell

Progress on the Center continues at the church. Last week photographer Stephen Reasonover was able to take amazing photos of the mural that Hank Prussing, son of then Music Minister Steve Prussing, completed in the summer of 1966, when he was 16 years old. Mr. Prussing says it is an allegorical scene of people walking down the side walk. The people are purposely transparent making the comment about who are the invisible members of our society. He said that in an indifferent world, the younger girl and older woman were to make the point about the importance of linking across generations and socio-economic backgrounds.

On the construction side, demolition, about eighty percent of the framing, and some of the electrical work is complete. On the program side, the BID has completed a flyer outlining the services that will be provided as well as the services that are provided off-site until the Center opens. They are also completing the service provider schedule, including daily housing, case management and advocacy, employment services, health care screens, and harm reduction training. Veterans’ benefits, ID services, and birth certificates are also provided on the weekly schedule. More services are to come. (See pages 20 and 21 to read this flyer.)

On the church side, we have formed the BID Advisory Group (BAG), a group of NYA members and staff focusing on the relationship between the BID and the church as well as the role of church volunteers. From the membership, the group includes Ann Bradley, Rebecca Davis, Martha Davis, Paul Dornan, Tyler Feret, Courtney Spearman, and Matt Webster. From staff, the group includes Jasmine Jowers Prout, Roger Gench, and Alice Tewell.

There has been a change in the leadership of the Center. Rev. Linda Kaufman is no longer the Director of Homeless Services and Executive Director of the Center. Ellen Jones, the Deputy Executive Director at the BID, is serving as the Center’s director until someone is hired after the Center's opening. Jones writes, "We are grateful for the contribution Linda made in her short time here at the BID to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness in downtown DC. She helped to set us on the path towards opening the Downtown Day Services Center to place more individuals in housing and secure the services they need to stay housed, while improving their quality of life during that process. We wish her well in her future endeavors." At the church, we are also grateful for the contributions Linda made as well as the relationships she has built both with church staff and members. We wish her well, and expect to see her around town!

We are also excited to announce that in the fall, Darlyene “Tokyo” Direkston joined the BID as the Homeless Services Site and Program Manager to oversee day-to-day operations of the Center. You can read more about Ms. Tokyo here. Most of the other Center staff have also been hired.

Please reach out to us if you have any questions, concerns, or want to volunteer in the Center.
Stewardship Moment for Mission
by Astrid Brigham

Good morning. I’m Astrid Brigham. I was asked to talk this morning about Stewardship. A lot of activities that I take part in here at New York Avenue are able to happen because of funding help from the church.

As you might know, in July I went to Massanetta, a church summer camp in southern Virginia, with Penny, Jacob, Helen, and Sarah. I had an awesome time. The food was delicious, and I probably had more sugar there than I ever have in my life. I made friends in the mini groups, and everyone there was amazing. We all stayed up until almost eleven o’clock each night, and on the first evening, we made 10,250 bags of rice, soy, dried vegetables, and a vitamin packet to send to people in need.

One thing that I look forward to every year is the Youth Day of Service to Honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Kids of all ages from churches across Washington, DC gather right here to make lunch, organize the clothing closets, and make care packages for the homeless.

Just about a month before that, one of my favorite parts of the holiday season takes place. The Christmas Pageant takes place every December, and I love rehearsing the songs and the pageant itself. I have taken part in the pageant for years, starting when I was a sheep.

I also enjoy taking part in Youth Sunday. I enjoy spending time with my friends to help create an entire church service that everyone enjoys.

All of these activities are at least partially funded by the church. In order to keep activities like these going for the youth of the church, please consider filling out a Stewardship Pledge. When you fill out a stewardship pledge, New York Avenue has a better idea of how much money there will be and what activities we can plan for the coming year. Thank you!

Peace Candle
One visitor took a Peace Candle back to Chicago.

Linda Gibbon
Fourth Presbyterian Church
Chicago, IL

2018 Christmas Pageant Rehearsal
Youth Choir Sings for World Communion Day
by Taisha Estrada

For World Communion Day, the Youth Choir performed with the Adult Choir on a piece called “Ukuthula,” which is a South African song that talks about finding peace and redemption through Jesus’ blood. We had one rehearsal before performing, but the kids memorized the music quite quickly! We were even able to add motions. It was really beautiful to combine the choirs and sing such a powerful song proclaiming peace, and I think for adults it can be particularly moving hearing these words from children.

(Taisha, the Alto Soloist with the choir, also directs the Youth Choir, with the able help of Molly Johnson and with Karen Dunlap at the piano.)

Hurricane Rebuilding, Nov. 26-30, 2018
Tarboro, North Carolina
by Rev. Beth Braxton

“You are my angels! Praise God!,” exclaimed Phyllis Skinner of 915 Elm Street, Tarboro, North Carolina, as she proceeded to hug all five strangers in her kitchen inside her back door. We, the NYAPC Disaster Response Team, had just arrived for our first day of work and Phyllis was overjoyed.

The first thing I noticed was the open door to the electric oven. This was Phyllis’ method of heating her house. The natural gas furnace was not operational; and the water heater in the far end of semi-outdoor small storage room also was non-operational. One of the first tasks I got assigned was to work together with her to clean out this storage area so a plumber could put in a new natural gas water heater. I noticed this was the only storage for the five-room fifteen-hundred square feet house; there was no attic and no basement, no garage, and no carport. Sports equipment for grandchildren, automotive tools belonging to a brother, garden tools and equipment, a lawn mower pushed back underneath the floor system in a crawl space – all these and much, much more, all came out onto the little patio and back yard.

(continued on p. 7)
Other tasks at her house included pulling up living room and bedroom carpeting, installing a bathroom light fixture and wooden medicine cabinet, installing door and drawer knobs on brand-new kitchen wall cabinets and base cabinets, feathering out ceiling wallboard seams and ceiling fasteners with spackle, doing outdoor shrub trimming, and lugging trash out to the curb of Elm Street.

Four of our team members worked at a house in Princeville not very far away. Princeville is known as the oldest incorporated town in America for freed African American former slaves, settled in 1865 and twenty years later incorporated. The story is that these people were given bottom land near the Tar River that was prone to flooding. Our four volunteers spent three days completing an outdoor deck already started by an earlier team of volunteers. A third project for the week, which took five of us three hours to complete, was to tarp the roof of a house in Princeville for a retired Veteran.

The first evening, when discussing with the site manager for the United Methodist Disaster Response Center, volunteer team members inquired, “Isn’t there something more urgent we ought to be doing – rather than building a deck?” Rev. Jason DuVall replied, “With each home, we try to lift up (not just replace what it used to be) and leave a little better than it was!”

A surprise for us was that we were doing hurricane rebuilding for the 2016 Hurricane Matthew, not the most recent ones Florence and Michael in 2018. About two hundred homes in the area have requested help.

Two other teams of volunteers were living with us and working in the Tarboro area: nine from Kingsport, Tennessee see https://www.kingsporttn.gov/ and another group of six volunteers from Mooresville, North Carolina http://www.ci.mooresville.nc.us/ The disaster-response center web site reports that six thousand volunteers have come through there: https://nccumc.org/outreach/disaster-response/

The facility where we stayed is a “retired” social services building and is spacious, with lots of cubicles outfitted with beds or bunk-beds. There is also a large kitchen where various teams shared in meal preparation. Two nights while we were there, local churches fed us at supper. And, yes, we got to taste barbecue a la eastern North Carolina: http://www.abramsweb.com/home (Ask David Smoot, our sexton, about Abrams and North Carolina Barbecue; he is from Tarboro.)

Our team’s sojourn was very meaningful and fulfilling. The team go along well; each person had different skills to contribute, and a super attitude. There was always lots of laughter, and relationship building, and conversation, even about politics, as Phyllis pulled out her Obama sign from under the house. Each evening we had prayer, readings and conversation about the day. There is plenty of work remaining for future teams to tackle.

The members of our team were Beth and Bob Braxton from NYAPC, Larry Kugler, Mike Shunfenthal, and Hank Zusman from Jewish Congregation Adat Reyim, Charles Bailey from Burke Presbyterian Church and Jim Davis from Our Lady Queen of Peace Roman Catholic Church.
Peacemaking at the 223rd General Assembly
by Angela Williams, Austin TX
(Angela is a former Young Adult Volunteer at NYAPC.)

The General Assembly's (GA) vote to not divest from fossil fuels but to continue engaging with fossil fuel companies for another two years was profoundly disappointing; However, we also had many reasons to celebrate at this 223rd General Assembly in St. Louis:

Social Justice Issues: Presbyterian Peace Fellowship celebrates the passage of the overture On Praying for a Movement of the Spirit to Engage Presbyterian Congregations in Nation-Wide Action to Prevent Gun Violence, as well as an overture endorsing a moratorium on the death penalty. We also celebrate the GA's overwhelming support for LGBTQIA persons.

Peacemaking and Immigration Issues: The GA passed a Commissioners resolution condemning separation of families at the border. An overture affirming PC(USA) support for conscientious objectors and "peace churches" was approved, as was a strong statement supporting nuclear disarmament. A study was authorized to develop policy recommendations on Central America.

Middle East Issues: The Assembly approved a comprehensive statement on Syria, and several overtures supporting Palestinian rights. We welcome the GA's opposition to legislation in the US which seeks to impose civil and criminal penalties for nonviolent BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) resistance against human rights violations in Israel and Palestine. A report on the status of Jerusalem will be prepared for the next GA.

Theological Issues: The Letter from the Birmingham Jail became a candidate for inclusion in the Book of Confessions.

Environmental Issues: The GA decided not to divest from fossil fuels, but to continue engagement with those companies for at least two more years, despite a 35-20 vote for divestment in the committee, which heard powerful testimony from participants in the Walk for a Fossil Free World and advocates from 40 presbyteries. In the plenary session, representatives from Mission Responsibility Through Investment and the Board of Pensions took advantage of unlimited podium access to convince commissioners to support a weaker minority report.

Mission Coordination: The GA urged all levels of the church to confess their complicity and repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, give voice to Native American theologies, and disrupt historic oppression and racism in Native American communities. The church will develop resources to help us understand how scripture and the confessions teach us to respect people and communities from different cultures and worldviews; how the PC (USA) strayed from those understandings and became complicit in a prevailing worldview of oppression and collusion through policies based on the Doctrine of Discovery; and how to co-operate in efforts that respect Native American peoples and their sovereignty.

General Assembly Procedures: The Office of the General Assembly was asked to recommend cost-reduction measures for future meetings, possibly including shorter or less frequent meetings, managing items of business such as overtures and reports, venue changes, and advisory delegate participation.

Hands and Feet: Apart from official business, 500 Presbyterians took to the streets without a marching permit to deliver $47,000 to a bail fund to release St. Louis residents from pre-trial incarceration and to demand an end to cash bail. The nonviolent direct action was led by local activists, mostly young women of color, and embodied the call of the 2016 General Assembly to become a "Matthew 25" church, engaging in social justice action at every GA.

"Nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek."

-Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail

Choir and Strings Assembled to perform Vivaldi’s Gloria at The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, December 9, 2108
Professor Ellen Davis on
Prophetic Possibilities for Contemporary Ministry
by Paul Dornan

Dr. Ellen Davis, Amos Ragan Kearns Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School, graced New York Avenue as McClendon Scholar in Residence on the weekend of October 20 and 21 with her presence, her knowledge and her teacherly mastery. Dr. Davis is the author of eleven books and many articles. Her research has focused on how biblical interpretation bears on the life of faith communities and their response to urgent public issues, particularly the ecological crisis and interfaith relationships.

Her Saturday morning presentation, “Border Crossing, Hospitality and Community Formation”, drew connections between the story of Ruth and Naomi and America’s immigration policy. Her Sunday church school class, “Holy Places: Precious, Fragile and Threatened” highlighted how the scriptures hold up the Land and whether it is cared for or not as a litmus test of the faithfulness of a people and their leaders. Professor Davis’ sermon that day, “Seeing God in Exile”, interprets Ezekiel as a prophet of hope urging conversion of a people exiled in Babylon. The prophetic witness, in her words, “opens up unexpected possibilities for the future in fear-filled circumstances.”

Professor Davis’ portrayal of Ruth and Naomi displays that same element of hope in apparently hopeless circumstances. Seamlessly interweaving the story of Ruth and her mother-in-law, the woodcuts created by her friend, Margaret Adams Parker, her intimate knowledge of Hebrew and customs of the Near East at the time, Dr. Davis argued that hope emerges from the actions and faithful commitments of ordinary people. In the Bible, women are the quintessential ordinary people, “the poor and the vulnerable”. When Ruth, a Moabite woman, decides to remain with her mother-in-law, a Hebrew, hope comes from crossing borders for the sake of life. The test of a covenant relationship in this view is how one vulnerable person treats another vulnerable person or people. Faithful people empowering vulnerable people becomes the test of covenant.

Over the weekend with Ellen Davis, the New York Avenue community was offered the gift of a masterful teacher sharing her wisdom about how the scripture might be interpreted in light of the consuming issues of our day.

**TRANSITIONS**

**BIRTHS**

Baby girl Quinn Davis was born to Will and Anna Davis and big sister Carolyn Davis, September 17.

George Edward Feret was born to Karen and Tyler Feret, November 6.

Dax Rohan Douglass was born to Silke and David Douglass, December 5.

**BAPTISMS**

Rose Victoria Tewell, daughter of Rev. Alice Rose and Adam Tewell, October 7

Rosemary Day DeBonis daughter of Dena Iverson and Michael Anthony DeBonis, October 21

**DEATHS**

Ann Holland, older sister of Bill Long, in Panama City, Florida, in early September

Bud Long, older brother of Bill Long, in California, in early September

The Reverend Ralph Davis Bucy, 91, former NYAPC Associate Clergy, September 8

Eddie Yoder, brother of Ron Yoder, Sept 12

Anna Graves, former member of NYAPC, at age 87, September 17

Harriet Ford-Breach aunt of Candace Rouchon, September 24

Betty Herndon, long time NYAPC member, at age 92, October 2

Irangani Perera, younger sister of Kamanee Wickremeratne, October 7

Ralph Reeder, after a serious automobile accident, October 12

Elizabeth Ross Young, October 14

Saul Levy, father-in-law of Helga Ying (former member of our congregation and sister of Evelyn Ying), October 22

Anthony Newman, son of Mary Newman and nephew of Raymond Newman, November 13

Dr. Avelex S. Amor, oldest nephew of Adlai Amor, November 19

Ronald Hoffman, father of Karl Hoffman, in December.
2019 Advocacy Training Weekend
April 5-8
in Washington DC

Compassion Peace and Justice Training
Day - April 5
Ecumenical Advocacy Days - April 5-8

Registration for the 2019 Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice Annual Conference is now open! Join us for this important gathering of Christian clergy and laypersons from across the country and around the world as we gather for ecumenical worship, learn from educational and training workshops, advocate on Capitol Hill and stand together in public witness.

This year, our theme is, “Troubling the Waters for the Healing of the World -- #GoodTrouble!” It recognizes the need for us to stand up and speak out on behalf of the most vulnerable in our world. It also reflects the need for us to have advocacy training and skills to build coalitions and movements that address the needs of our own communities.

In 2019, we gather at a time in which people of faith and conscience are again called to stand in the prophetic stream of those who have come before us, those who were not afraid to stir up #GoodTrouble for the sake of God’s kingdom. We also are troubled by the many issues that we are confronting in our communities, nation and world.

Drawing on #GoodTrouble pioneers from the Civil Rights era as well as inspiration from young leaders, the 2019 Ecumenical Advocacy Days will help us to learn from the past, share best practices, and encourage one another for the work ahead. We will beckon the Spirit to “Trouble the Waters” as depicted in John 5:1-9, calling on God to bring healing to our nation and world.

JOIN us for #EAD2019 as we envision and train for new ways to stir up #GoodTrouble for the healing of all God’s children. Register today! For more information or to register, visit https://advocacydays.org/2019-troubling-the-waters/.


Stay tuned for more information about Compassion Peace and Justice Training Day on April 5!
You are cordially invited to the...

DR. Martin L. King JR. Multi-Faith Celebration Service

Remember! Celebrate! Act!
During the Reception, please attend the...

MLK Peace Expo Resource Fair:
“Welcome to the Beloved Community"

Sunday, January 13, 2019, 3:00 p.m.
(MLK Program / 3:45 p.m.
Reception & Resource Fair / 4:30-6 p.m.)
THE NEW YORK AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1313 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC. 20005

You are cordially invited to attend, “DR. MARTIN L. KING JR: REMEMBER! CELEBRATE! ACT!: Humanity Tied in a Single Garment of Destiny”, a commemorative interfaith service for Dr. King on Sunday, January 13, 2019 at 3:00 p.m. hosted by The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church and sponsored by the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington and the Council of Churches of Greater Washington.

Enjoy an afternoon of keynote speaker, Rev. Brenda Girton-Mitchell, sharing reflections (brief bio below), interfaith expressions, Hip Hop Artist Yusha Assad, music by gospel singer Wyomme Pariss and musical selections by the fabulous “The Artists Group Chorale of Washington” as well as the “2019 Interfaith Youth Choir” representing youth of ten different religions! Be present for the first, "Dr. Martin L. King Jr. Humanitarian YOUTH Awards".

Join in a joyous sing-along as we leave the sanctuary for a special Reception of delicious food and the “MLK Peace Expo: Welcome to the Beloved Community”, a Resource Fair of organizations living Dr. King’s dream of a “Beloved Community” making the world a better place.

This is an event the whole family will enjoy! (*There will be FREE Garage Parking for this special service right next to the church at 1399 New York Avenue Washington, DC 20005 til 6:15pm)

*Any organization interested in “tabling” at the MLK EXPO can register at: http://bit.ly/MLKResourceFairREGISTRATION2019
*For more information, contact Andra at: mlk@ifcmw.org

Rev. Brenda Girton-Mitchell
Our keynote speaker, Rev. Brenda Girton-Mitchell, earned a law degree from the Chicago, Kent College of Law and a Master of Divinity degree from Wesley Theological Seminary. She is the Founder and President of Grace and Race Ministries, Inc – a ministry dedicated to working for racial understanding, healing and reconciliation. She has received numerous awards and held many positions. To name just a few: Rev. Girton-Mitchell was the Director of the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the U.S. Department of Education and has served the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA as Associate General Secretary for Justice and Advocacy.

The special awards she has received include the 2007 National Council of Negro Women Bethune Recognition Award for Outstanding Woman in Ministry, National Bar Association Presidential Award, and the Charlotte Ray Award, named after the first black woman lawyer. She was inducted into the Martin Luther King, Jr. College of Preachers at Morehouse College and received the 2008 Society of John Wesley Award of Merit, the highest award granted by Wesley Theological Seminary. Currently, she serves as the Ecumenical Officer for the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. and is the Vice Chair of the Board of Governors for Wesley Theological Seminary.
Sanctuary DMV Network of Congregations  
by Ruth von Fleckenstein

As the news about immigrants and refugees continues to get worse, the Sanctuary DMV Network of Congregations continues to expand and strengthen its efforts. The events recorded here are merely a smattering of all of the things that are going on.

Salvadoran takes sanctuary at UU Church in Bethesda

On December 10, Rosa Gutierrez, who fled El Salvador in 2005 after facing harassment from machete-carrying farmworkers, took sanctuary at Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church in Bethesda to avoid being deported and permanently separated from her three U.S.-born children.

Rosa, after years of annual check-ins with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and wearing an ankle monitor since 2017, was ordered by ICE to buy a plane ticket back to El Salvador. Rosa bought the ticket but decided not to self-deport yesterday, out of worry for the welfare of her children and her own safety if she returned to El Salvador. Her immigration case is pending in court.

Rosa is the mother of three children under the age of 11, including a 6-year-old with Down syndrome and numerous other medical conditions that require vigilant care. When she was ordered by ICE to self-deport, she sought help in the community. DMV Sanctuary Congregation Network helped her find refuge at Cedar Lane UU. She is the first immigrant to seek sanctuary at Cedar Lane.

Planning Retreat, October 20

The retreat examined what’s working, and what needs to be tweaked. Several ongoing work teams were created (3 functional ones) to continue the work of building our most effective structure for our congregational work, developing fund raising, and promoting outreach. Leaders for each group were nominated. The group will be examining a revised mission, vision, strategies and priorities. Our DC Cluster was well represented.

Multiple breakout sessions were held in our Cluster, which allowed us opportunity to reflect on four key questions:

Where do we want our immigrant families to be in 1-2 years due to our organizing efforts?

What are the Policy/Systems Changes we need to focus on to make this vision a reality?

What do we have?

What do we need?

Some suggestions from the DC Cluster:

- Prayer Vigils in various places
- Develop a plan and priorities
- Seek a presence on campuses
- More people from impacted communities
- Engage with congregations who are not involved, and perhaps have never been engaged
- Use the Facebook page more and spread fact-based information.
- Get clearer on our rapid response strategy and plan of action.
- It would be helpful to recruit additional lawyers from our congregations and community.

On October 25, Abel Nunez reported on how the group might plug in more closely with the work of CARECEN DC and TPS recipients who are at risk of losing status because of policy changes. How can congregations help make sure that everyone feels at home in DC? “We need to define what sanctuary means for us in DC, specifically. We need to move from responding to be more proactive in our thinking about legislation. With regard to TPS, we need to provide more capacity to support provide legal services. How might we spread the word in congregations about the need for greater legal assistance? People will be needed to fill out applications, etc. and volunteers will be needed and should be trained in advance of when there will be strong demand; for example, as TPS deadlines approach and persons begin to have work permits expire, etc.”

Other types of actions in the last three months include:

- Accompanying immigrants to ICE appointments
- Lobbying for better legislation for immigrants, both in DC and in the Congress
- Continued action in support of separated children
- Financial and in-person support for immigrants who come to Washington to demonstrate
- Financial support for families of deportees
- Demonstrations and vigils
CUBA NEWS

History Committee Presents NYAPC Cross to Rev. Hernández

On behalf of the NYAPC History Committee, Marilyn Seiber presented to Rev. Liudmila Hernández a necklace of the NYAPC cross, a replica of the Cross of Iona made by the Scottish Arts Industries that hangs in the front of the sanctuary. The PCUSA Office of Public Witness delegation visited First Havana on September 22 for lunch and a briefing to the group by Rev. Hernández. Marilyn gave the necklace to Rev. Hernández the evening of their arrival, and Rev. Hernández wore it the next day for the group’s visit.

Rev. Izquierdo’s New Book on Reconciliation

Rev. Daniel Izquierdo Hernández, pastor of Luyanó Presbyterian Church in Havana and former Moderator as well as General Secretary of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba, recently published a book about which he reports that he gained inspiration and encouragement from his friends in the U.S. and at NYAPC. He autographed and sent copies of *The Great Message, The Challenge of Reconciliation for the Church in Cuba Today* (Un Gran Mensaje, El reto de la Reconciliación Para la Iglesia en Cuba hoy) to Sonia Wall and Marilyn Seiber. His book was on sale at the PC (USA) Cuba Partners Network meeting in Florida in October. Rev. Izquierdo is a trained architect and was ordained in the Presbyterian Church as Minister of Word and Sacrament in 2001. The book explores the mediating work of Christ understood in terms of reconciliation and looks at the church as a reconciling agent within society and especially as it applies to Cuba. Rev. Izquierdo has visited Washington, D.C. and preached at The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church – the last pastor to preach in the pulpit before the sanctuary was closed for renovations.

Rev. Héctor Méndez Celebrates 53 Years as Ordained Minister

[The following was received from Rev. Méndez translated by Sonia Wall.]

To my family in the Christian faith:

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Today, October 26, 2018, I am completing 53 years since my ordination as a Minister of the Word and the Sacraments. That event took place in the Second Presbyterian Church of Cardenas (El Fuerte), October 26, 1965 and was conducted by the then Presbytery of Cuba.

I thank God that he permitted me to serve Him in Cuba, my country, during 51 years of active service in the pastorate; I thank my parents and my brother, who at a difficult moment for preaching the Gospel in Cuba, respected my decision; I give thanks to the different churches where I had the opportunity to serve during those years; I give thanks to so many people who throughout the years have supported me in the work and from whom I have learned a lot; I thank God for the opportunity to expand my vision of the family of faith through participation in the ecumenical movement; I give thanks in a special way to my family, my wife Oneida and my daughters Oneidita and Suecia, for their understanding and support always.

In the same way I thank God for these last two years, of supposed RETIREMENT, in which we continue preaching the Word and serving in different ways.

MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED!

Fraternally, HECTOR MENDEZ

Note from Sandra Santos

[Former First Havana Music Director, Sandra Santos, and her husband Oscar and two sons moved to Indiana in August where Oscar is pursuing a Master's degree in Music at Indiana University.]

In November we celebrated our first four months in the US! We've experienced so many things, and it has been a challenge. But we're also very happy about this extraordinary blessing we've received. The kids are learning English so fast! They surprise us every day with new expressions and words. Our integration to the American culture is being gradual and successful.

Oscar is finishing the first semester with the highest qualifications. He has performed twice with the Renaissance and Baroque Orchestra in his department, and is already preparing for two more concerts in the next weeks. The weather here is so different from the Cuban one! We have experienced extreme hot, windy days (tornado alerts!), heavy rain, and even snow in a relatively short time.

We are attending the First Presbyterian Church in Bloomington where we have been extremely well received. They offered their support from the first moment. Some members of the congregation are helping us so we are deeply grateful. In general, Bloomington is a very friendly place to live. Its inhabitants are aware of the huge amount of foreign students arriving every year, most of them in need of basic things to settle down, and there's a culture of sharing and helping here.

We're really happy about how our life is going here and we're very excited about professional and personal perspectives in the future.

God bless you all,

Oscar D. Cañizares and Sandra Santos.
**Carmina Blasco Visits—Finally!**

by Marilyn Seiber

Carmina Blasco—Elder of First Havana and “born into the church”—finally was able to visit the United States after years of waiting. Carmina is a friend to all Presbyterians who visit not only First Havana but the national Presbyterian Church (Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba) as well. Carmina is employed by the Synod as an accountant, but also has a job she jokingly refers to as “Foreign Minister” for planning visits by international church guests. Carmina waited eight years to receive Spanish citizenship and a Spanish passport (her father and grandparents are Spanish), and is now able to travel freely to the U.S. without a visa. Carmina has come to the U.S. previously to visit with U.S. Presbyterian churches, but the last time was in 2001.

Carmina had a whirlwind visit, seeing friends from NYAPC, Church of the Pilgrims, Leesburg Presbyterian, Old Presbyterian Meeting House and St. John’s Episcopal Church, all of whom had been on NYAPC visits to First Havana. She also met with members of the Presbytery’s Global Mission Network that supports a Presbytery Cuba Partners Network. The pastor of Leesburg Presbyterian Church gave her a tour of the church and a walking tour of Leesburg as well as nearby sights, ending in an evening gathering of Leesburg members who had been to Cuba.

Rev. Alice Tewell hosted a dinner for Carmina the night before the worship service at NYAPC where Carmina led “Time with Children” and gave greetings to the congregation from First Havana. Following the service, the Cuba Partners Committee hosted a lunch reception so more of the congregation could meet her. She also gave a brief talk allowing for questions and answers, reporting on the mission work of First Havana, its latest renovation projects, including expansion of the library, and the efforts of Rev. Hernández to bring more children and young adults into the church programs.

Throughout the week, Carmina enjoyed seeing old friends and meeting new ones. She hopes to visit the States annually and make Washington, D.C. her hub. We hope she will do that!

**Cuba Partners Network Conference**

Oct. 24-27, 2018, Leesburg, Florida

*Discerning Our Strategy for These Times*

This year’s annual gathering took place at the spacious Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center outside Leesburg, FL, a half-hour ride by pre-arranged shuttle from the Orlando airport. We were approximately 90 attendees, discerning together issues of inequality and power. Anne Laroche, Betsy Merritt and Marilyn Seiber attended from the NYAPC.

Over three days, our community deepened bonds of friendship at mealtimes, in workshops, in worship, in business meetings over money matters, by making S’mores, by singing and by listening to news of what’s going on in Cuba and other places in the Caribbean and Latin America. We learned that there is a shortage of paper in Cuba and that Living Waters for the World is providing clean water in twelve of fifteen Cuban provinces.

In June 2018 at the 223rd General Assembly in St. Louis, Missouri, our two denominations, PC(USA) and La Iglesia Presbyterian-Reformada de Cuba (IPRC) had reaffirmed our Mutual Mission of working together in proclamation, mission, evangelism and reconciliation. Our October gathering welcomed the theme "Act Boldly and Compassionately so that Faith Comes Alive and the World Wakes Up to New Possibilities."

Highly significant is advocacy for Cuba now. Partners recognize that the embargo is a complex set of laws that a president cannot change. Information and support are available to empower us to take action and support current legislation to end the travel ban and trade embargo against Cuba now.

Our program had been planned by nineteen leaders from partner congregations across the US. Six Cubans participated, and two interpreters facilitated presentations and discussions. Adding enthusiasm were eighteen commuters from Florida churches wishing to establish a new partnership or planning to visit Cuban Presbyterians next year.

Our next Conference will be in New Orleans in June 2019, and everyone is welcome to participate. In the meantime, join us to advocate ending restrictions on travel and trade policies that deprive normal citizens of basic goods. Five bills are languishing in Congress that your activism can energize!
PC(USA) Office of Public Witness Leads Ecumenical Group to Cuba
by Marilyn Seiber

On September 21-27, 2018, the PC(USA) Office of Public Witness with the Latin America Working Group organized an ecumenical delegation to Cuba for the purpose of advancing advocacy on behalf of Cuba to eliminate U.S. policies against Cuba. In addition to the Office of Public Witness Director and staff, the group consisted of representatives from the United Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopal, Baptist, and Church of Christ churches as well as the Latin American Working Group and the Washington Office on Latin America. Marilyn Seiber represented NYAPC. The delegation was hosted by the Cuban Council of Churches.

Most delegation members had not been to Cuba previously or had visited once or twice in the past. The goal of the Cuban Council was to introduce to delegation members the “Cuban reality” of the impact of the embargo on daily living in Cuba; the energy, growth, and vital role of churches in Cuba; and the cultural and political environment existing in Cuba. The Council introduced its staff and the extensive programs throughout the country, and enabled the delegation to meet with staff and discuss programs and challenges with them. The group helped distribute Bibles to children on International Bible Day in the province of Pinar del Rio; met with the leader of the Assemblies of God; toured the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center and met with its leaders; and was briefed by an economist as well as the Director of the Office of Religious Affairs of the Communist Party.

The group was hosted for lunch and a briefing by Rev. Liudmila Hernández at First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana which emphasized the history of the church in Cuba and the activism of its mission and outreach in today’s Cuba.

The Council’s efforts to demonstrate a thriving church in Cuba and yet to show the serious negative impact of the U.S. embargo and the downsizing of the U.S. Embassy in Havana made an impact on the delegation. All were committed to working for increased advocacy on Cuba’s behalf. This new effort supports the concurrent effort by the PC(USA) Cuba Partners Network to make advocacy for Cuba part of its mission as it promotes partnerships.

Baghdad Presbyterian Expands School!
by Marilyn Seiber

In October 2018 the National Evangelical (Presbyterian) Church in Baghdad expanded its Pre-K and Kindergarten school to add grades 1, 2 and 3. The grand opening was a marvelous event and celebration. Plans are already underway to add 4th grade in 2019 and 5th and 6th grades in 2020. Each grade requires two classrooms plus labs, and extra needed construction will take place above the current K/Pre-K and elementary buildings. Construction costs will range from $180,000 to $250,000. In addition, a wider playground is also being built. The school still needs more furniture—desks, lab, library—for the elementary school (ranging from $3,000-$5,000) to meet Ministry of Education standards. The school also needs a mini-bus to take the children to and from school at a cost of $34,000—$36,000. The church and school communities are excited to have accomplished this next step in their education program.

In other activities, the Baghdad Church plans to train its staff for handling and treating children with autism who attend the school. Rev. Hammo hopes to hold a week or two of training for staff that also will include staff from the Kirkuk and Basra churches.

Finally, the Baghdad Church also plans to acquire its own FM radio broadcasting station—it currently uses one owned by another entity—and expects to use one of its properties for the broadcasting station. It will still require equipment, broadcast tower, staff training, and fees for using the broadcasting wavelength. Rev. Hammo expects that transmitting equipment will cost $50K; transmitting tower $45-55K, and wavelength monthly fees of $2,000. (A Presbyterian church in Atlanta is willing to cover this latter cost.)

Overall, the Baghdad Church is moving forward with its mission planning with energy and enthusiasm. The opening of the expanded Good Shepherd School is a wonderful accomplishment and mark of the church’s dedication to its mission.
Matthew’s Journey
by Marsha Renwanz

Matthew Mukua is a gifted and talented student in our Njoro Partnership program. He is enrolled in Class Eight at a local elementary school. During the NYAPC-sponsored trip to Njoro this past August, Matthew was a member of the Alpha (youngest) discussion group, shepherded by Bob Braxton, Elizabeth Black, and me. Knowing the Bible passages we covered each day by heart, Matthew was quite responsive to our questions and asked some compelling ones of his own. He read a book a night from a collection Rev. Beth Braxton had carried with her to build up the Njoro program’s library. Matthew also excelled in the Arts and Crafts group, creating beautiful paintings, beaded jewelry, Christmas wreaths and collages. His very original artwork expressed a keen emotional sensitivity and insight. A model student, Matthew is ranked at the top of his class. Thus, we were greatly alarmed to learn on from the Njoro Team that Matthew was missing as of Friday, September 14. He had run away from home, without letting anyone know of his whereabouts. We immediately asked our congregation to pray for his safe return.

Unlike the Prodigal Son in the parables of Jesus, Matthew had only three dollars in his pocket when he ran away. The specifics characterizing his journey parallel the hardships facing countless 19th century European children as movingly depicted in novels such as Oliver Twist and Nicolas Nickleby by Charles Dickens and Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte, among many others. Matthew lives in a small tin hut with his mother and an older brother. During our home visits in August, we saw only two pieces of furniture in the dwelling, both donated by then Njoro program chairman Philip Mathenge. One was a hard wooden-backed bench to sit upon. Directly behind the bench was a set of two cushions on a platform and covered by a torn curtain. This is where Matthew and his older brother sleep. Matthew’s mother depends on day labor to earn a few dollars a day when work is available. She described her inability to earn enough income to feed the boys at night. Grateful for the corn meal that the Njoro program gives Matthew every Saturday, I was humbled to witness the stark poverty in front of me in Matthew’s dwelling place.

We later learned that Matthew left his home in great shame, following harsh and unjust corporal punishment at school. A very unfortunate relic of British colonial rule in Kenya, the education system adheres to such outdated norms and practices as corporal punishment. The counterproductive use of physical force by teachers remains widespread in Kenyan elementary schools and elsewhere. Having been blamed for some rowdy misbehavior by others Matthew faced multiple “spankings” on the day before he ran away. As Matthew wrote in a lengthy apology essay upon his return, the seating arrangement of his classroom had been reorganized earlier that eventful week, placing Matthew with several other boys in the back row. Although Matthew continued studying when the home room teacher left the room, others started shouting and using glass bottles to hit the walls. When the teacher returned, she demanded to know who the culprits were. When no one responded, she called the boys in the back row to the front and had them kneel. She then proceeded to hit every student in the classroom once, except Matthew’s row, who were hit twice. Then she instructed the students to go to their English class. As Matthew tried to retrieve his English book, the teacher hit him a third time with a black hard-rubber stick. As Matthew wrote: “We used to call it Black Mamba.” After he protested his innocence, the teacher hit Matthew again and rang for the Deputy. When the Deputy failed to respond, the teacher ordered Matthew to go and find him.

When he found him in his office, the Deputy refused to hear Matthew’s side of the story. He ordered Matthew to return at the end of the day’s classes. Matthew wrote that he was angry by then, facing a fourth round of punishment. To make matters worse, when Matthew walked into his English class, he found his home room teacher punishing students who had failed the English test. After directing Matthew to go get his test answers, Matthew wrote as follows: “I felt the world had come to an end.” Matthew decided to flee, timing his exit through the main gate when the security suard had moved away for a brief interval. After running out of the gate, Matthew walked home. His mother was there, cleaning utensils. Matthew told her he’d had to leave school early because he wasn’t feeling well. Concerned, Matthew’s mother asked him to go to the Njoro Church Health Clinic. Knowing he was healthy, Matthew hid in Njoro’s Cinemax and returned home late, telling his mother that there’d been a long queue at the clinic. Exhausted, Matthew went to sleep and put off deciding his next steps until morning.

Rising early the next day, Matthew put on his uniform and hid his home clothes in his school bag. After his mother gave him three dollars to pay for a school trip, Matthew left knowing he could not face returning to school. After changing into a tee shirt and jeans, Matthew decided to spend fifty cents on a communal van trip to Nakuru, the closest nearby city. After walking aimlessly around Nakuru and recognizing he lacked any concrete plans, Matthew bargained down the ticket price and took another communal van to Nairobi, which was several hours away. By the time he reached Nairobi, Matthew spent his last dollar on food. Seeing a sign post for River Road, Matthew decided to follow it for many miles. Upon finally reaching a Book Seller, Matthew asked him where he might find a Children’s Home as he had nowhere else to sleep. The Book Seller pointed Matthew in another direction, which he followed for many additional hours.

Finally, Matthew reached a sign post for the “Halfway Rehabilitation Centre.” By this time, Matthew was exhausted, parched and famished. After being introduced to a teacher there, Matthew related much that had happened to him. But when the teacher asked for Matthew’s mother’s phone number, Matthew wrote that he “cheated” him by saying he didn’t know the number. After being told that the other children at the Centre were not “normal” like Matthew, he was told he could stay as long as he abided by the institutional rules. Upon agreeing to do so, Matthew was given water, food, some clothes and a place to sleep near some toilets. Despite a paltry food allowance (only 1 cup of porridge at breakfast and a few spoons full of rice and cabbage at lunch), mosquito-ridden sleeping conditions, no freedom of movement, and boredom, Matthew stayed at the Centre for three weeks. He
looked forward to working on the Centre’s farm every Saturday because it helped him deal with his anger. He also appreciated the morning prayers and singing every day. Moreover, he was grateful for being able to drink as much water as he wanted.

Eventually, Matthew was given the responsibility of cleaning the room where the Centre’s matrons slept. It was while he was doing this chore Matthew started to question himself, asking what his mother must be feeling as well as Susan, the Njoro OVC Program’s Social Worker. As his anger abated, he started to realize how foolish his decision to run away had been. After all, he only had one month to go before he would graduate from elementary school. If he missed taking the National Exams, that would end his dream of qualifying for a public boarding school in Nakuru to continue secondary education. As Matthew’s confusion lessened and his regrets grew, he looked for an opportunity to escape. After mopping the matron’s room one morning, he told the security guard at the front gate that the teacher had directed him to go to the shop. The guard refused to let him leave without a written note. Controlling his anger, Matthew settled upon another strategy. Pretending he had to water the plants at the farm, Matthew took advantage of an opportune moment to jump over the fence to freedom.

Matthew’s journey back home was characterized by the same privation and hardships he faced when he first ran away. He ran for a very long time until he reached a place called Mlolongo around seven o’clock at night. Matthew then decided to walk until he found a place to sleep. After nearing a building labeled the Bamburi Cement Factory, Matthew sought some cardboard boxes to sleep in. Seeing a man sitting near a kiosk from a distance, Matthew decided to approach him. After greeting the man, Matthew asked him for a place to sleep. Shocked by this request, the man demanded to know who Matthew was, where he was from, where he was going and what was he doing at the kiosk. Despite Matthew’s explanation’s, the man refused to help him. Yet Matthew persisted until this unlikely Good Samaritan relented and asked for Matthew’s mother’s phone number. When Matthew dialed the number, Matthew’s mother was overjoyed to hear his voice. She sent a dollar from her cell phone to the unlikely Samaritan, who in turn took Matthew to a hotel to eat. After that, Matthew returned to the kiosk with the man and slept there.

The next morning Matthew’s mother phoned and promised him she’d send additional dollars to cover his transportation costs back home. The Samaritan received a dollar and accompanied Matthew on a bus to Nairobi, where they looked for another vehicle to take him to Nakuru. By the time Matthew reached Nakuru, his mother was there to greet him with great joy and excitement. She’d brought enough food to satiate Matthew on the road back to Njoro. When they reached Njoro, she also took him to a hotel for another meal. Such abundance of food was the Kenyan equivalent of killing the fatted calf. Back home at last, Matthew was also welcomed by his uncle. No questions were asked of him that evening and he went to bed full and greatly relieved to be back.

The following morning, Matthew related all that had transpired. After Matthew was told never to repeat such a mistake, he prepared himself for returning for to school to apologize to his teachers. After his heartfelt apologies, Matthew was allowed to take an important year-end exam. When the results were re-leased Matthew had achieved twentieth place out of two hundred and eight exam takers. With some of his confidence returning, Matthew attended the Njoro Saturday program, where he apologized to Susan. He also apologized to other Njoro team leaders, asking for forgiveness. He wrote of his happiness upon being forgiven. Next, he wrote a lengthy essay to Rev. Beth Braxton, relating his journey as summarized above. Thanking her and NYAPC for supporting him and everyone else in the Njoro program, he asked for prayers as he awaited taking the National Exams. As Matthew concluded his letter, he wrote: “Thank you so much and may God bless you in everything you are doing for us. May God be with you and we hope that we will meet again, God willing.”

Note: when Matthew took the National Primary School Exam (the K.P.C.E.) in November, he received 379 points out of 500, which put him in 11th place out of 205 students who took the exam. Francis Muchemi, the returning chair of the board said “We are celebrating Matthew. He did very well despite many challenges and missing classes.”

Kenya National Primary School Examination (the K.P.C.E.)
Orphans and Vulnerable Children Scores
November 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Student</th>
<th>Points out of 500</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Mukua</td>
<td>379 points out of 500</td>
<td>11th of 205 students sitting exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammy Ndungu</td>
<td>257 points out of 500</td>
<td>average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Wanjiru</td>
<td>255 points out of 500</td>
<td>average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branton Ngige</td>
<td>231 points out of 500</td>
<td>average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The Wendo Retreat for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Kenya

Francis Muchemi
We have just arrived back from the Wendo Retreat Center, where we spent most of Friday November 16 and Saturday November 17. We had a good time there with lots of fun. One child even said yesterday, that once he goes back home, he will pray God that our donors in the US have more money, so that next year they can send more money for a one week retreat, because one night wasn’t long enough! I hope Rhonda will share with you about the retreat. Thanks and blessings to all and much love. Here are some accounts by the OVC children:

(continued on p. 18)
(continued from p. 17)

Elizabeth Waweru Wambui
On the first day, the first game played was having a walk of about 3 kilometers. The second game was all about following instructions so as to win the game. Game 3: we made a circle where we held each other’s hands and listened to the instruction. It was to use the body parts such as, head to knee or elbow to toes. The lesson learned was that we should follow the instructions given. Game 4: we made a circle, we held hands, and then we separated every person in his or her own position. We learnt that we should follow the instructions given. Game 5: we stand on a post block where we were mixed in different sizes. The instructions were that you should arrange yourselves from the tallest to the shortest. We learnt that we should work as a team and don’t do wrong to make others sad. Game 6: there was a dance talent (contest.)

On the second day, in the morning we went for physical exercises. We did practices using body parts, where we stretched. Game 2: we were given instructions where we were given fire blocks in groups of three. We were given instructions such as, use the fire blocks to close a certain distance where you could not touch the ground. It taught that we should follow instructions, we should share the little we have, and it also emphasized team work. Game 3: we were given instructions where we used the 60 seconds and claps, where we clap faster than a second in a minute. The lesson learnt is that we should use our time well. Game 4: we were taken to a field where there was a rope in a circular shape, with which we measured our height. Inside the rope we were given tickets of each country where, after sleeping upside down in a straight manner, we kept our tickets under the head. We were given instruction that we should not touch the rope or touch the ground before the rope. We learnt that we should follow instructions. Game 5: we were taken into an open room where table tennis, pool and other new games. We played till one o’clock, then we went to take lunch. Then at two o’clock we went to the hall. We saw what we had done because we were recorded. We took a group photo, then played a lot and started our journey back to Njoro.

Matthew Mokua Maguti
It was on a Friday when we all assembled at our school campground. Our teachers talked to us and arranged us accordingly. We gathered the requirements and went for breakfast. We took our breakfast and we were waiting for the bus. After that, our pastor held a word of prayer. Immediately after we finished praying, the bus arrived. We put our bags in the boot and got in the bus.

Without wasting any time, we set off. We travelled for almost two hours. Luckily, we arrived at Wendo Camp. Some of us were disappointed because we had travelled for such a short while. When we entered, the place looked like paradise. It was green everywhere. When we alighted, two hosts welcomed us. From there they took us to the games room. That place was where we were given instructions as the hosts were introducing themselves. After that, we were shown where the toilets, dormitories and bathrooms were. After we changed, we followed the hosts to the field. At the field, the first game was about following instructions. It was tricky. We enjoyed the game very well. Afterwards we had a cup of water and headed for lunch. The dining room was well-ventilated, it was smelling nice and we were told to enjoy the meal. What was amazing was that we were serving ourselves. There was every kind of food. The food was sweet and delicious.

From there, we played a bit and went for dancing. The dancing master was very kind, humble and friendly. He showed us how to dance at the same time we were stretching. We enjoyed the dancing very much. After dancing, we had a cup of water, and headed on to the next activity. The activity we were going to do was balancing on the high flatted pole. After stepping on, we were then told to re-arrange ourselves in ascending order. We

(continued on p. 19)
thought that it was impossible. But it was not impossible. The only means that we had to apply was teamwork, self-trust and being serious. We talked to each other and agreed. The first time we failed. We remembered that we had not applied seriousness. The second time we succeeded because we followed the instructions. The hosts were happy because since the Wendo Camp started, there had been none who had ever made it.

From there, we went for evening tea. We enjoyed it and then went to take a shower. We went to our dorms. They were well-ventilated. After a shower, we went for dinner. The meal was very delicious. The bonfire followed. I was the one telling a story. The members were happy. From there we went to sleep. We had a very nice night.

The following day we woke up and went to the Sanctuary. Then we had breakfast. After that we went to the games field. We played another tricky game and finally we succeeded. We learnt that teamwork leads to success. After lunch we went for another tricky game. All that was needed was teamwork. Then we went for dinner. We took tea and cakes. From there we went to the hall and waved to our hosts for it was the last day. We came back safely. We really enjoyed it, and we would like to go back for a week.

Mentoring in the Njoro OVC Program
by Francis Muchemi

Rev. Matiko is encouraging all the OVC Committee members to mentor a few students!

Dear Rev Beth,

Greetings in Jesus name!

In our last meeting we agreed all mentors should have time with the children before 4th December and write a short paragraph of their experiences with the students and share with you and Fritz, so next week expect more emails from committee members.

Today (December 1) I had a chance to meet my students, they are:

1) John Njoroge
2) Simon Endapan
3) Monica Kavindu
4) Samuel Macharia, who wasn't there today. He had asked permission to go school to get school fees structured; next time he will be there.

Today mainly was to introduce myself to them and who I am to them. We started with a word of prayer by John Njoroge, I shared with them briefly about discipline and I gave them time to ask any questions and we agreed to be open to each other. We shall also plan how we shall be meeting and then Monica Kavindu ended with a word of prayer. It was great to have time with them. Below are some photos with them. I will keep updating.

My love to you all,

Francis
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About The Center

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For more information or to get involved, contact (202)-638-3232.
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