

# Around The Fellowship

U n f i n i s h e d   W o r l d . U n f i n i s h e d   C a l l i n g

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**Judy Dale,  
Editor**

A Publication  
of MCC's  
Communications  
Department

Want To Learn More  
About MCC's Growing  
International Ministries,  
Including Church  
Planting, Social Justice,  
Theology and Biblical  
Scholarship, HIV &  
AIDS, Human Rights,  
Ecumenical Outreach,  
Upcoming Events, On-  
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million people visit the MCC  
website each year?)

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Discover Hope,  
Strength, and  
Inspiration at  
**MCC's 2007  
General  
Conference**

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## MCC & GLOBAL DAYS FOR DARFUR

Many MCC congregations responded to **Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson's** invitation to participate in "Global Days for Darfur" as a tangible way to work for an end to the genocide taking place in the Sudan. Here are reports of the ways MCC churches participated.

**Church of the Trinity MCC** (Sarasota, Florida) offered special prayers for Darfur and participated in the Candlelight Vigil sponsored by the Pinellas County Interfaith Coalition to Save Darfur.

Congregants of **Jesus MCC** (Indianapolis, Indiana) were among those at the Darfur Rally at the Statehouse, Indiana's Capitol.

**Christ Covenant MCC** (Decatur, Georgia) hosted a Teach In and Multi-Faith Prayer Vigil as part of the Global Days for Darfur Campaign. Mark Bixler, author of *The Lost Boys of the Sudan*, spoke about the crisis in Darfur and ways we can help. They collected donations for Doctors without Borders' work in the Sudan.

**Harvest MCC** (Denton, Texas) observed "Save Darfur Sunday."

Special prayers for the people of Darfur were offered at **Trinity MCC** (Gainesville, Florida).

## JUSTICE & SOCIAL ACTION UPDATES

**Rev. Dr. G. Penny Nixon**, former senior pastor of MCC San Francisco, will preach at New York's City's historic Riverside Church on Sunday, June 24. Dr. Nixon will preach at the 10:45 AM worship service. She will also be the guest speaker that morning at the 9 AM

**It's not too late for you to register and attend!**

[Click Here](#) for complete details.

### MEET THE MCC ECUMENICAL AND INTER-RELIGIOUS TEAM!

You can learn about MCC's revitalized ecumenical programs at the new on-line site for MCC's Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Team.

Meet the members of the Team, learn the history of MCC's ecumenical work, read denominational position papers, and learn about current projects and goals.

Your church can also take the MCC Ecumenical Survey at this site.

To learn more, [CLICK HERE](#).

### IT'S A FIRST! MCC GOLF TOURNAMENT AT GENERAL CONFERENCE TO BENEFIT CHILDREN AND YOUTH!

Take part in the first-ever MCC Golf

Pride Breakfast sponsored by SAGE, the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, and Maranatha.

When legislation that would give gays and lesbians most of the rights of married couples came before the Oregon legislature, **Rev. Wes Mullins**, Assistant Pastor of **MCC Portland** (Oregon) was at the Capitol with other clergy who supported the bills. He was quoted in *The Oregonian* as saying, "These bills are good, they are just and they are moral."

**MCC Newcastle** (England) is one of the organizations participating in ARCH, a network that combats racism and homophobia in their city. The group provides a hotline to anonymously report incidents in more than 100 languages, 40 centers to report incidents in person, support for victims and for actions against perpetrators, and anti-discrimination training for professionals and young people.

When 20-year old Sean Kennedy of Greenville, South Carolina was killed in a recent anti-gay hate crime, **Rev. Donna Stroud**, pastor of **MCC of the Upstate**, provided leadership and ministry to the local community. She helped organize a public vigil in Sean's memory, called for hate crimes legislation, was interviewed in local newspapers, and read a public statement at the rally from **Rev. Nancy Wilson** and **Rev. Elder Arlene Ackerman**. You can view a brief news video of the rally and listen to Rev. Stroud's remarks by [CLICKING HERE](#).

**Rev. Julio Flores** and **Rev. George Chein** of **MCC Hartford** (Connecticut) participated in an Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast and press conference at the Connecticut State Capitol in support of marriage equality for same-gender couples. They are members of the Steering Committee for Connecticut Clergy for Marriage Equality.

Members of **Open Arms MCC** (Rochester, New York) demonstrated in the SAME (Social Action for Marriage Equality) event known as "Marriage Equality for All Taxpayers: Tax Day Demonstration" at the city's main post office on the day that income taxes were due to the federal government in the U.S.

**MCC South London** (England) collected over 150 Easter Eggs for the children of inmates in the local prison.

Every month the flock of **Gentle Shepherd MCC** (Tallahassee, Florida) collects something to give to other people ... items for a food pantry, diapers for mothers who can't afford them, school supplies for children. What they discovered was as they began focusing on ministry to people who are less fortunate, God began blessing their congregation! Their deficit turned into income over budget and now they are seeking a facility of their own.

**Valley Ministries MCC** (Stockton, California) created and distributed over 100 Easter Baskets to the Transitional Learning School (for

Tournament on Monday, July 2 during General Conference.

The course is the site of the PGA's FBR Open, the largest golfing event in the world, drawing more than 500,000 fans!

All proceeds will benefit programs for children and youth.

Sign up for the tournament... have a great time... help children and youth... and make history at MCC's very first MCC Golf Tournament.

To learn more about this MCC Tournament, or to register for this event, [CLICK HERE](#).

**IT MIGHT BE THE MOST UNUSUAL AFFINITY GROUP AT MCC'S GENERAL CONFERENCE. AND YOU'RE INVITED...**

It's become a conference tradition!

Join us on Tuesday, July 3 at 9:30 PM (note date change) for the MCC Cigar Aficionados Gathering.

Bring your favorite cigar... and maybe an extra to share. A limited number will be available for free for those who'd like to attend this informal get-together hosted by

homeless children) and the Children's Receiving Home.

Every week folks from **MCC Key West** (Florida) deliver over 110 hot meals to inbound seniors around the island and distribute over 30 bags of groceries through their pantry program.

As a counter to Focus on the Family's anti-gay Love Won Out program, members of **MCC Omaha** (Nebraska) joined other LGBT folks/families/friends in a *Bowling for Gandhi* afternoon with the proceeds providing scholarships for LGBT youth.

**Resurrection MCC** was a Gold Sponsor of the Houston (Texas) Transgender Unity Banquet. **Rev. Dwayne Johnson** and **Rev. Bernie Barbour** were among those in attendance.

Congregants from **MCC Albuquerque** (New Mexico) went as a group to view the *Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals 1933-1945* display at the New Mexico Holocaust and Intolerance Museum.

Eyeglasses were collected at **Church of the Trinity MCC** (Sarasota, Florida) and donated to the local Lions Club.

**Rev. Wendy Woodruff** was among those arrested when the Souforce Equality Riders protested at Wisconsin Lutheran College. Because of their interactions, there are some new student faces at **Milwaukee MCC!**

The Food Bank at **MCC Corpus Christi** (Texas) serves over 100 families each month.

**Charlotte Egler** headed Team JMCC (**Jesus MCC**, Indianapolis, Indiana) in the Homeward Bound Walk to end homelessness in their city.

#### HIV AND AIDS NEWS

An evening of Drag Queen Bingo benefited the fundraising efforts of **Mario Perez**, **Paul Gronberg**, and **Rolando Lira** from **MCC Los Angeles** (West Hollywood, California) for their participation in this year's AIDS LyfeCycle, a seven day, 545 mile bike ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

Folks from **Promise MCC** (Dallas, Texas) provide dinner once each month for residents of the housing unit of AIDS Services of Dallas.

**MCC South London** (England) raised over £300 for children with HIV/AIDS in Africa and an additional £80 has gone to **MCC North London** to help with food for their night shelter.

Missions are very important to the congregation of **Valley Ministries MCC** (Stockton, California). They have three initiatives that they already support, but are now adding the **Mother of Peace Orphanage** in Zimbabwe to the

the MCC  
Communications  
Department.

Want more info?  
Write to  
[info@MCCchurch.net](mailto:info@MCCchurch.net).

### READ BREAKING NEWS ON-LINE RIGHT NOW!

You can read major, breaking MCC news stories from Jamaica, Eastern Europe, and MCC's "Would Jesus Discriminate?" campaign on-line right now at [www.MCCchurch.org](http://www.MCCchurch.org). Scroll down the page to "MCC News."

### SHARE YOUR CHURCH'S NEWS

To share your church's news with the MCC Fellowship, send info by e-mail to [Judy Dale](mailto:Judy Dale), Editor.

Deadline is the 15th of each month.

### NEW RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Looking for new resources for your

list.

**Imago Dei MCC** (Glen Mills, Pennsylvania) hosted their sixth annual Ham Dinner for the graduates and current residents of Gift of Mary and of Ralph Moses House, which offer transitional housing and hospice to women and children and to men with AIDS.

**MCC Wichita Falls** (Texas) sponsored *Say It Loud, Save a Life!* Proceeds from the 5K run and 1 mile walk went to their AIDS program, *No Day But Today!*, and to the Circle of Hope food pantry.

In conjunction with AIDS Partnership Michigan, **Divine Peace MCC** (Pontiac, Michigan) is opening their doors on monthly basis to offer free HIV testing in downtown Pontiac. They have also hosted two sessions of AIDS 101 to help educate people.

AIN, the AIDS Interfaith Network in Dallas, honored **MCC of Greater Dallas** with their Crystal Hope Award for all of the work the church has done collecting food, clothes, providing pastoral care, participating in fundraising events, and providing educational events.

As their church's 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary gift to the community, **Resurrection MCC** (Houston, Texas) hosted *Twisted Torch: A Celebration of Life*, performed by vocalist **Cassandra White**, Director of RMCC's Gospel Ensemble, and pianist Rodney Waters. Proceeds benefited AIDS Foundation Houston HIV Prevention Program.

The folks at **Holy Covenant MCC** (Brookfield, Illinois) collect cash, food, paper products, cleaning needs, and toiletries each month for Vital Bridges, a local HIV/AIDS service provider.

### ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Folks from **River of Life MCC** (Kennewick, Washington) and Shalom UCC welcomed the Soulforce Equality Riders to a lunch at the Vista Youth Center.

**MCC San Jose** (California) participated in their local Council of Churches Earth Day activities, including learning how to "green" the church. The children's activity was *Worms Eat My Garbage*.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Empty Bowls Dinner was hosted by **Sunshine Cathedral MCC** (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida) and three other interfaith partners to raise money for the Cooperative Feeding Program.

**Promise MCC** (Dallas, Texas) sponsors the Emergency Aid Food Pantry for the Oak Cliff Churches.

Last month clergy from across the United States answered the call by HRC (the Human Rights Campaign) to engage in an interfaith lobbying day on Capitol Hill. **Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson** was one of the speakers and **Rev. Dr. Cindi Love** spoke at the interfaith worship service. MCC

church's ministry?

[CLICK HERE](#) to visit the MCC website -- on the opening page, click on "Resources."

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You can participate in a research project on the spiritual and religious beliefs of LGBT people.

The survey is conducted through Texas A & M University.

To take part in this survey, [CLICK HERE](#).

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Interested in Church Planting within MCC? Want to know how many new MCC churches are being planted right now?

This information and more -- including the Church Planting Institute at General Conference -- can be found in the latest MCC Church Planting Status Report.

For a copy of this report, write to [info@MCCchurch.net](mailto:info@MCCchurch.net).

had the largest contingent of any denomination or faith group present, but were very much the minority of participants when focusing on sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Rev. Mike Ellard**, Pastor of **MCC San Jose** (California), joined other South Bay faith leaders in signing a letter of support for the local Islamic community when an anti-Islamic speaker was scheduled to present at Santa Clara University.

**City of Angels MCC** (Los Angeles, California) hosted a Buddhist Meditation Group at one of their services.

**Rev. Carolyn Mobley**, Interim Pastor of **MCC United** (Tulsa, Oklahoma), is a member of the local chapter of "**Pastors for Peace**." She recently led the Litany of Commitment at an Interfaith Memorial Service commemorating the loss of lives in the war in Iraq.

**Brianna Johnson** has joined **Sharron Emmons** on the elected Board of Directors of Centre City Churches in Hartford, Connecticut. Both are active members of **MCC Hartford**.

Broadneck Baptist Church and **MCC of the Chesapeake** (Annapolis, Maryland) jointly hosted a workshop on the Internet, sex addiction, and the search for spirituality and community. **Rev. Wayne Schwandt** and the Baptist pastor both offered spiritual reflections.

## LEARN ABOUT... CHURCH PLANTING IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

It began with a Caribbean vacation by two **MCC-DC** (Washington, DC) members to Santo Domingo, the capital city of the Dominican Republic (DR). Their intent was to enjoy the white sandy beaches and fresh pineapples - but God had a different plan!

After meeting with the local LGBT community, it soon became clear that the city was desperately in need of an MCC to offset the constant harassment by police, persistent national homophobia, and frequent condemnations from the Catholic Church. The vacationers returned to tell their story to their pastor, **Rev. Dr. Candace Shultis**, who promptly established the MCC-DC DR Outreach Team.

The Outreach Team's first mission was to conduct a feasibility study and affirm that a church plant would be successful in Santo Domingo. The feasibility study followed the protocol of **Rev. Pablo Navarro Hernandez** from the MCC Feasibility Study Work Book. The ten month study included researching DR culture and history, informal mission work in the DR, and interviews and surveys of members of the Dominican LGBT community and their supporters. The study and its recommendations were reviewed and approved by Rev. Shultis and the MCC-DC Board of Directors on March 14, 2006.

A two-prong approach to cultivate support for a church plant was followed. The first action was to send former MCC-DC Associate Pastor

**Rev. Venson Mathews** on a three month summer assignment to develop a functioning Santo Domingo Core Team. The second was to send a mission team to demonstrate MCC-DC's commitment to the church plant effort. In July last year, twenty-six people from MCC-DC were joined by **Rev. Lance Mullins** from **New Covenant MCC** (Laurel, Maryland) and **Linda Hardy** from **New Life MCC** (Hampton Roads, Virginia) in traveling to the DR to perform maintenance repairs at an orphanage and to conduct a Summer Bible School for children at two schools. Throughout the remainder of 2006 and into 2007, the Santo Domingo Core Team continued to meet on a weekly basis and to coordinate plans with the MCC-DC DR Outreach Team.

The core team was ready for a spiritual leader, and, of course, God provided one. **Rev. Tania Guzman**, a native of the Dominican Republic, moved to the US at the age of twelve. She completed her clergy candidacy with **Church of the Trinity MCC** (Sarasota, Florida) and was ordained there in March. In April she was in Santo Domingo to serve as the first pastor of **MCC Santo Domingo!**

The fiscal 2007 operating budget for **MCC Santo Domingo** was established in the amount of \$63,135 (USD), which includes salaries, rental of worship space, outreach efforts, and other essential items. MCC-DC has designated a portion of their 2007 offerings towards this. Church of the Trinity MCC is also contributing to this endeavor, but a significant need for additional revenue remains. Please consider supporting this magnificent and important work. Contributions may be sent directly to MCC-DC, c/o DR Fund, 474 Ridge Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, USA. A 20- minute DVD has been produced to assist with your fund-raising efforts. For a copy of the DVD or more information on MCC Santo Domingo, contact MCC-DC DR Outreach Chair **Tim Helm** at [tjhelm@aol.com](mailto:tjhelm@aol.com).

***Solo Dios Puede! (Only God Can!)***



## CONFERENCES, CLASSES, & RETREATS

**Living Springs MCC** (Bath, England) is fully booked for their June 9th Retreat.

Fifty people attended **MCC Knoxville** (Tennessee)'s Spring Retreat at Norris Dam State Park. During the weekend, they enjoyed worship, workshops, singing around a campfire, and individual quiet time.

The Board of Directors of **MCC Lubbock** (Texas) went on a retreat to Ruidoso, New Mexico, to plan the next steps of their church's ministry.

**MCC of Greater Dallas** (Texas) hosted *The Experience*, a three day workshop focusing on increasing the love, joy, passion, power, and purpose in life.

The **MCC Board of Elders** met recently at the Stasney's Cook Ranch near Abilene, Texas. They were joined by key staff members to develop their 2008 Work Plans. The **Leadership Team** and some members of the **Moderator's Theology Team** participated at their own expense as Dr. Mary Hunt led the Elders to focus on their role as theologians charged with articulating MCC's message.

**All God's Children MCC** (Minneapolis, Minnesota) hosted "Sex Week" for the Twin Cities. There were workshops on healthy sexuality and spirituality. At "Stump the Pastor" participants were able to ask **Rev. Paul Eknes-Tucker** about sexuality, theology and spirituality. There were also three worship events that focused on sexuality.

**Region 3's** Central Sub-Regional Gathering met at **MCC-DC** (Washington, DC) for a day of training, support, worship, and networking. Their offering was donated to the *Be a GEM* campaign to bring MCCers from around the world to General Conference. (Go to [www.MCCchurch.org](http://www.MCCchurch.org) for details or to donate.)

**Harbor MCC** (Galveston, Texas) is offering the first six weeks of *Creating a Life that Matters*. The other segments will be taught later in the year.

**Milwaukee MCC** (Wisconsin) was the only faith community to host an information booth at FORGE Forward, a conference focused on the complex lives of trans-masculine individuals and SOFFAs (Significant Others, Friends, Family and Allies). Staffing the table through the weekend were: **Michaelle Deacon-Schall, Gary Hawkins, Carol Ann Kyrias, Corky Larson, Mark Matelski, Karla Sanborn, Arlene Schultz, Jamie Woods, and Rev. Wendy and Mary Woodruff.**

**Rev. Dr. Mona West** facilitated *From the Inside Out*, the Spring Retreat for members of **MCC Portland** (Oregon).

*God & Gays Gathering 2007: Unity is Our Identity* will be held in Nashville, Tennessee, August 3-4. Based on the hit documentary, *God and Gays: Bridging the Gap*, the movie comes to life with featured speakers Bishop John Shelby Spong, **Rev. Dr. Mel White**, Peggy Campolo, along with musical inspiration from **Jason & deMarco** and laughs from comedian Jason Stuart. This will be an exceptional gathering for allies and for LGBT people seeking to reconnect with their faith. For details, visit <http://www.godandgaysthemovie.com/conference.html>.

#### CHURCH & PASTORAL ANNIVERSARIES

**Peninsula MCC** (San Mateo, California) will celebrated their 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary with a dinner dance at the Coyote Point Yacht Club. On their invitations, they described the church as a person. If you would like a copy of this novel outreach tool, contact [revterri@peninsulamcc.org](mailto:revterri@peninsulamcc.org).

*A Decade of Promise* was the theme for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of

**Promise MCC** (Dallas, Texas). The weeklong celebration included the dedication of the Promise Community Center, a concert by **Jason and deMarco**, and a worship service led by **Rev. Elder Troy Perry**.

**MCC San Diego** (California) celebrated their 37<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a picnic, a trip to see *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and other special events.

**Rev. Elder Darlene Garner** was the special guest for the 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Weekend at **Central Texas MCC from the Heart** (Waco, Texas). In addition to Sunday worship, they enjoyed a Potluck Dinner, Silent Auction, and Awards Night.

*A Decade of Dreams* was the theme for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at **FirstCoast MCC** (St. Augustine, Florida) earlier this month. They celebrated with a dinner dance complete with awards, an historical (hysterical) timeline, gift bags for participants, anniversary T-shirts, and other festivities.



#### SERMON AND STUDY SERIES

*Beatitudes for Today*, a study book by James C. Howell, is the current basis for Dinner & Dialogue at **Central Texas MCC from the Heart (Waco, Texas)**. After building their own hamburgers or hot dogs, participants enter into a lively discussion around the table.

*Basic Discipleship* is the theme of a new class at **Agape MCC** (Ft. Worth, Texas). For the first three weeks **Rev. Ken Ehrke** and **Robert Meyers** taught "Homosexuality and the Bible" using, in part, *The Children are Free* by **Rev. Jeff Miner** and **Tyler Connoley**.

Following Easter, **Rev. Tessie Mandeville** began a sermon series at **Christ Covenant MCC** (Decatur, Georgia) on The Seven Next Words of Christ.

At **MCC Toronto** (Ontario, Canada) some congregants have been involved in a study *Bridges of Faith: Bonds of Love*, a seven session series engaging Jewish life and culture.

The Discipleship Series at **Church of the Trinity MCC** (Sarasota, Florida) offers monthly sessions. This quarter the classes focused on Spiritual Growth, Worship Traditions, and Spiritual Gifts.

**MCC San Diego** (California) offered a series of three workshops for couples (or singles) on honoring and improving communication and relationships.

*Finding Your Joy* has been the theme of the sermon series at **MCC San Jose** (California).

Interim Pastor **Rev. Ron LaRoque** is leading an eight-part series on

pertinent questions of faith on Wednesday mornings at **MCC Portland** (Oregon).

The Book Group at **City of Angels MCC** (Los Angeles, California) is studying *Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith* by Barbara Brown Taylor. They meet in a local coffee shop to encourage non-churched folks to join them.

The Wednesday Night Oasis group at **Jesus MCC** (Indianapolis, Indiana) focused on *Finding Jesus in the Movies*.

## IS GOD CALLING YOU TO BE A MILITARY CHAPLAIN?

*\*Editor's Note: While the following information is US-centric, if this goal is achieved, it will mark a historic accomplishment for all of MCC and will open a new chapter of ministry for MCC clergy.*

Did you know that since the passage of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in 1993, MCC has been working to place the first MCC-endorsed U.S. military chaplain on either active or reserve duty? To achieve this goal, the next step is to identify a suitable candidate who is willing to apply for a military chaplaincy and serve as a national (U.S.) test case.

A successful candidate must meet the following critical qualifications: S/he must not be older than 39; must have an honorable discharge if s/he has a record of prior military service; must already hold a Master of Divinity degree; must be a U.S. citizen; must already be ordained; must be in excellent physical condition, i.e., must not require any waivers to meet physical fitness and weight standards; must be willing to apply for reserve duty (with the understanding that reserve duty can very quickly become active duty); must be fully comfortable with ministry in a multi-cultural and interfaith context; spiritually, emotionally and psychologically must be strong, healthy, and mature; must exhibit a strong sense of calling both to chaplaincy ministry and to serving as a legal test case on behalf of Metropolitan Community Churches.

While these criteria represent a significant challenge, they are the standards which must be met by a successful candidate who feels called to chaplaincy, and who is committed to achieving the legal breakthrough needed for MCC to provide chaplaincy ministry to women and men in uniform. Once an MCC chaplain is successfully placed in any branch of the U.S. military, reserve and active duty chaplaincies will be open to MCC clergy in all branches of the U.S. armed services.

If you meet the criteria listed here and believe God may be calling you to this desperately-needed ministry, please contact **Rev. Lea Brown** at [lbrown@wichitafallsmcc.org](mailto:lbrown@wichitafallsmcc.org) for additional information.

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[www.MCCchurch.org](http://www.MCCchurch.org).

**Metropolitan Community Churches**

P.O. Box 1374  
Abilene, Texas 79604

E-Mail: [info@MCCchurch.net](mailto:info@MCCchurch.net) . Web: [www.MCCchurch.org](http://www.MCCchurch.org)

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