

# ONE TABLE

VOLUME X ISSUE I

WINTER 2009

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## CREO Urges Regional Gun Violence Task Forces

*Late last year, CREO leaders wrote the following letter to the Troy City Council and the Schenectady City Council.*

Greetings!

The Board of the Capital Region Ecumenical Organization (CREO) has watched with great interest what the City of Albany has been doing to address the problem of gun violence. CREO is an ecumenical expression of a number of faith groups and faith-based organizations in our region.

Last spring, we wrote to Mayor Jennings and the Albany Common Council to commend them for making the decision to form a Gun Violence Task Force. Since one of our members, the Rev. John U. Miller, is the Chair of the Task Force, we have heard reports on their work on a regular basis.

We are very concerned about the ongoing problem of violence in the wider Capital District. We believe that this is an issue that demands a regional response. Gun trafficking and the cycles of retribution do not stop at city or county lines. The strength of the Albany task force approach is that with a broadly based body they are looking at both the causes of gun violence, especially among young people, and ways to lower the escalation of violence once it occurs. They are also examining "best practices" from other locations.

Therefore, we urge your municipality to consider the formation of a similar task force and furthermore, to work with the governments of the other major cities of our region to address this problem.

Our prayers are with all who are affected by violence of any kind in the Capital District. If there is any way the wider ecumenical faith community can be helpful in your efforts, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Faithfully yours,  
The Rev. Robert C. Lamar  
President, Capital Region Ecumenical Organization Board ■

"Gun trafficking and the cycles of retribution do not stop at city or county lines."

## Albany District Attorney to Speak at Area Church

Albany County District Attorney David Soares will be speaking at the First Congregational Church, 405 Quail St., Albany, on Monday, Jan. 12, at 6:30pm. There will be time for questions and answers after his talk, followed by a time of fellowship until 8pm. Call the church at 482-4580 for more. ■

### CREO Members

Albany United  
Methodist Society

American Baptist Churches,  
Capital Area Association

Capital Area  
Council of Churches

Catholic Charities,  
Diocese of Albany

Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)

Episcopal Diocese of Albany

Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America,  
Hudson Mohawk Conference

FOCUS Churches of Albany

Interdenominational  
Ministers Conference of the  
Capitol Region

Presbyterian Church, USA,  
Presbytery of Albany

Reformed Church in  
America, Classis of Albany

Roman Catholic  
Diocese of Albany

Schenectady Inner City  
Ministry

Troy Area United Ministries

United Church of Christ,  
Hudson Mohawk Association

United Methodist Church,  
Troy Conference

## The Kibera Bone Jewelry Project

*Marilyn Paarlberg, member*

FIRST CHURCH IN ALBANY (RCA)

Members of the First Church in Albany recently undertook an exciting project to benefit widows and orphans in Kibera, Kenya, Africa's second largest slum. By working directly with a self-help group and no middleman, proceeds of the project went directly to the intended recipients. A portion of the proceeds paid for a new nursery school for children.

This experience profoundly and directly impacted the lives of both people in Kibera and at First Church.

The project took shape minutes after an October presentation at First Church by Steve Andersen, who had recently returned from a two-year term of service

with the Peace Corps in Mali. Steve's presentation of life in Mali was captivating and compassionate. He spoke of the crushing poverty in Kibera, of the high number of orphans whose parents had died of AIDS and poverty-related illnesses, and of the widows whose only source of income was prostitution.

Steve sought out Raphael, a resident of Kib-

era who wanted to find some way to improve the lives of people in his community. Raphael wanted to start a small school for children who had no other opportunity for education. He also wanted to create employment in the slum where there are almost no jobs. So Raphael went to restaurant owners in nearby Nairobi and asked for discarded animal bones. Then he hired Kibera residents to fashion unique, handcrafted jewelry from the bones.



Steve showed samples of the beautiful jewelry, and the momentum began. A small group of those attending the talk gathered afterwards to find out how they could help, and the energy was palpable! They decided to order sets of the jewelry (necklace, bracelet and earrings) from Raphael, and sell them during coffee hour at the church.

In two Sundays, just under 75 sets of the jewelry were sold to enthusiastic buyers for \$20 per set. During the first sale, Steve gave an abbreviated version of the story of Raphael and the Kibera Bone Jewelry project, complete with pictures and a personal email message from Raphael to the people of First Church. Raphael and the arti-

*(Continued on page 10)*

## The Details...

Deadline for Submission  
*One Table* Spring Edition  
 April/May/June...March 15

Please help us by updating your contact information. We mail our newsletters *Third Class* for a first-class reason – to save money. While some newsletters may arrive late, we hope the message will always be timely. **This newsletter was mailed the week of January 4.**

*One Table* is published quarterly by the Capital Region Ecumenical Organization on recycled paper. Circulation: 600 per issue. *One Table* serves as an ecumenical voice in our region and is supported by CREO members and the Northeastern New York Chapter of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Only motions duly passed at Board meetings reflect the official actions of the entire Capital Region Ecumenical Organization. Opinions expressed by contributing writers are not necessarily those of CREO.

Letters, news items, and announcements are invited. Publication cannot be guaranteed, but all submissions will be reviewed for use. The Coordinator reserves the right to edit material to conform to editorial policy, style and length. Unless otherwise attributed, all articles are compiled and/or written by the Coordinator. ■

## Volunteers Provide Needed Emotional Support

*Jill Ordoñez, LMSW, Program Director,*  
SAMARITANS FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICE  
OF THE CAPITAL REGION, INC.

Are you a good listener, with the will to help your community – and a little free time on your hands?

Albany-based Samaritans Crisis Hotline needs volunteers to provide emotional support to callers. A nationally accredited crisis hotline, the Samaritans is dedicated to providing compassionate, non-judgmental emotional support to people who may be depressed, despairing or in crisis in the Capital Region.

A program of Family and Children's Service of the Capital Region, the Samaritans is a worldwide movement of people helping people, a volunteer emotional support movement, that began over 50 years ago in England. Although the Samaritans do not pertain to any religious organization, the original Samaritans branch was founded by an Anglican minister, Reverend Chad Varah, who was deeply affected by the death of a parishioner to suicide and wanted to do something to prevent future suicides in his congregation.

Samaritan volunteers come from all walks of life: retirees, students, and community members of all ages, with the common goal of supporting people in a time of depression, despair or crisis.

*Rebecca\** came to the Samaritans because she lost her husband to suicide. When she started with the Samaritans one year ago, she wasn't even sure she belonged here. Now, she has increased her confidence and has seen and heard the real impact she has on the people she has worked with. She says that working with the Samaritans has become a life mission for her and, "It makes me feel good knowing that I can make something good come out of the worst thing that happened to me."

*Robert* came to the Samaritans because he is retired and had some time to give back to the community. He had volunteered at the food bank in his church and he decided that he wanted a

change. He says, "I enjoy volunteering with Samaritans because

I get the feeling that I have made a direct impact on people – I leave at the end of the shift knowing I have made a difference."

*Jessica* came to the Samaritans because she is a psychology student and wanted to increase her ability to help others in crisis. Not only did she gain valuable communication and assessment skills needed for her future career, but she also deepened her knowledge of the human condition and gained a greater perspective on how lucky she is to have people that love her in her life. She said, "I never realized how many people are out there that are truly alone and need someone to listen."

### Volunteer Qualifications, Commitment and Training

Volunteers are screened for suitability, but no certificates or educational requirements are needed to enter the training program. Volunteers undergo a 30-hour training program, learning skills in active listening, rapport-building and crisis intervention.

Volunteers must be willing to commit nine months of service – one five-hour shift per week – on the hotline. They are provided with ongoing supervision and continuing education upon successful graduation.

Samaritans' volunteer training class begins every two months. The next training class begins on Saturday, January 10th. For more information, please call Samaritans Program Director, Jill Ordoñez, at 462-6531 ext 126 or email at [jordonez@fscapitalregion.org](mailto:jordonez@fscapitalregion.org). For more information about Samaritans, please visit the website at <http://www.orgsites.com/ny/albany-samaritans>

*\*volunteer names have been changed to protect anonymity. ■*



## Ecumenical Life after the Synod of Albany

*Rev. Richard Otterness*

Having served as the synod executive of the Regional Synod of Albany (RCA) until mid-2004, I wondered how my experiences with the Capital Region Ecumenical Organization (CREO) might affect ecumenical relationships when I would move abroad to work in partnership with the Reformed Church in Hungary—or whether I would even be involved in ecumenical relations and projects beyond the Reformed tradition. I'm delighted to report that the foundation of Christian unity so crucial to CREO is equally important to the mission of the church in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and never more so than right now.

My wife and I have become a long-term mission co-workers invited by the Reformed Church in Hungary to work with Europe's largest ethnic minority—the Roma (popularly called 'gypsies' by some). This work includes supporting the development of Roma church leaders; expanding an important young adult volunteer program in Roma communities; participating in human rights issues, especially when leadership comes from within the Roma community; addressing health-care concerns; and helping the church develop missional relationships with Roma communities in ways that will move the established church beyond paternalistic and sometimes racist attitudes.

One important aspect of my work involves a volunteer program of the Reformed Church in Hungary's Volunteer Diaconal Year office. It's called the *Roma-Gadje Dialogue Through Service (RGDTS)* initiative. Until this year the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s Young Adult Volunteer office was one of our partners, as we have placed young adults in Roma communities to work in early childhood education, youth programs and family outreach. Unfortunately the PCUSA is concentrating now on a smaller number of projects globally, and we miss their

participation now. Nevertheless, in the Budapest office which coordinates the 11-month volunteer program, we are facilitating ongoing discussions with the PCUSA regarding other ways in which they may be involved. Meanwhile, The ELCA has expressed renewed interest in this program.

So here's my plug: if young people from churches in the Capital Region are interested in a life-transforming experience amongst people often immersed in poverty, victimized by racism, and from a culture quite unlike their own, please contact me!

The *RGDTS* initiative comprises a decentralized network of partners with projects in many European nations, some faith-based and some

I am reminded that ecumenical relationships anywhere in the world are all about embodying the unity we share in Christ.

secular. The Hungarian and Ukrainian projects we are involved with are church-related. This does not make things easy. Attitudes within these long-established churches often need to be challenged, and new or alternative partnerships with other churches—even with Pentecostals or the Orthodox (in some regions) may be pursued by us within the coming year.

We often describe ourselves as mission workers *with* the Roma and as missionaries *to* the church. Currently we are working with a group considering new possibilities and new directions for the Reformed Church in Hungary's work with Roma beyond the volunteer program. Meanwhile, we are also discovering and learning from what other people in other churches are doing in CEE with Roma, including the Roman Catholic Church in Budapest, and most recently, the Baptist Union in Russia.

As I write, we are preparing for a training session for members of the Ecumenical Diaconal Year Network (EDYN). I am reminded that ecumenical relationships anywhere in the world are all about embodying the unity we share in Christ. This unity transcends cultural and theological differences, yet also helps all of us find our way

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## What I Did During My Summer Vacation

*Chaplain (Captain) Jake Marvel*  
STAFF CHAPLAIN, 109TH AIRLIFT WING  
NEW YORK AIR NATIONAL GUARD

At least once every day this summer I waited for a C-17 to land from Iraq or Afghanistan. If we timed it right, we sat for about 15 minutes before we saw our “bird” arrive and taxi to its parking spot. When the pilot signaled it was clear, we rolled onto the flight line, a caravan of blue modified school busses painted with large red crosses. We’d park near the tail of the aircraft and I was among the first people out of the vehicles who headed into the plane.



U.S. Air Force Photo/Master Sgt. Scott Wiegans.

As soon as I was onboard, I started talking with patients.

“Welcome to Ramstein Air Base. You are in Germany and you are safe. I’m Chaplain Marvel, I work with the people who are going to transport you today into the next level of medical care. In a moment, the back of this plane will open up and you’ll see our ambulance busses. You might want to put on your coat – it’s probably a little colder than where you came from. Once we are all on the busses, we’ll drive you to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center where we’ll get you some breakfast and a chance to meet some of the finest docs in the world who are here to help you.

As you work your way through this process, I and other chaplains are here. Remember that what you tell us stays with us – we don’t report what you say to anyone without your permis-

sion. If you need to talk, I or others have chosen to be here because we want to listen.”

I assured snipers they are forgiven. I swapped out crutches for some more comfortable. I listened to cries of “Where was God when my sergeant was blown up?” I arranged phone calls to tell parents what’s happened to their children.

Some people were going home to broken marriages, some to infants they’d never met; many had seen or experienced such horrible events “downrange” that they just wanted to talk with another human being.

As a chaplain, I provided Holy Communion, I prayed with people, I anointed them and prayed for healing. But

my most effective ministry was often in listening to and holding their stories – hopefully, therefore, making them Holy. My job wasn’t to fix anything, but to rely on the Spirit to mend their brokenness.

Since coming home, I’ve had a difficult time relating my experience, which I’ve discovered is true for many military members. Often, it’s been difficult to clarify that my military duty is in no way related to a particular political agenda. I serve as a military chaplain not because I like war, but because I am that visible reminder many of us need sometimes that there is no place we can go where the Holy would abandon us. ■

*In addition to his position in the U.S. Air Force, Jake serves as Associate Pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Clifton Park. He is ordained and endorsed for military chaplaincy by the Reformed Church in America. ■*

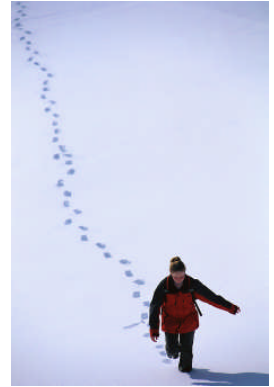
*(Continued from page 4)*

through differences to a better place of missional service with integrity. The deep commitment of many within the churches in CREO has served as a reminder and as an inspiration for what is possible—and is even now taking place—in Central and Eastern Europe.

*Richard Otterness was active in CREO from 2001-2004. He and his wife Carolyn live in Budapest, HU, where they maintain a guest room where many ecumenical visitors and all kinds of other folks stay when in or passing through Budapest. Richard can be found on facebook and at [otterness.r@gmail.com](mailto:otterness.r@gmail.com). ■*



*Participating Judicatory Executives offer thoughts on how Christian disciples can care-fully navigate these long, dark months of winter.*



## Roman Catholic Church

THE MOST REV. HOWARD HUBBARD, BISHOP  
*Diocese of Albany*

During these dark and chilly days between Christmas and Lent, I am still reflecting upon how Jesus, accepted our frail, weak, human condition without compromise. He came to live among us and to reveal himself to us through the instrumentality of his humanity.

Far from being a pious automaton or statuesque zombie, as he is so often depicted in art or portrayed on the screen, Jesus was a deeply feeling human being who experienced fully the rhythmic cycle of life and death, joy and sorrow, hope and disappointment, striving and fulfillment which are the incapable hallmark of our human condition.

At times, our failure to accept this fundamental truth about Jesus' humanity, has led us to deny or suppress our own humanity, with unfortunate consequences.

Such an attitude easily flows from the Western task oriented culture in which we live. We in the United States, for example, have often accepted the pragmatic principle that only the serviceable is worthwhile. Everything in the society around us tells us that it is the effectiveness of things, deeds and persons that really counts, not their inner truth or goodness or beauty. Hence, productivity or efficiency becomes the standard by which we evaluate our loves, and judge our successes or failures.

Often, we are programmed to act efficiently and effectively, and we feel guilty about ourselves if we are not doing something. I know for myself that if I take a day off or relax, sometimes I feel guilty, as if I am violating some implicit standard of conduct that does not include wasting time. I find myself making excuses for why I am sitting still, or listening to music or reading a book or playing a game. Or, I feel the need to explain to others why I'm just "chilling out."

Or take another example. There is the tendency on our part to assume more responsibilities than we can physically or emotionally bear and, then, identify this excessive availability which flies in the face of human limitations, with the full living out of Christian discipleship. I would suggest, however, that this posture is really a subtle denial of our humanity which is harmful not only physically and emotionally, but spiritually as well. It is a bow to the utilitarian trend within our society that denies the value of contemplation, the esthetical and relaxation, and that fails to appreciate the goodness of wholesome human living.

In the face of these and other cultural influences which serve to undercut the acceptance of our humanity, we must grasp the fundamental truth that we are loveable not because of what we do, achieve or possess, but because of who we are; people made in the image and likeness of God.

Therefore, we must make self care a priority in our life, just as Jesus had. He celebrated with the wedding couple at Cana, feasted at the table of Zacheus, rejoiced in the companionship of his apostles and other friends like Lazeraus and his sisters Mary and Martha. Most significantly, he took time for himself, withdrawing frequently to "a place apart" to reflect on the events of the day and to converse with his Father in prayer.

This same type of self care which Jesus evidenced is necessary for ourselves as well if we are to fulfill the command to love others as we love ourselves.

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## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

PASTOR BETH PARKER, DEAN,  
*Hudson Mohawk Conference*



First, a poem by Antoinette Adam:

How shall the mighty river  
reach the tiny seed?  
See it rise silently  
to the sun's yearning,  
sail from a winter's cloud  
flake after silent flake  
piling up layer upon layer  
until the thaw of spring  
to meet the seedling's need.

Make tender, Lord, my heart;  
release through gentleness  
Thine own tremendous power  
hid in the snowflake's art.

It probably sounds strange, but snow keeps me sane in winter. Without snow, I spend all day inside. With snow I can get outside, into God's wondrous creation, to cross-country ski or snowshoe in the woods around my house. The fresh air, the exercise, the quiet time all help keep at bay the depression I used to feel come February every winter. Snow is an invitation (from the Creator?) to slow down, to change plans, to reflect, to play. Snow is a sign that even in the midst of dormancy and cold death, God is at work, in an artful way, to create life. Peace and Joy! ■

*(Continued from page 6)*

Today's fast paced life involves all kinds of multi-tasking. If we are not careful such demanding activity can lead to workaholism or escapism; to drop out or burn out.

That is why we must be attentive to our need for days off and vacations; for hobbies and recreation. We must be willing to make time for family and friends; to be with people who love us for ourselves, and from whom we can receive honest feedback and constructive criticism. Finding time for such leisure and personal or financial relationships is not being self-centered or self-indulgent; rather it is essential for being healthy, mature human beings.

In a society which permits everything but forgives nothing, that preaches the gospel of success and glorifies the winners and achievers, the key to healthy living is to humbly accept ourselves as failure prone. We must recognize that no success of ours is every without a tinge of failure and that no failure of ours is ever completely such.

It is in accepting our humanity fully, I believe, that we come face to face with the central mystery of our Christian life: the Redemption. It enables us to appreciate from the framework of our own limitations and failures that we are the prodigal sons and daughters for whom God is our loving Father; that we are the lost sheep for whom Christ became the Good Shepherd and that we are the weak ones for whom the Holy Spirit has been sent forth. ■

## Connecting Children and Families to Health Care Coverage

*Katherine Napoli, Outreach Coordinator*  
CONNECTION TO COVERAGE CAMPAIGN  
NYS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Today 2.5 million New Yorkers under the age of 65 live without health insurance, including 434,000 children. These children live in our neighborhoods, go to school with our children, and play in our parks. Children who are uninsured are more likely to go without essential health services, miss school because of untreated illness, and end up in the emergency room for preventable conditions.

The Governor has expanded eligibility for children's health insurance and despite the difficult economic times we face, he has kept that commitment in the budget he proposed for the next fiscal year. There are no eligibility reductions or benefit reductions proposed for Child Health Plus or Medicaid, and he is proposing an eligibility expansion for Family Health Plus.

A family of three earning approximately \$70,000 may be eligible for coverage for their children. With coverage through Child Health Plus and Medicaid, children can get the care they need when they need it including regular check-ups, vaccinations, prescriptions, doctor visits when they are sick, hospital care and much more.

While health insurance is no-cost for some children, other families pay a monthly premium. How much a family pays depends on their income. It is important for families to know that Child Health Plus is a program for uninsured children.

To get coverage for their children, parents need to sign up. They can fill out an application right in their own neighborhood with help from enrollment counselors called Facilitated Enrollers. To find the Facilitated Enroller closest to them, families can call 1-800-698-4543. To find out how your organization can help promote coverage for children and families call the New York State Department of Health's Connections to Coverage Campaign at 518-473-4679. ■

## Calling Child Advocates

*Casey Dinkin*  
*Manager of Communications and Advocacy*  
NUTRITION CONSORTIUM OF NYS

Congress has a unique opportunity in the upcoming reauthorization of the child nutrition programs to improve access, meal quality and nutrition for millions of children, particularly low-income children in child care, in school, during out-of-school time, and at home. Thousands of diverse national, state and local organizations representing anti-hunger, religious, education, medical, nutrition, agriculture and a host of others are committed to a bill that has a bold vision to eliminate child hunger. These organizations are now joined by a President-elect who during the campaign has set the goal of ending child hunger by 2015.

The extraordinarily successful, cost-effective child nutrition programs play a critical role in helping children, especially those in low-income families, achieve access to quality nu-

trition, child care, educational and enrichment activities while improving their overall health, development, and school achievement. However, federal support for these programs has not always kept pace with children's need for these programs, food cost inflation, the costs of delivering services, or increased scientific knowledge.

A well-conceived, adequately funded reauthorization bill can reduce hunger and food insecurity in America, help reduce childhood overweight and obesity, improve child nutrition and health, and enhance child development and school readiness.

The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 2009 is an exciting opportunity to make improvements to school meals programs, summer food service programs, child and adult care food programs and WIC. Please join this effort! If you would like to be a member of the Nutrition Consortium's Child Nutrition Reauthorization Coalition, please call 436-8757 x22 or email Casey. [Dinkin@nutritionconsortium.org](mailto:Dinkin@nutritionconsortium.org). ■





## Resources and Announcements

### *For your newsletter or bulletin*

#### **The Commercialization of Childhood\***

**\$500,000,000,000:** The amount of money in purchases that children under 12 influence every year.

**\$17,000,000,000:** The amount of money spent to market to children, a staggering increase from \$100 million in 1983.

**20,000,000:** Baby Einstein videos sold by Disney through 2006.

(The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends *no* screen time for children under age two.)

**200,000:** The acts of violence, including 40,000 murders, that the average child will see on television by the time they are eighteen.

**25,000:** Ads on television the average 2 to 11-year-old sees on television every year.

*\*All statistics are taken from fact sheets found at [www.commercialfreechildhood.org](http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org). ■*

#### **Change Begins with a Single Voice**

We are in the midst of the most challenging economic crisis in decades, with rising unemployment, high food and fuel costs, and a global economy that is on the verge of a major recession. The number of people receiving food stamps has grown by 2.5 million people in the past year alone, and millions of others who need food, but are just beyond the eligibility limits and are turning to strained charities struggling to feed greater numbers. Visit Center on Budget and Policy Priorities ([www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)), Bread for the World ([www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)), or Feeding America ([www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org)) for new analytical reports, recommendations for federal action to prevent large increases in poverty, and ways to speak out for help and hope for all. ■

#### **Ecumenical Witnesses of Baptism**

Now in its 14th year, this program of the Capital Area Council of Churches is one of the most visible signs of Christian unity in our area. During 2008, teams of witnesses were present for 57 baptisms in churches in 5 different denominations. Every year, pastors and witnesses (current and those who might be interested in joining the program) gather on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord to share experiences and learn about baptism in one of our traditions. We always welcome more witnesses and participating congregations. If you are called to be a part of this program, contact Coordinator, Ian Leet, at 482-6612 or email him at [ileet@nycap.rr.com](mailto:ileet@nycap.rr.com). ■

#### **Ecumenical Advocacy Days**

This annual conference brings together lay and clergy from all parts of the United States to explore the background of key issues facing the nation and then to meet with their members of Congress. It is co-sponsored by the National Council of Churches, Church World Service, denominations and other Christian partners with strong witness programs in DC.

##### **“Enough for All Creation”**

Coming together March 13-16, 2009, participants will focus on climate change, immigration and poverty in the U.S. and around the world. The opening session begins at 6:30 pm on Friday. On Saturday and Sunday there are a variety of workshops and advocacy training events as well as time for ecumenical worship and denominational fellowship. Monday, participants spend time on Capitol Hill visiting with their representatives with whom they have made appointments.

You can look over the information about Ecumenical Advocacy Days on the web (<http://advocacydays.org/>) for details on housing, registration, etc. Many churches and/or denominations will provide partial scholarships for interested participants. ■

## Proposal of Envoys for Ecumenism in the Capital Region

*Rev. Dr. Robert Loesch, Pastor*

ZION'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF  
TABORTON, SAND LAKE NY

Twenty years ago the Massachusetts Council of Churches originated an association called *Envoys for Ecumenism*. It is an intentional association of people committed to invigorating the ecumenical movement through spiritual renewal in companionship and community. Those who subscribe to the purpose of the association, and those who commit themselves to the ten-point discipline listed below, may become members. Practice daily prayer and meditation in the spirit of John 17:21, "that they may all be one...so that the world may believe..." including intercessory prayer for other *Envoys for Ecumenism*.

1. Read, at least weekly, literature about the quest for Christian unity, and/or the relationship between the unity and mission of the church.
2. Practice monthly shared Bible study with a people of another Christian tradition.
3. Give some time to a voluntary association devoted to promoting Christian unity.
4. Gather once annually with other *Envoys for Ecumenism* for dinner and dialogue about the observations, hopes and concerns of ecumenical work experienced through involvement in voluntary associations.
5. Contribute financially to an ecumenical organization.
6. Participate annually in at least one ecumenical worship service (such as during the

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity).

7. Attend annually at least one ecumenical event for personal edification.
8. Witness frequently to one's ecumenical commitment (especially in a local church), and encourage annually at least one other person to become an *Envoy for Ecumenism*.
9. Participate in an annual twenty-four hour retreat for *Envoys for Ecumenism*, during which members can become a gathered community, and be refreshed by, renewed for, and re-dedicated to the ecumenical mandate.

I became one of the founding members of the *Envoys for Ecumenism* and found it a valuable means to strengthen and develop my ecumenical commitment. Under the Massachusetts Council of Churches, I was able to attend many of the annual dinner dialogues and retreats.

However, since moving to the Capital Region over two years ago, I have only been able to continue eight of the points of the discipline, but not able to attend the two annual Massachusetts events.

We in this region could develop the same format as has existed successfully for 20 years in our neighboring New England state. I welcome comments or responses to this proposal. I have been an active ecumenist in Ohio, Connecticut and Massachusetts, and now New York State for almost 50 years.

*Rev. Loesch serves on this region's UCC's Ecumenical Commission and can be reached at rkloesch@aol.com or 518-674-8204. ■*

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## Bone Jewelry Project cont'd...

*(Continued from page 2)*

sans were paid directly, and a portion was earmarked for the school. The profits will be used to place another order to allow other churches and organizations the opportunity to support the Kibera Self-Help Group. Photographs of each set of jewelry were taken and numbered prior to the sale, and a website was set up to display those pictures, as well as pictures of Raphael and the other artisans. The website is: <http://sites.google.com/site/kiberabonejewelry/Home>.

Steve's presentations will touch your hearts. Members of your organization are likely to love the beautiful jewelry. Widows and orphans benefit directly from proceeds of each sale. Contact Steve Andersen at [nimtreeswa-misc@yahoo.com](mailto:nimtreeswa-misc@yahoo.com) or call 206-426-5645 to schedule a presentation and/or arrange for sale of this jewelry. Contact Marilyn Paarlberg, 462-6040 ([marilynpaarlberg@gmail.com](mailto:marilynpaarlberg@gmail.com)) to learn more about First Church's experience in this service project. ■



# GOOD NEWS

Go tell it ... EVERYWHERE!

Upcoming courses of the Capital Region Theological Center. Pre-registration is required at (518)462-2470, or go to [www.capitalrtc.org](http://www.capitalrtc.org).

† ***The Church and Its Money***, Scotia, Feb 14, Rev. Norm Tellier, CFP, Coordinator of Gift Planning (RCA) for 18 yrs.

† ***Introduction to Preaching*** Saturdays, Jan. 31, Feb. 7, 21 and March 7, Schenectady. Rev. Dr. William Levering, professor, and pastor of First Reformed Church, Schenectady.

† ***Encountering Jesus through the Gospel of John***, Feb 5-6, Siena College. Rev. Dr. Richard Carlson, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg. Dr. Carlson returns to give us an introduction to the main theme of the entire gospel and then highlight specific texts offering ideas for practical application and sermon starters.

† ***The Practice of the Prophetic in a Consumer Society***, Feb. 28, Delmar. Dr. Walter Brueggemann. Join CRTC for this extraordinary experience to be part of three hours of intense exegetical lecture with Dr. Walter Brueggemann.

† ***Family Systems***, March 12. Rev. Dr. David Olson, ED of Samaritan Counseling Center.

† ***Building on Strengths***, March 21, Clifton Park. Dr. Cynthia Woolever. This will challenge congregational leaders to reframe their thinking about whether location determines their church's vitality.

† **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** (Jan 18-25) worship service: All are welcome to worship during the annual prayer service using the Graymoor Liturgy sponsored by the Capital Region Ecumenical Organization at noon on Wed. Jan 21 at the RC Pastoral Center, Albany. This year's theme is "That They May Become One in Your Hand." Call 453-6660 for more.

† **Protestant-Roman Catholic Dialogue** – Jan 22. 12-1:30pm, Firth Lutheran Church, Albany. Bring a sandwich and listen to Rev. John U. Miller (UCC) speak on "Faith and Order + Life and

Work – Incarnation, Reformation, and Ecumenism." Discussion time to follow. Call Deacon Ray Sullivan at the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, 453-6660.

† **Habitat for Humanity Snowshoe**, Feb 1, 10am, Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center. At Pine Bush, 1, 2, and 5-mile loops will be marked. Bring your own snowshoes or borrow some for free from Eastern Mountain Sports. Free giveaways, free raffles, hot chocolate and light snacks provided. Please collect donations per number of miles you plan to snowshoe, and bring them with you. Call EMS store at 482-0088 for details.

† **Martin Luther King, Jr., Interfaith Memorial Service**, Jan 15, 7pm at Metropolitan New Testament Mission Baptist Church, Albany. Interfaith participants include representatives of the Hindu Temple and a local mosque, Rabbi Rena Kieval, Bishop William Love, and Bishop Howard Hubbard. Free will offering for the MLK Scholarship Fund.

† **Winter Assembly and Annual Meeting of the Capital Area Council of Churches**, Feb 9, Delmar. Dinner (\$10/person) served at 6:15pm, followed by Assembly, including the presentation of the Joyce Steinkraus Giles Pastoral Service Award. Dinner reservations received by Feb. 4. Call 462-5450.

† **Dr. Walter Brueggemann Lecture** (free) Dr. Brueggemann will lecture on the Union College Campus, Feb 26, at 7 p.m. at Memorial Chapel. Co-sponsored by Union College Campus Protestant Ministries. **"Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: Journey to the Common Good"** will be a free lecture open to the public in which he will consider how the "master narrative" of the Hebrew Bible serves as a guide and summons toward the common good. A walk through that narrative will reflect on the crises points and seductions in the narrative, and the way in which Jews, Christians, and other people of good will are together along the way to a world of well-being. Registration not required. ■

# One Table

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## Capital Region Ecumenical Organization

### **The Covenant**

“Believing ourselves to be under God’s direction through the Holy Spirit, we feel the need for an ongoing regional, ecumenical structure as a vehicle of cooperation for and among those bodies accepting the sole lordship of Christ.

We are aware of the richness of our varied religious traditions, we purpose to work together for the good of all people and to strive for reconciliation among all groups and ideologies.”

Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.  
See, darkness covers the earth  
and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the LORD rises upon you  
and his glory appears over you.

Isaiah 60:1-2

