

ONE TABLE

VOLUME X ISSUE III

SUMMER 2009

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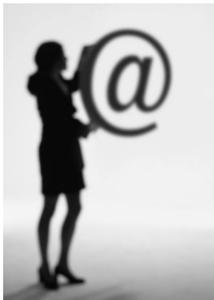
From This Corner...

Ian Leet, President

RCA ECUMENICAL OFFICER

Thanks to the Albany Presbytery's generosity of sharing web space, One Table may now come to you in two formats, electronic or printed. This new endeavor is both exciting and food for thought.

Many of us would like to leave our sanctuary doors open, but can't for a variety of reasons. Web activity happens 24/7. If we can't open our actual doors, can't our churches have an always-open electronic portal? This is a congregational calling and care issue.



If the Internet is the world's largest and best yellow pages, what do we do to make sure that our proclamation of the Gospel is not a dozen web pages down when people seek a faith-growing opportunity?

We soon hope to have an announcement about a CREO website, but that's only a step. It's more apparent that just having a new 'update-able' website isn't sufficient, especially with younger people. Websites don't really allow for interaction.

Not using some of the new so-called 'social media' also may be too passive. Have you heard, "Oh, that's the thing our parents do and it doesn't have relevance to me?" When we don't let the current ways of communicating our faith-based points of view to others, we're not letting those ideas that we hold so dear fully inform their lives.

For all but the smallest churches, these technologies are so important that 'the webmaster' may become a paid position in many church budgets, just as church secretaries are now. Perhaps the secretary can become the webmaster. For those churches with Youth Directors, chances are that a good portion of his or her time is already spent on these activities.

We need to get out there in the ether! Watch for news about a CREO blog spot soon – and we won't have to wait until the next issue of One Table to invite you to join it.

Finally, as my son and daughter suggested, I've recently put myself out on Facebook, which many of you or your churches may have done. I'm already struck by a couple of things, but there isn't space here to deal with it, so more on this next time. Or, maybe we'll blog about it together!

If you haven't done so already, please take a moment to contact our Coordinator, Misha Marvel, at mishamarvel@gmail.com if you would prefer to receive future editions of One Table electronically. One Table will be posted on the Albany Presbytery's website (www.albanypresbytery.org) along with other ecumenical links and information. Let's spread ecumenical good news effectively and broadly! ■

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 Furniture Program of Troy Area United Ministries (TAUM)

Rev. Donna M. Elia,
TAUM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

More than a dozen years ago, founding members of the Troy Homeless Services Collaborative (including TAUM) identified the need for essential furniture as a gap in service to move people from homelessness to homes. Now, TAUM annually gives away about \$100,000 (or about 2,500 items) in good used furniture free of charge to women and dependent children fleeing family violence, recently homeless families, the working poor, people with disabilities, and the elderly.

About 15 agencies refer people to the furniture program, which makes it possible for families to remain intact. Minimally, families must provide a bed for each child and table set to have custody. At times, we bring beds to low income grandparents whose grandchildren have coming to live with them. The need is far-reaching and desperate.

A rural Rensselaer County couple with two children unexpectedly had the husband's sister drop her three children on their doorstep. TAUM's furniture program provided beds for the children.

A Senegalese woman had to flee her country when a new regime came into power. She took

refuge in the Troy area and received furniture through the program. After she and her family established themselves, they were able to donate furniture back to the program. On an annual basis about 2% of program recipients donate back to the program. TAUM hires former program recipients as program assistants too.



With our 14-foot panel truck, we pick up furniture from Rensselaer, Albany, Saratoga, and Schenectady Counties and get it into the homes of people the very same day. As program director Michael Barrett says, "Someone will be sleeping in this bed tonight!" The truck gets eight miles per gallon, and since recipients do not pay, donors are encouraged to make a monetary donation to the program as well. All money goes back into the program to make it possible to serve more people.

Your donation of furniture- beds, dressers, tables, chairs, sofas, infant furniture- and/or money would be greatly appreciated. For more details or to arrange a pick-up, please call Michael Barrett at 274-5920 x204 or Donna Elia at x202. ■

The Details...

Deadline for Submission
One Table Autumn Edition
Oct/Nov/Dec...Sept 25

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 distributed the week of July 19.**

One Table is published quarterly by the Capital Region Ecumenical Organization on recycled paper. Circulation: 550 per (hard copy) issue. *One Table* serves as an ecumenical voice in our region and is supported by CREO members and *One Table* readers. 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.

Articles, 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, articles are compiled and/or written by the Coordinator. ■

Enough For All Creation: Speaking Truth to Power

The following letter was sent to Senators Gillibrand and Schumer as a follow-up to recent advocacy meetings. Other personalized letters went to Rep. Tonko to thank and encourage him to continue his proactive environmental record and to Rep. Murphy, to welcome and urge his action on these environmental stewardship issues.

Members of the Board of the Capital Region Ecumenical Organization (CREO) are very concerned about the impacts of climate change and the people and creatures most affected by them. CREO is an ecumenical expression of a number of faith groups and faith-based organizations in our region.

This March, several of our members met with you and your staff in Washington to urge you to support legislation that would reduce climate change emissions, support vulnerable communities around the world, and to assist and welcome climate migrants to the United States. Members attended the national Ecumenical Advocacy Days conference and shared with us what they learned about the connections between climate change, migration, and poverty in the U.S. and around the world.

We write to echo our members' message to you in March. The poor and hungry of the earth are most vulnerable to rising sea levels, the spread of infectious disease, extending areas of drought, and other impacts of rising temperatures, many of which are already occurring.

We live in an increasingly interconnected world and have an enormous impact on each other and creation. As the earth's temperature rises we see a strain on resources. Food, while plentiful for some, is desperately scarce for others. Lack of clean water makes children sick and burdens women. Global warming and growing resource deprivation forces some people to migrate and others to wage war over food, water and oil. Our increasingly co-dependent economies lift a few individuals up to great heights while keeping oth-



ers living lives of destitution.

Our prayers are with all who are affected by climate change as well as for you as you strive to seek meaningful ways to curb it. We look forward to being partners with you in your efforts, and ask you to call upon us just as we call upon you to be courageous and clear in taking action.

Faithfully yours,
Ian Leet, President

On behalf of the following members:

Rev. George Brennan, Catholic Charities
Donald S. Bunk, Conference Deacon,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Rev. Mark Chaffin, CREO
Barbara DiTommaso, Director, Commission
on Peace and Justice (Roman Catholic Diocese of
Albany)

Susan W. Hassinger, Bishop,
Albany Episcopal Area,
United
Methodist Church
Bishop Howard J. Hubbard,
Roman Catholic Diocese of
Albany
Hudson Mohawk Association,
United Church of Christ
Caise "Kitt" Jackson, Adminis-
trative Director,

Capital Area Council of Churches
Rev. Deb Jameson, Community Minister,
FOCUS Churches of Albany
Rev. Robert C. Lamar, Pastor-Emeritus,
First Presbyterian Church, Albany
Edith Leet, Commissioner of Christian Action
and Social Education, Capital Area Baptist
Association
Misha Marvel, Coordinator, CREO
Rev. David P. Moore, West End Presbyterian
Church (Albany)
Deborah C. Riitano, Capital Area Council of
Churches
Rev. Cass Shaw, General Presbyter
Albany Presbytery (PCUSA)
Rev. Marian P. Shearer, regional minister,
NY Conference United Church of Christ
Deacon Raymond J. Sullivan,
Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany
Kay Victorson, CREO ■

Finding Your Place with the Belhar Confession

Earl James, Coordinator of Multiracial Initiatives and Social Justice

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

The RCA's General Synod recently adopted the Belhar Confession as the denomination's 4th confession. Next, at least 31 of the RCA's classes must approve the Belhar as a constitutional change. However, a number of congregational and classical leaders have told me that they have not decided what the Belhar means to them. They shared with me that the historic confessions are not pivotal for them or allegiance with the South African anti-apartheid movement is not compelling to their congregations or that their congregations have not been directly confronted with racism. They question how they, from their perspectives, can enter into discussions and decisions on the Belhar.

Personally, I value their questions. I value discovering pathways to Belhar with them that begin from where they are now. I also value what the Belhar has to say both about God's character and how the people of God need to live out those character traits in all they think, say, and do. So, how might undecided people find themselves in the Belhar? I want to share a story and idea that might "scratch where they itch."

I was somewhat uninformed and neutral about the Belhar until September 2008 when I was asked to join the RCA's Belhar Implementation Team. At that time, I intently studied the Confession, searching for how it would serve the church and its people. The Confession, however, became real and relevant for me personally in March 2009 after I started reading and discussing it with my wife. What began as a casual shared experience became convicting and compelling for me. I wondered how I had been living out the Belhar's principles of unity, reconciliation, and justice in my being her husband. Those three principles – lenses really – helped me see my being her husband from a different, fresher, deeper perspective. Don't laugh too long, but I started wondering if I should learn to love her as her Belharian Husband. That phrase – "Belharian Husband" – reflects a

new root in our relationship. I admit that I struggle to live up to the hopes and promise of that new root. But, should not a Confession lead us to hope and struggle as we seek to reflect more of God's own character?

My personal experience mirrors exactly something one delegate shared from the floor of General Synod. She spoke powerfully about how the Belhar helped her understand deeper things about being a mother, a wife, and a family member. Belhar forged for her a fresh pathway to deeper relationships with those whom she loves.

Can seeing our intimate relationships through the lenses of the Belhar help us who are otherwise unclear about the Belhar's relevance? Can such a use of it produce pathways for gaining experience and perspective about the Belhar? I believe the answer is "yes."

If the unity, reconciliation, and justice lenses of Belhar can help us in our intimate personal relationships, can they also help us deepen our congregational life relationships? I think they can. Can you imagine a choir or food pantry team or tutoring ministry members or volunteers in general meditating on the Belhar and seeing their ministry together through its lenses? Can you imagine consistories and other teams taking 20 minutes at each session discussing and praying through some aspect of the Belhar? Can you imagine what the neighbors of a congregation might say if asked how the congregation demonstrates unity, reconciliation, and justice towards them? If we can imagine it, we can do it.

I encourage us to explore ways of applying the lenses of the Belhar Confession both to our personal lives and our congregational experiences. I encourage us to share our stories, at least within our congregations and classes, about the differences Belhar makes to us. I believe that if some of us do that, not only will we be better prepared for classis discussions about the Belhar, we will be better prepared for depth living on a more regular basis.

Go here to get a downloadable copy of the Belhar Confession - <http://images.rca.org/docs/aboutus/belharconfession.pdf>. ■

I Wonder as I Wander... An Encounter with Jesus

SUSAN W. HASSINGER, INTERIM BISHOP

United Methodist Church, Albany Episcopal Area

Have you ever had an experience so vivid that it came back to mind repeatedly for several weeks? That's what happened to me in May during the United Methodist Council of Bishops meeting.

Before 6:30 a.m. those who wished to, gathered in the lobby of the hotel where we were meeting in Bethesda, MD. All of us had been given white t-shirts emblazoned with red letters: "ReTHINK Church." On this chilly spring morning we also sported red jackets with the logo, and some wore the red baseball caps that communicated the same message.

Quickly we were sorted into three groups and transported to two different sites in Maryland, or one in northern Virginia. As we neared our destination in Gaithersburg, MD, the sign at the corner of the street read "Temporary Workers Site." On a barren plot of land stood a moderate-sized bare metal building, with steps leading up to two doors on either end of the building.

Outside the building we were greeted by a pastor whose ministry is working with immigrants who are seeking day labor jobs. The pastor explained briefly how he sensed God had called him to this mission. That call grew out of his own experience as an immigrant. He invited us to enter, and as we did we observed, around two sides of this overgrown trailer, rows of old metal and plastic chairs, on which were sitting mostly men, possibly 60 or so. The workers had registered with the small office in one corner of this building, and they were waiting, hoping to be called for today's work.

Gradually we began to move among the workers. We exchanged smiles or a few words in Spanish or English. Those of us who were fluent in Spanish had more extended conversations, as they listened to what had brought the workers to this place and what life was like for them.

My Spanish is "muy pocito" (very little). So I extended greetings to several. Towards the end of a row, I heard one of the bishops speaking with one young man, in English. As the other bishop moved on, I bent over to speak with him. He offered that his name was "Will," and shared that he had been in this suburban Washington, D.C. area for about three years, trying to sustain himself by finding day jobs – sometimes landscaping, sometimes moving furniture, sometimes construction, whatever was available. Sometimes he would go several weeks without getting a job. Other times the jobs were more frequent.

After a brief time of conversation, "Will" asked why we were there. I told him that we just wanted to come and be with them, to share that we were interested in and cared about those who struggle to survive in this economy. I noticed that he was looking at the ReThink Church logo on the 2XL red jacket that hung on me. He asked what that was about. I told him that we believed that church was not just for inside church buildings, but that Jesus was everywhere, and we wanted to go where Jesus was, not just stay inside the four walls.

Will got a quizzical look on his face, and there was silence between us for what seemed like a long moment. Then he looked down a bit, and mentioned that he also believed in Jesus. He mentioned that he prayed, but that he didn't go to church, but that he knew that Jesus was with him.

About that time, two of the day laborers brought out guitars and played some music for us. Others who were staff of the project or volunteers told a bit more about their ministry. Then, the pastor brought out three long, slender loaves of bread and some grape juice, and Bishop Minerva Carcano offered a brief Eucharistic prayer in Spanish. Together we communed, day laborers and bishops and



(Continued on page 7)

Need to Know About Community Services? Dial 2-1-1

Jill Ordonez, LMSW

Director 2-1-1/Samaritans

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICE OF THE CAPITAL REGION, INC.

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember number that anyone can call for information on community services. Administered by Family and Children's Service of the Capital Region, United Way 2-1-1 Northeast Region serves all community members in 12 counties. 2-1-1 service is currently available in 80% of the country, including much of NYS.

The Call Center is currently staffed by a combination of staff and trained volunteers. We are looking for more volunteers from the community to keep up with increased call volume in the coming months.

2-1-1 gets people in need connected with services more efficiently and with less frustration. 2-1-1 also provides callers with a knowledgeable Call Specialist who listens patiently to the situation and assesses it fully to find opportunities for services that may not be apparent to the caller. The following are just a few examples.

Homeless Family Finds Housing:

In one example, a family had recently relocated from NYC to the Albany area – hoping to find a better life. When they called 2-1-1 they were living out of a hotel and were almost out of money. They were desperate and wanted to know what their options were. The Call Specialist interviewed the grandfather and determined that he was a Veteran. The specialist was then able to locate housing for veterans for him and his family in Saratoga.

Disabled Grandmother helps Grandchildren:

In another example, a grandmother, who had a respiratory illness, found it increasingly difficult to transport her grandchildren to school. She had attempted to arrange for busing on her

own, but to no avail. The 2-1-1 Call Specialist listened to the grandmother's frustrations and interviewed her to find out exactly what steps had been taken. The call specialist gave the grandmother the correct phone numbers to call and the children had bus service the next day.

Help Navigating Service Systems:

People also call because they are having issues with benefits or health insurance. For example, a woman who had qualified for health insurance when her cancer was active did not qualify for health insurance when it was in remission because

of her income. The call specialist was able to explain the low cost health insurance programs to her that are provided by NYS and help her apply.

In Times of Life Crisis:

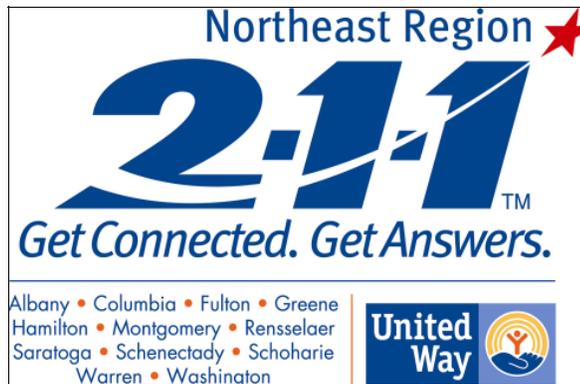
Many times people just don't know where else to turn in a time of crisis. The call center has also fielded

calls from people who have recently lost a loved one: an elderly person from another country was visiting relatives and unexpectedly passed away. The family wanted to know if there was any help in transporting the body back to the homeland. In another case, a grief-stricken man called saying his wife had passed away the day before and he needed assistance with mortuary fees as he had lost his job months prior.

The 2-1-1 Database:

The answers to caller's questions come from the database of more than 1,000 community agencies, covering a 12 county area which is maintained by a full-time Database Coordinator assisted by skilled volunteers. The service database can also be accessed online at www.211ny.org. All community members with access to the internet are welcomed to search for services via service type, keyword or location.

The United Way 2-1-1 Call Center is becoming the spoke in the wheel of human services, a universal access point. ■



Prison Re-entry Ministry Opportunity

Consider the numbers: some 25,000 inmates are released from one of NYS' 69 prisons each year. 95% of male offenders have no positive male role model. 32% of ex-offenders are back in prison within two years. Re-entry programs are considered a cost-effective public safety issue.

Janet Tool, Regional Coordinator of Volunteer Services, NYS Department of Correctional Services (NYSDOCS), shared information to the CREO Board recently on the "Transition from Prison to Community Initiative," which serves as a framework for re-entry programs in various places around NYS.

Some of the issues faced by ex-offenders are finding suitable housing and employment, physical and mental health issues, substance abuse, obtaining needed education and/or job training, and family reunification. When ex-offenders receive assistance, guidance, support, and encouragement from volunteers and have access to services in their community, they are more likely to make a successful transition and less likely to return to the life style that put them in prison in the first place.

NYSDOCS works with community service providers to establish post-release services and

welcomes members of the faith community to serve as coaches/mentors who will be a positive role model, individuals who will assist with the family reunification process by teaching parenting classes and other family focused programs, and others who can assist with addressing any of the issues returning offenders face. People in the business community who are in the position to hire are also greatly needed to make an act of faith and hire an ex-offender.

NYSDOCS is planning two community forums: a forum for faith based groups at the Schuyler Inn in Menands and a forum for community service providers this summer and early fall. The forums provide an overview of the Re-entry Initiative and will include a workshop about grant opportunities.

The Division of Volunteer Services has a system in place to register volunteers and will provide training for those considering coaching an offender. Coaches will be asked to make a least a one year commitment to working with their matched offender. Training includes two full Saturdays and commitment includes two face to face visits plus two letters/calls per month prior to release. Please contact Janet.Tool@docs.state.ny.us or 518-402-1694. ■

Re-Think Church cont'd...

(Continued from page 5)

spouses, bound together by our love for and commitment to the Jesus who loved us to the end, the Jesus who leads us outside the walls. The Lord's Table was a long rough table, around which workers sometimes gathered to learn English-as-a-second-language.

After the communion, several of the men moved outside, and shortly our group also exited in order to head back to our hotel and meetings. As we did so, we observed the laborers lining up to pass by tables and pick up a breakfast sandwich and a bottle of juice, their breakfast for the day. This daily ritual, feeding of another sort, was part of the ministry outreach.

As we headed down the steps, I saw "Will" standing at the bottom of them, waiting to enter the breakfast line. As I approached him, I held out my hand. He smiled a broad smile and shook it. I thanked him for the conversation, and said that I very much appreciated our talking together. I also indicated that I would pray for him.

Frequently since that time, I have visualized the smiling face of "Will," a 23-year-old who is seeking a better life, and I have prayed for him. For me, on that day, in that face I saw the face of Jesus. While we went to bear witness to ReThink-ing Church, it was I who received that witness. Jesus was already there. ■

Fulfilling our Baptismal Promises through Camp

Rev. Kent Busman, Director

FOWLER CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER

Somewhere along the line, I'll bet that everyone of us stood up in a congregation and, as a baby was getting doused with water, promised to help raise that new little brother or sister in the faith. By the time I see them, they've changed: grown taller, learned how to talk, and have become quite mobile.

I've had the privilege of working for over 20 years directing a small children's camp for the Regional Synod of Albany in the Reformed Church of America. One of the joys of working there is that I get to be part of fulfilling some of those baptismal vows. Kids at camp are nurtured in the faith, just like we promised they would be. They "hear" the Word in both speech and action, just like when we started them on their journeys by passing them through the sea of baptism and pronouncing the truth of God's love for them.

But here's the deal. Never once in 23 years have I stopped to think, "I never promised to help raise her or him in the faith." The kids who come to Camp Fowler aren't branded "Reformed" or "Lutheran" or "I'm not really sure because we only go to church on Christmas..." The kids who come to Camp Fowler are all under our promise to be nurtured in faith. It's one of the things that makes camp different from church. No one during their time here belongs to a specific flock: they all just belong to God's greater Flock.

And that's why perhaps it makes sense to think ecumenically: at least about the aspect of spiritual formation we call "summer camp." When they're canoeing or singing or eating a s'more it's hard to tell the Presbyterians from the Lutherans. And as adults caring for these children we too understand again that our differences are at their best when they show the height and depth and breadth of God's love for this world of wonders.

The tricky part, of course, is for us adults to

pull that sort of an ecumenical venture off. We all come in with different hopes and fears; visions and suspicions. And we all desire not just a place, but "our" place, where we can experience the sort of spiritual formation that often happens at camp. So let me highlight three things that might be important for such an experiment:

It seems as though hospitality would be key. The virtue of gracious interaction where "turf" and "traditions" are subordinate to "openness" and "wonder." At Fowler it's long been understood that community can only exist when one hand is holding onto your neighbor and the other is extended towards whoever else may come by.

The goals of the camp experience would have to be limited. After all, camp is best when it nurtures the faith rather than trying to indoctrinate it. For



most main line denominations, confirmation happens within the covenant community. Camps are a pale representation of the long term love and care that a congregation can give a young person. And yet, camps have a way of distilling the covenantal vision into an experience or experiences

that help a young person see God working through all of his or her life. A camp experience that incarnates Christ's call to follow him out into the world would be a marvelous tool for any congregation as they continue nurturing the child.

Partnering congregations would have to be invested in all aspects of the camp's ministry. Again, the Biblical vision of welcoming the outsider as genuine brother and sister would be key. If partnerships were established based on projected income or power, the endeavor will fail.

Which brings me back to the water. If a child has an experience which welcomes her into the greater Church, where they are allowed to be part of the great mystery of faith, hope, and love, and, in addition to all of this, they see adults who are also living into that vision, then perhaps we will have come close to fulfilling those vows we took so long, long ago. *Contact 'Uncle Kent' or learn about Camp Fowler at www.campfowler.org.* ■



Resources and Announcements

For your newsletter or bulletin

Safe Parks and Edible Playgrounds

Schenectady Inner City Ministry is one of only 21 faith-based coalitions across the country that was awarded a two-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to prevent childhood obesity by increasing access to healthy foods and physical activity through community advocacy. SICM's "Safe Parks and Edible Playgrounds" will advance community policies and environmental changes to improve access to safe places to play for area children and establish gardens for and by children. Noting that faith-based coalitions have been at the forefront of local and state efforts on social issues such as homelessness and hunger and poverty, RWJF is optimistic about these groups advocating for improved food, nutrition and environmental policies. SICM will be enhancing coalitions with other interested neighborhood groups such as Weed & Seed, ACORN, and the Hamilton Hill Arts Center. A key partner in the project is Roots & Wisdom, a youth agriculture and community service program, bringing together Schenectady County youth and committed adults to grow organic vegetables for donation to local food pantries and for sale within the county. SICM Summer Interns are also involved. To get involved, please contact the Rev. Van Stuart at SICM, 374-2683. ■

Come Fly With Us!

The 109th Airlift Wing, New York Air National Guard, invites local clergy onto the Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia several times each year for a brief introduction to our mission, and our role in the community and the Air Force. A chaplain from the unit will brief participants on the role of military chaplains and ways in which we partner with local clergy and churches. Clergy may then board one of our C-130 cargo aircraft for a two-hour flight while aero medical personnel practice the skills that turn that aircraft into a "flying ambulance."

If you would like to learn more, please contact Chaplain Jake Marvel at jacob.marvel@ang.af.mil, pastorjakemarvel@gmail.com, or 518-729-0279. ■

Ecumenical Baptismal Witness

Want to participate in one of the most satisfying activities of your entire year? Become an Ecumenical Baptismal Witness! These volunteers are present at baptisms in various churches to welcome the Baptized into the wider body of faith. Churches throughout the capital region and witnesses who participate find their worship is enhanced. So, if you wish to invite a team to your church for a baptism OR if you are interested in becoming a witness, please call our Witness Coordinator, Ian Leet, at 482-6612, or e-mail to ileet@kneecap.err.com. For more information about the program, call the Capital Area Council of Churches office at 462-5450. ■

20% Off Your First Stay at Silver Bay

Looking for a place to host a conference or retreat this year? Silver Bay YMCA of the Adirondacks is a 100-year old YMCA affiliated family retreat and conference center on Lake George. Silver Bay hosts conferences, family reunions, family vacations, weddings, and team building & leadership training on a 700-acre waterfront campus.

Silver Bay is offering a discount of 20% off your first stay on campus. Visit www.silverbay.org to plan your stay, then mention discount code 455 when making your reservation. Explore our campus online (www.silverbay.org) and envision yourself at Silver Bay.

We look forward to seeing you! ■

School Supplies Collection Begins

The FOCUS on Schools program will collect school supplies throughout the summer for children who use the FOCUS Interfaith Food Pantry in downtown Albany. The goal is to provide children with the basic supplies they need to begin school so that they are prepared to participate fully.

Last year, more than 175 students received supplies, and the need may be greater this year. For parents who use the Food Pantry, the \$10 needed for supplies for grades K-2 and \$40+ for high school can devastate their already meager resources.

Those who have cars and a few extra dollars can take advantage of special sales, rebates, and “buy one get one free” offers on school supplies to share with neighbors who do not have access to these offers. Cash donations enable FOCUS to buy supplies that are not donated.

Between Aug. 31 - Sept. 5, FOCUS on Schools welcomes volunteers of all ages to help sort and distribute the supplies from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Checks should be made out to FOCUS, marked “FOCUS School Supplies,” and sent to FOCUS c/o Allan Tedrow, Westminster Presbyterian, 85 Chestnut Street, Albany 12210. For more information, contact Rev. Deb Jameson, Community Minister, at 443-0460 or at focuschurches@juno.com. ■

Camp Out With Habitat

Erica Small, Development Director

CAPITAL DISTRICT HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

On August 13th-20th, 2009, Capital District Habitat for Humanity will present Tent-a-thon 2009. This annual family focused event raises money for Capital District Habitat for Humanity. Participants give up the comforts of their homes and sleep in tents to demonstrate their commitment to eliminating poverty and substandard housing. Each participant collects pledges from family, friends and co-workers for their efforts on behalf of Habitat.

Tawasentha Park in Guelderland is once again

the site of the event. At Tent-a-Thon 2009 campers will enjoy music, softball, free food, campfire stories, games and more. Dinner and breakfast will be provided each day by local restaurants. Tents can stay one night or all seven. Register online: www.CapitalDistrictHabitat.org.

All donations will directly benefit Habitat for Humanity - a non-profit Christian housing ministry that provides low-income families with an opportunity to own their own home. Habitat for Humanity offers a hand up, not a hand out. ■



Art of Spiritual Guidance

Silver Bay YMCA of the Adirondacks will launch the Art of Spiritual Guidance Training Program this September at the Silver Bay Conference Center on Lake George.

“Spiritual direction is a call, a blessing, and a gift,” says Carol A. Fournier, leader of the program. “Spiritual guidance is being present in the moment, seeing and honoring the sacred mystery of the soul of another.” Carol trains spiritual directors, guides, counselors, and ministers internationally. She is a spiritual director as well as a nationally certified counselor with a specialty in spirituality, ministry and integrative healing. Carol is recognized for her guidance and leadership in spiritual and religious issues as well as interfaith initiatives by the spiritual direction, counseling and higher education communities

If you feel called to spiritual guidance, have a desire to deepen your spiritual journey and walk with God, or would like to integrate an understanding of spirituality into your work or ministry, prayerfully consider the 18 weekend session which begin meeting monthly in September.

Applications are encouraged early and are accepted until the program is full. Details are available at the Art of Spiritual Guidance at Silver Bay webpage: www.silverbay.org or call 802-865-2600. ■



GOOD NEWS

Go tell it ... EVERYWHERE!

† **Camp Erin for grieving children (ages 6-17)** Sept. 25-27. This special overnight weekend camp is free of charge but space is limited, register by Aug. 1. Children who have experienced the death of a family member or friend are invited for a fun, high-energy camp combined with some grief education and emotional support. Activities for children of all ages and abilities may include music, sharing, canoes, arts & crafts, swimming, luminaries, nature walks, and storytelling. Camp Erin-Albany is being held at Fowler Camp and Retreat Center on Sacandaga Lake in Speculator, NY. Campers and volunteers will be transported from Albany by bus. The camp is staffed by bereavement coordinators from the Community Hospice and community volunteers who are professionally trained by Hospice staff. The swimming area will be staffed by a certified life guard. Contact Barbara Kipniss, Bereavement Secretary at (518) 694-4980 to register or for more details. You can go to www.campfowler.org to learn more about the facility.

Upcoming courses of the Capital Region Theological Center. Registration required: (518)462-2470 or www.capitalrtc.org. Scholarships available.

† **SafeTALK**, Sept. 19, 9a - 1p. Melanie Puerto, NYS Office of Mental Health. This introductory suicide prevention workshop will explore warning signs and early intervention techniques. Cost: \$50. Register by Sept. 3.

† **Generational Dynamics**, Sept. 26, 9a – 4p, Loudonville. Andy Chestnut, MSW, MBA. See beyond today's meltdown and connect your church to the future by exploring generations; what they are, why they matter, and why you should care. Cost: \$75. Register by Sept. 10.

† **Helping Children Listen to God**, Oct. 17, 9a – 4p, Albany. Barbara Cullum, Christian Educator & trainer. Use the best of the Godly Play as well as

Children and Worship models to grow the spirits of your youngsters. Cost: \$75. Register by Sept. 30

† **Introduction to the New Testament**, Tuesdays, October 13 – December 15, 7p – 9p. Dr. Peter Bedford, Union College. Explore the unity and diversity of structure, composition, theology as well as historical, social, religious contexts and value in everyday life of New Testament texts. Cost: \$225 (\$175 audit), Register by Sept. 28.

† **Freedom and Responsibility: Preaching Galatians and 1 Corinthians**, Oct. 22-23, 9a – 3p, Rev. Dr. Richard Carlson, LTS Gettysburgh. Explore the Christian freedom and Responsibility empowered by the Holy Spirit in lectionary epistle texts. Cost: \$155. Register by Oct. 8.

† **Introduction to World Religions: Islam**, Oct. 31, 9a – 12p, The Islamic Center of the Capital District. A unique experience to learn first hand from a faith leader, tour the religious space, and dialogue. Cost: \$45. Register by Oct. 15.

† **Overview of World Religions**, Oct. 31, 12:30p – 5p, Albany. Fr. Linh Hoang, OFM, PhD, Siena College. Gain an understanding of your neighbors and the world with this comprehensive overview. Cost: \$50. Register by Oct. 15.

† **Capital Area Council of Churches' Fall Assembly Banquet**, Sept. 29, Schuyler Inn, Albany. Program highlights include the recognition of community partners and the presentation of the Carlyle Adams Ecumenical/Interfaith Award. The Rev. Chris DeGiovine, Chaplain at the College of St. Rose, will be the keynote speaker. Call 462-5450.

† **Visit www.albanypresbytery.org to find more ecumenical news on the new CREO webpages.** ■

One Table

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Organization
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PAID
Albany, NY
Permit No 310

Misha R. Marvel, MSW
Coordinator

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Office:
102 Arrowwood Place
Malta, NY 12020

Phone: (518) 729-0278
Email: mishamarvel@gmail.com

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.”

Prayers for Our Neighbors Who Are Searching for Work

O God, who made us in your image,
you call us to live in community,
caring for all, but especially for those in need.

Look with love on those of us
who are unemployed,
or who are paid too little,
or who are called to be supportive community.

Help us to understand what kind of help we need to offer one another,
respecting the dignity of each person,
realizing the need of all to fully participate in society,
to find meaningful work that sustains life.

Guide the leaders of our country,
that they may make wise decisions which will benefit us all.

Help us to enjoy life together, realizing we are the one Body of Christ.
We ask this through him who was a worker, Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen

(Adapted from a prayer by K. Leith)