

Around The Fellowship

T e a r i n g d o w n w a l l s . B u i l d i n g u p h o p e .

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**Judy Dale,
Editor**

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Communications
Department

WELCOME!

Welcome to MCC's "Around The Fellowship" newsletter from Metropolitan Community Churches.

To include your information in upcoming issues, send news to [Judy Dale](#), Editor.

LEARN MORE ABOUT MCC'S BOARD OF ELDERS!

You can now read the complete report of the recent meeting of MCC's Board of Elders online!

To read the report and learn more about the work and ministry of MCC's Elders, [CLICK HERE](#).

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LOCAL MCCs MADE A DIFFERENCE

During the recent holidays, MCC congregations helped thousands of individuals and families have a more blessed Christmas. Here are just a few examples.

There was a huge pile of coats in front of the altar at **Reconciliation MCC** (Grand Rapids, Michigan). They were following the Scriptural admonition to give one of their coats to a person who has none.

Trinity MCC (Gainesville, Florida) adopted three local families. Plus they made sure that there were presents for all of their own MCC children.

MCC Louisville (Kentucky) congregants provided over 100 gifts for teenagers (US\$75 gift cards) and children (fulfilling their wish lists) who are infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. The program at House of Ruth then allows the parent/s to wrap the gifts and give them to their children.

The Outreach Team at **MCC of Our Redeemer** (Augusta, Georgia) sponsored a Memory Tree. People donated US\$1 or more in honor of loved ones with the money going to the church's Benevolence Fund.

The Children's Ministry at **Harvest MCC** (Denton, Texas) raised enough money to purchase a water buffalo for an Asian family through Heifer International.

The annual Bears and Books drive at **First MCC** (Atlanta, Georgia) gathered teddy bears and children's books for students at Montclair Elementary School.

Residents of two nursing homes received gifts and Christmas visits from the folks

MCC PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF LGBT RIGHTS PIONEER BARBARA GITTINGS

Before Stonewall, Barbara Gittings was taking part in demonstrations for LGBT rights at the U.S. White House and the Liberty Bell.

A moving tribute to Barbara Gittings' life has been authored by Rev. Elder Jim Mitulski, with contributions by Rev. Nancy Wilson and Rev. Troy Perry.

You can read the tribute at www.MCCchurch.org.

TROY PERRY BOOK AVAILABLE ON AMAZON.COM

The beautiful coffee table book, "Troy Perry: Pastor and Prophet," is available for purchase on Amazon.com.

This book makes a wonderful gift or keepsake, and you'll find the lowest price on Amazon.com.

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at **MCC Corpus Christi** (Texas).

Each Sunday in December the folks at **MCC of Greater Dallas** (Texas) brought specific items to be given away, including blankets, warm clothes, canned goods, and toys.

A family was adopted by the congregation of **Peninsula MCC** (San Mateo, California), as was a family in Northern Virginia by the folks at **MCC NOVA** (Fairfax).

Christmas cards galore with individual notes and greetings poured in at **MCC San Jose** (California). The church addressed them and mailed them to people incarcerated during the holidays.

Over 30 winter coats to be sent to Kurdish children in Iraq were brought into the sanctuary and blessed by the children of **MCC Wichita Falls** (Texas) on Christmas Eve.

MCC Albuquerque (New Mexico) had an angel tree in their lobby. There were red angels for children and families who need a little extra help this Christmas and white ones for items for the church.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND REPORTS

Mary Ann Lawson led the congregation of **MCC Lubbock** (Texas) in their annual Kwanzaa service.

The Cycle Disciples of **FirstCoast MCC** (St. Augustine, Florida) donated a tree to the St. John's County Festival of Trees. They decorated the tree for breast cancer awareness and education, naming it "Hope".

New Creation MCC (Columbus, Ohio) had a Holiday Bizarre Bazaar, selling arts and crafts, food, fleece blankets, and rainbow items.

Two Christmas Eve services for the community were conducted at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts by **Sunshine Cathedral MCC** (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida).

MCC Albuquerque (New Mexico) has produced a DVD of their Christmas pageant, *Playing Church: A Pageant's Progress*. It is available for US\$5. neilm@mccabq.com

Divine Peace MCC (Pontiac, Michigan) had a contingent in the city's Christmas Parade and **MCC of the Coachella Valley** (Cathedral City, California) had a float in the Festival of Lights parade.

On Christmas Eve the folks at **All Saints' MCC** (Christchurch, New Zealand) gathered for a celebration, carol sing, and supper.

MCC Wichita Falls (Texas) sponsored "Hope for the Holidays," a support group for those living with HIV.

**HONOR OR
MEMORIALIZE YOUR
LOVED ONES THROUGH
MCC**

Your financial donation to Metropolitan Community Churches is a wonderful way to honor or memorialize your loved ones.

Your gifts touch the lives of people around the world with a message of hope and faith -- and are a beautiful tribute to those who have made a difference in our lives.

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**SHARE YOUR CHURCH'S
NEWS**

To share your church's news with the MCC Fellowship, send info by e-mail to Judy

The folks from **MCC of Our Redeemer** (Augusta, Georgia) traveled to the Biltmore Estate in Ashville, North Carolina, to participate in one of the Candlelight Christmas Evenings. The next day they toured the gardens, winery, farm village, and the rest of the estate.

MCC Corpus Christi (Texas) made and sold items at a Christmas Craft Fair at a neighboring Methodist church, as well as in their own church.

A holiday trolley ride to see the beautiful Christmas lights was enjoyed by folks from **Church of the Trinity** (Sarasota, Florida).

The Children's Church at **Jesus MCC** (Indianapolis, Indiana) celebrated Jesus' birthday with a party complete with games, cake, and gifts.

Open Door MCC (Boys, Maryland) took a group for a Sing-Along at a local nursing home.

The Celebration Choir at **MCC San Diego** (California) presented their Christmas program on two consecutive evenings at a nearby middle school.

Congregants at **FirstCoast MCC** (St. Augustine, Florida) brought items needed for the church, such as coffee cups and copier paper, as their Christmas gifts.

JUSTICE AND SOCIAL AC

Rev. Elder Jean White was interviewed by the British Press when conservative Christian groups tried to proclaim "all of Christianity's objection" to the Sexual Orientation Regulations which became effective in Northern Ireland this year.

LGBT people across Jamaica regularly face hostility, attacks and even murder. You can make a difference by sending a brief e-mail to the Prime Minister of Jamaica. You'll find complete details in the Action Alert on-line at www.MCCchurch.org.

The Social Justice Committee of **Open Arms MCC** (Rochester, New York) hosted a *Gay History Fair* for the entire community featuring speakers, vendors, panelists, and exhibitors.

Angels of Hope MCC (Green Bay and Appleton, Wisconsin) opened its doors to Fair Wisconsin for a phone bank staffed by hundreds of people over a three day period in an attempt to defeat an anti-gay marriage amendment.

MCC Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) cosponsored a Presence Prayer Vigil outside the venue where James Dobson was preaching at a "Stand for the Family" rally. The counter group, "Standing with ALL Families," represented the families of the LGBT community who are ignored by Dobson's Focus on the Family organization.

Good Shepherd MCC (Sydney, Australia) supports the Salvation Centre in Cambodia, for the purpose of educating the children of people who have died

[Dale](#), Editor.

Deadline is the 15th of each month.

from AIDS, a program that was instituted by **Rev. Greg Smith** while he worked there. Over a year's time, they donate enough money to educate 100 children. **MCC Auckland** (Aeroteareo/New Zealand) also supports this Cambodian ministry.

Light University, the educational arm of **Sunshine Cathedral MCC** (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida) showed *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin* during February. The movie is the definitive film biography of one of the most controversial figures of the US Civil Rights Movement. He was one of the first "freedom riders," an advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King, and an organizer of the 1963 March on Washington, but he was denied his place in the limelight for one reason - he was gay.

The folks at **MCC San Diego** (California) donated coats and blankets to be distributed to the homeless during the recent freezing weather.

Glorious Light MCC (Pretoria), **Good Hope MCC** (Cape Town), and **Hope and Unity MCC** (Johannesburg), were part of the Joint Working Group of LGBT organizations that supported the Civil Union bill that was adopted by the government of South Africa, providing same sex marriage in that nation.

The **MCC in the Valley** (North Hollywood, California)'s Last Sunday of the Month Noon Forum featured Mike Sandler from California Interfaith Power and Light, a statewide organization mobilizing the religious communities to take a leading role in the fight to halt global warming and protect our climate.

Metropolitan Community Churches was listed as an endorsing organization near the top of the page in a full page ad in many large US newspapers, including *USA Today*, for the *Weekend of Prayer for Darfur* sponsored by SaveDarfur.org.

Representatives from **Harvest MCC** (Denton, Texas) were part of a peaceful counter-demonstration at North Texas University when a fundamentalist preacher, Pastor Tom Short, ranted for hours about the sins of the world, in which he included homosexuality! They were able to talk to many college students and give them information about MCC.

MCC of the Upstate (Duncan, South Carolina) is involved with 19 different community organizations in the Greenville - Spartanburg area. They are barely two years old, but have already donated over US\$4,000 to the community! They also regularly contribute paper products to the Middle Tyger Community Center's pantry and maintain their children's playground on a monthly basis.

Team effort! **MCC of the Quad Cities** (Davenport, Iowa) adopted a local elementary school. They listen to children read, provide additional adult supervision at school functions, and do other things to benefit the students. In return the children write letters to homebound members and help with other projects for the church.

The *Do The Thing* campaign, which provides support for children with HIV and AIDS at **Mother of Peace Orphanage** in Zimbabwe, was launched in the Sarasota-Tampa-St. Petersburg area of Florida the end of January. Tennis champion **Martina Navratilova** hosted a series of events sponsored by MCC and Cyber-Wyze.

The LIFE (Living In Faith Experience) at **Cornerstone MCC** (Mobile, Alabama), which reaches out to all women in the LGBT community, collected school supplies for the children of South Alabama CARES, the **Community, AIDS, Resources, Education & Support** center for twelve counties.

MCC Naples (Florida) received a "Certificate of Appreciation Awarded by the HIV/AIDS Network of Collier County to MCC Naples in recognition of your extraordinary efforts to make National HIV Testing Day 2006 successful. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to HIV/AIDS. You helped at least 150 people find out their status."

The folks at **Agape MCC** (Ft. Worth, Texas) are now providing a hot dinner and fellowship time for the residents of Samaritan House twice a month. **Kathy Munn** and **Mitzi Hawn** coordinate this ministry team.

Volunteers from **MCC Albuquerque** (New Mexico) provide a home cooked meal each month for the residents and staff at Stanford House.

MCC of Greater Dallas (Texas) supplies non-perishable food items to the Daire Center, an adult day center for persons with HIV/AIDS and a project of the AIDS Interfaith Network.



ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH NE

Several MCCs participated in pulpit exchanges during the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*. **Rev. Dee Dale** preached at Strathmoor Presbyterian Church and Rev. Dean Bucalos of Douglass Blvd. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) led the worship at **MCC Louisville** (Kentucky). **Rev. Kieren Bourne**, Pastor of **Living Springs MCC**, was the guest preacher at St. Michael and St. Paul (Anglican/Evangelical) in Bath, England. Many congregants also attended a special service and workshop for the ecumenical community.

MCC of Corpus Christi (Texas) is sharing their facility on Sunday afternoons with the new open and affirming worshipping group of Grace Church.

The Moderator's **Ecumenical/Interfaith Team** will meet for the first time next month. The members are Chair **Stan Kimer** (North Carolina), **Rev. Dr. Araceli Ezzatti** (Uruguay), **Rev. Dr. Bill Young** (Texas), **Rev. Elder Diane Fisher**, and seminary student **Lynn Farrand**. **Rev. Robert Griffin** and **Connie Meadows** will be staffing the team.

Board members of the **A. Austin Amerine Retreat Center (AAARC)** have approved a plan that will create a path around the pond with shrines to the major religions of the world. On the top of a tall mound a Peace Pagoda will be constructed. It would be only one of a few in North America and could become a

pilgrimage site for Buddhists and others from around the world.

MCC Newcastle (Newcastle Upon Tyne, England) is part of the Middlesbrough Council of Faiths; One member serves on the Executive Committee. Other groups include Bahai, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Spiritualist, and Unitarian.



MCC CONFERENCES, CLASSES AND RETREATS

Attention!!! People who are permanently disabled, over 65, low income, Clergy Candidates, or Students in Formation, this reminder is for you! You may register for General Conference at half the regular registration fee! There are also fee reductions, if you live outside North America. Be sure to check it out when you fill out your registration form at www.mcccconferences.org! Even if you don't qualify for a discount, this is one conference that you won't want to miss!

Folks at **MCC Manchester** (England) enjoyed a weekend away in January. The theme, *Change: Ourselves, Our Church, Our World*, focused on how Biblical characters dealt with change and how we can do likewise.

MCC Sydney (Australia) will be hosting a class on March 18 for people who want to learn more about photography, especially using video and digital cameras. There will also be instruction in editing, using Photoshop, taking portraits, and doing landscape photography. To register, email office@mccsydney.org.

The women of **All Saints' MCC** (Christchurch, New Zealand) are already planning their annual retreat in Hanmer for all who identify as women. If you would like to attend April 27-29, contact deaconval@gmail.com.

The Book Club at **City of Angles MCC** (Los Angeles, California) is studying *The Phoenix Affirmations: A New Vision for the Future of Christianity* by Eric Elnes, a progressive manifesto for Christian faith and life in a pluralistic and changing world.

The Bible and LGBT People of Faith will be presented at Christ Covenant MCC (Decatur, Georgia) March 2-3. The featured speakers are **Bishop Yvette Flunder**, **Rev. Elder Jim Mitulski**, and **Rev. Dr. Justin Tanis**. For more information, contact christcoveanat@christcovenant.org.

Plan Ahead! The **2008 People of African Descent, Our Friends and Allies Conference** will be April 17-20 in St. Louis, Missouri. If you would like to serve on one of the many teams producing this conference, email RevDarleneGarner@MCCchurch.net. She is also compiling a list of all people of African descent who are serving as leaders or are preparing for leadership in MCC. Please send her the names and e-mail addresses of those who are laity involved with their local church or Region, ordained MCC clergy, clergy from other denominations working in an MCC setting, or are preparing for ordination.

Rev. Elder Lillie Brock led a retreat for **St. John the Apostle MCC** (Ft. Meyers, Florida) February 23-25.

The folks at **Open Arms MCC** (Rochester, New York) are planning a camping trip March 23-25. Let's hope the snow is gone by then!



CHURCH AND PASTORAL ANNIVERSARIES

MCC New York (New York) celebrated their 35th Anniversary with a Midwinter Gallery Night of art for sale, music, and hors d'oeuvres; a workshop for church leaders led by **Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson**; a Brunch; and a special worship service. Hosts for the weekend were **Casey Easterling** and **Mark Gilrain**.

ICM Paz y Alegría (Managua, Nicaragua) celebrated their 8th Anniversary in their own ministry space, thanks to the generous donation from an individual in Region 1. **Rev. Alberto Nájera** and the congregation were absolutely thrilled to be able to have their very own "House of Peace and Joy".

MCC Palmdale (Lancaster, California) celebrated their 20th Anniversary with Dinner/Dance, a Drag Show, a Picnic, and a sermon by their special guest **Rev. Barbara Haynes**.

MCC of Corpus Christi (Texas) celebrated their 25th Anniversary this month with a buffet dinner, dance, silent auction, and music by the San Antonio Men's Chorus. MCC's Executive Director **Rev. Dr. Cindi Love** preached and led a workshop.

Rev. Margaret Walker recently celebrated 8 years in ministry with **Exodus MCC** (Abilene, Texas).

MCC of the Coachella Valley (Cathedral City, California) will celebrate their 10th Anniversary March 2-4. Tickets are on sale for their Awards Banquet and Dance at info@mcccv.org. They are compiling a book of testimonials about how MCCCValley has changed people's lives. It will later be available in digital format as well. They will have a special edition of Friday Night Live, a brunch following the morning worship service and a reception after the evening service. **Rev. Elder Darlene Garner** will be their special guest for the weekend.

Peterson Toscano will present his one-man comedy *Doin' Time in the Homo Nostalgia Mo Halfway House -- How I Survived the Ex-Gay Movement!* at **MCC Portland** (Oregon) to celebrate their 31st Anniversary.

First MCC (Atlanta, Georgia) celebrated their 35th Anniversary earlier this month with a Rainbow Ball, complete with gospel music, dinner, photographs, and dancing.

Resurrection MCC (Houston, Texas) has announced that best-selling novelist Lynn Harris will be the special guest for their 35th Anniversary celebration April 28-29.

New Heart MCC (Tacoma, Washington) celebrated their 20th Anniversary with a Dance, a Dessert Auction, and an Ice Cream Social. **Rev. Denis Moore** was the

guest preacher.

Rev. Bobbie Dunn recently celebrated 20 years as Pastor of **MCC Pittsburgh** (Pennsylvania).

SERMON AND STUDY SER

MCC San Jose (California) just completed a transgender sermon series with transfolks preaching all four Sundays in January. Their guest speakers were **The Honorable Rev. Victoria Kolakowski**, the first out transperson to be appointed a judge and to have articles printed in an academic theological journal; **Rev. Sky Anderson**, the first out transperson to serve as a pastor in the United States and the first to serve on the board of directors of a council of churches; **Lannie Rose**, author of *How to Change Your Sex* and *Becoming Lannie*; and **Rev. Bran Scott**, the first out transperson to be ordained in the United Church of Christ.

Chasing Daylight is the ten week Bible Study series being taught at **MCC Lubbock** (Texas). It compares Jonathan and Saul to demonstrate the difference between living a life of purpose and adventure and living one of apathy and missed opportunity.

The Adult Christian Education Program at **MCC of Our Redeemer** (Augusta, Georgia) is studying *Reading the Bible Again For the First Time: Taking the Bible Seriously But Not Literally* by Marcus J. Borg, which addresses having a fully authentic, yet contemporary, understanding of the Scriptures.

Rev. Andy Braunston of **MCC Manchester** (England) is known for his many interesting sermon series. The current one is based on *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, a satire on religious intolerance.

Rev. Sherry Poepsel was the guest presenter at **MCC Albuquerque** (New Mexico) for *The Five Languages of Love*, a seminar for couples, including information on identity theft, living wills, powers of attorney, and health care directives. This is the sixth MCC in which she has presented this workshop. RevPatch@aol.com

Living the Questions Series, a 12 week series, just began at **Agape MCC** (Ft. Worth, Texas). Following a DVD presentation from current prominent theologians, they engage in a time of discovering and discussing the relevance of Christianity and what makes faith meaningful in today's world.

Cultivating Religious Imagination: Wonder as a Spiritual Resource was an experiential workshop presented by Rev. Dr. Anabel Proffitt of Lancaster Theological Seminary at **MCC of Northern Virginia** (Fairfax, Virginia) earlier this month, involving art, poetry, exercises, and conversation in order to keep alive the sense of wonder in daily living.

Rev. Julie Two Sues is leading a Bible based discussion at **First MCC** (Atlanta, Georgia) on how to discover God's promises for your life, especially the ultimate promise that God is always with us.

A discipleship group at **Imago Dei MCC** (Glen Mills, Pennsylvania) is involved with

an eight week study of the Old Testament, including videos, discussions, reflection and daily preparation at home. Another group is focusing on Eight Essentials for a Healthy and Thriving Congregation, based in part on Nehemiah's passion for Jerusalem.



RESOURC

Rev. Elder Dr. Charlie Arehart has two new seminars available for MCCs. The first helps churches ready to begin pastoral searches determine the opinions of congregants concerning type of pastor they want to call in order to avoid a mismatch. The second seminar assists congregations in identifying and addressing antagonists/bullies in the church. If you want more information or would like to invite him to your church for one of these learning experiences, email charliearehart@hotmail.com.

MCC_ChronicPainSupportLink is an independent group for MCCers and their friends, providing a forum for support and understanding, posting information, and generating discussion on a variety of topics relevant to Chronic Pain. This group originated from a small table discussion group at the Regions 3 and 5 Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mcc_chronicpainsupportlink/

Brand new Lenten and Easter resources are available online from MCC ... and they are not just for clergy! *Where the Wild One Leads* can be found at www.MCCchurch.org. On the opening page, click on "Resources" at the top of the page; then on the left under "Resources," click "Worship." On the next page, select "Lent 2007" from the left side.

MCC Toronto (Ontario, Canada) and the Canadian Cancer Society launched the video *Lesbians and Cancer, Coming Out Again*. <http://www.lesbiansandcancer.com/>.

Cheryl Bragg, the choir director at **MCC Christ the Liberator** (North Brunswick, New Jersey) and composer of the theme song for the 2006 People of African Descent Conference has just released a new CD *With All of My Heart*. whosoevermusic@verizon.net.

Rev. Charles Tigard has announced that **MCC San Francisco** (California)'s *Queer Eye for Straight Jesus Resources* can be found online at <http://www.mccsf.org/worship/special/queereyeresouce.html> or from the sermon menu off MCCsf.org main page.

Tell your friends! Current issues of *Around the Fellowship* can be found at www.mccchurch.org/ATF or www.mccchurch.org/aroundthefellowship!

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