



Celebration Journal

The Periodic Newsletter of Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church

Summer 2008

Reflections of the Pastor

“SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

I recently accompanied my wife, Judy, to a conference in Las Vegas where she was a featured speaker before a national gathering of CPAs. I fell in love with the desert, the mountains, and the wonderful national and state parks of Nevada. However, I was deeply saddened by what I



saw in the city. The glitz and glamour, the flaunting of wealth and prestige, the unrestrained indulgence in self-centered pleasures creates a culture that is alluring yet bereft of the values of the Kingdom of God. I found the Vegas Strip to be a place that was spiritually jarring, jangling, and unsettling.

I was particularly distressed when I thought about all the money being spent in Las Vegas, and I contrasted that to the news articles I read about the 4000 homeless children in the Las Vegas school system. According to the National Alliance for the Homeless, Las Vegas has the highest percentage of homelessness of any place in the United States — 0.6% of their population has no permanent residence. In spite of the country's economic downturn, the Vegas Strip is booming. Nearly half the downtown is under construction with plans to build 40,000 new hotel rooms in the next few years. Yet construction workers were on strike because the big contractors would not supply drinking water on the work site; an estimated cost of \$35 a week.

Why do I bring this up in the context of an article about our work at Rising Hope? In Matthew 6 Jesus tells us not to worry about what we shall eat or drink, or what we shall wear. I presume He would also say that we should not worry about finding a home. He says that God takes care of His creation, feeding the birds and dressing the fields with flowers. He rhetorically asks if we aren't more important to God than the birds and the flowers?

Then He says, *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”* (6:33). It dawned on me that Jesus wasn't simply talking to individuals, but He was talking to a society, a culture, institutions and communities as well. If we seek first the Kingdom of God as individuals and communities,

we will spend our time and money first on advancing God's Kingdom. He tells us not to worry because if we as a society seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness then we will be organizing to meet everyone's basic needs of food, water, clothing and shelter. In essence Jesus is telling us to quit agonizing about our problems and start organizing to solve them. God takes care of His creation through the work of those who hear and follow Him.

With all the wealth in Las Vegas perhaps the greater sin is that it is not used to solve their problem of homelessness. Thank God Fairfax County does not have anywhere near the magnitude of homelessness of Las Vegas. Yet as one of the nation's wealthiest counties, we too have no excuse to not solve our homeless problem. It boils down to political and financial will. Are we willing to organize and put our resources to work for God's purposes?

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Give and It Shall be Given to You

By Sonia Holman, Fund Development & Stewardship Committee

“Give and it shall be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap” (Luke 6:38)

What a wonderful promise! I am certain that promise is true from my own life experience and I hope that it has already been proven to you as well. What a wonderful promise indeed!

The Lord wants to bless us primarily so that we may be a blessing to others. The transformation of struggling individuals as well as the transformation of segments of our community is in each of our own interests and the responsibility of every one of us. We are called upon to be the hands and feet of the Good Lord himself on this earth. While that calling can be a bit overwhelming and sometimes we struggle to determine where to begin - it is our great fortune to have such a place as Rising Hope in our community. A place where God saves countless lives, where one can find help for homelessness, unemployment, substance abuse, hunger, and many other needs.

While the church has come a long way in its twelve-year history and the services are abundant - ***the needs of this blessed mission are great.*** The income and expenses never quite match up - the budget challenges continue. Please help us keep this miracle thriving with a gift to Rising Hope today!

"Celebrating Rising Hope" Event

"Celebrating Rising Hope" offered an afternoon of personal testimony through word and music, recognition of long-term volunteer service, entertaining thoughts and remembrances by a nationally-known author and advocate of rights for female clergy, and significant additional financial support for the ministries of Rising Hope.

On the lovely summer afternoon of June 22, many guests, volunteers and staff joined to hear the often humorous and very poignant remarks of Joy Carroll Wallis. Rev. Wallis was one of the first women ordained as a priest in the Anglican Church. She has written about her formative years and the struggle for ordination in the book, *The Woman Behind the Collar*. She was also the inspiration for the popular BBC series, *The Vicar of Wimbley*. During her comments, she shared some of the incidents in her life which became part of the series situations. Rev. Wallis is also the wife of national author, advocate, and founder of *Sojourners* magazine, Rev. Jim Wallis.



Music for the event was provided by Stephanie Simmons and Vinney Johnston with a song they had written to honor Rising Hope. Personal testimony was given by Rising Hope member, Kennard Watkins. Three volunteers who have given ten years of service to Rising Hope were recognized — Marionette Changes, Sharon Emory, and Virlinda Snyder.

This event, designed to encourage continued support from major donors, has raised an additional \$25,000 to date for the ministries of Rising Hope. As financial support continues to be received from this population, it is anticipated that the \$40,000 goal will be reached by September.

Urgent Needs at RHUMMC

Vacation Bible School — volunteers are urgently needed for the VBS scheduled for August 11 - 15, from 9:00 am — 12:00 noon each morning. Positions to be filled include teachers, teachers aides, craft aides, snack preparers, drivers to transport children to and from Rising Hope, and servers for breakfast and lunch. Why don't you come join "The Beach Party" - the Cokesbury curriculum being used this summer?

Milk and Honey Food Ministry — the shelves are bare as Rising Hope tries to serve more than 250 families each week (over 800 individuals, many of them children). We need non-perishable items such as canned vegetables, soups, fruit and fruit juices, meats, and tomato products. Just drop off food Tues. - Fri. from 9 am - 4 pm.

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Interestingly, Jesus starts this teaching on seeking the Kingdom of God with this statement: *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."*

Your Brother in Christ,

Keary Kincannon

Dates to Note



Camp Rising Hope

Monday, July 28 – Thursday, July 31

Vacation Bible School

Monday, August 11 – Friday, August 15

School Supply Distribution

Tuesday, August 26 – Thursday, August 28

V.O.I.C.E. (Community Advocacy) Inaugural Meeting

Sunday, October 5, 5:00—7:00 p.m.

Silent and Live Auction

Saturday, November 8, 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Thanksgiving Dinner

Thursday, November 27, 12noon—2:00pm

Christmas Dinner

Thursday, December 25, 12noon—4:00pm

What is an Advance Number???

By Charles Loeffler, Summer Intern

Want to support Rising Hope through your home church, district, conference, or other organization? Through partnership with the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries, Rising Hope has obtained a way for your gifts to be direct, safe, and effective through *The Advance*.

The Advance is a ministry of the United Methodist Church that forwards 100% of any gift directly from the giver to its intended recipient, taking none of the gift for administrative costs. Each mission of *The Advance* is assigned a number and posted on the *Advance* website (<http://new.gbgm-umc.org/advance>). The site explains a variety of ways in which one can give to a specific mission. These may include over the phone or internet by credit card, by setting up a monthly automatic payment, or by mailing a check made out to "ADVANCE GCFA", containing the name and number of the mission to:

Advance GCFA

P.O. Box 9068 GPO

New York, NY 10087-9068

Rising Hope's *Advance* number is #803001. Through *The Advance*, we hope to broaden our support pool throughout the denomination and make it easier for churches across the country to give to the ministries of Rising Hope.

Children's Ministry

Warm and Wonderful Summer

Summer is here and the children's ministry has kicked off a number of events to keep the kids active and invite more children into the ministry during their vacation!

We got off to a great summer start on June 14 with the annual Family Fun Fair. Two hundred participants from Route 1 community were able to play games, throw water balloons, make crafts, earn prizes, jump in a Moonbounce, and enjoy free pizza and hot dogs in this family-oriented event. Music was provided by "Crowns of Life". "All the kids seemed to really enjoy it," said summer intern Hannah DeLoche. "And by kids, I'm including the bigger ones as well!"



A young fellow enjoying games at the Family Fun Fair



Coordinator of Children's Ministries, Lauren Soljanyk Lee, and summer interns, Hannah DeLoche and Charles Loeffler, distribute lunches through SFSP

While school is not in session for the summer, Rising Hope has volunteered to host one of the local branches of Fairfax County's Summer Food Service Program, providing free breakfasts and lunches to children who normally eat at school. Children ages 5 to 18 can receive breakfast at 9:00 am and lunch at 12:15 pm every Mon.-Fri. through the end of August. The number of children has averaged 12 children each day. This program has also

given us the opportunity to offer other exciting events for the kids each week, including a Bible-lesson curriculum based on fun water activities every Tuesday and a trip to the movie theater every Wednesday.

Prior to the summer activities, Samaritan's Feet and First Baptist Church of Alexandria partnered with Rising Hope to offer a fantastic event. Far surpassing expectations, this all-day event held on March 17 featured community-wide activities for nearly 600 participants, a mini-Vacation Bible School, and brand new athletic shoes being given to well over 400 children. The event closed with a celebration service with music by national praise recording artists and testimony by the founder of Samaritan's Feet, Manny Ohonme. Mr. Ohonme told his story of being raised in Africa with no shoes until he was nine-years-old. He was offered a future by a missionary who gave him a pair of athletic shoes and a basketball and who let him know he was loved by God. This CEO of this international non-profit organization then told of his vision to put new shoes on the feet of millions of children all over the world. What an event for Rising Hope to have the opportunity to host!!

Rising Hope is blessed to be able to provide these children's ministries thanks to a generous grant from a local family foundation.

Staff Spotlight

Laura Derby

Church Executive Director

Ten Years at Rising Hope

By Charles Loeffler, Summer Intern

Laura Derby just celebrated her ten-year anniversary in her paid position at Rising Hope!!! But her history here extends beyond that. She attended the church's initial chartering and volunteered for two years before assuming her current staff role.



Laura is originally from Ohio. She graduated from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. She came to northern Virginia to work for the United Way of America in 1995 after seven years as the director of the local United Way of Columbia County near Albany, NY. Currently, she is not only a crucial member of the staff at Rising Hope, but she is also very involved with her church of membership, Aldersgate United Methodist in Alexandria. Her other interests include sharing experiences of fun with children and grandchildren, travel, and skiing with her soulmate, Don; active involvement in the Rotary Club of Mount Vernon; and serving as a Leader in Stephen Ministers.

"I believe that coming to northern Virginia was fulfilling a plan that God had for my life — giving me the opportunity to be part of the ministry at Rising Hope," Laura said. "I continue to be rewarded every day by the people I meet and the way they are willing to share part of their lives with me and others at Rising Hope. This is truly the church that John Wesley preached about and Jesus mandated we strive to achieve."

Fun Night Ahead

Silent/Live Auction Benefit – Saturday, November 8, 6:00 – 10:00 pm. Please save the date for this event. We are seeking donations of gift baskets, sports tickets, gift certificates to restaurants, vacation weekends, and other items to be auctioned. We would be most appreciative if UMW or UMM units could consider providing a gift basket with a theme such as "Tea Time", "Games for All", "Chocolate Decadence", "Home Mechanic's Hodge-podge", "Baby Bunting", "Christmas Tidings", etc.



Another opportunity to support this event is by purchasing advertising in the program booklet. Please contact Laura Derby at lderby@risinghopeumc.org for details on advertising your business, organization's events, or churches services.

Please plan to attend this fun event. Cost of tickets will be \$10 per person again this year. Contact Sharon Emory, chair of the Silent/Live Auction, at stemory@aol.com to make donations or for more information.

Volunteer Spotlight

Kennard Watkins

By Hannah DeLoche, Summer Intern



Kennard Watkins is a power-filled man with a power-filled testimony. Working in the Milk and Honey food ministry and driving the van to the homeless shelter each Sunday and Thursday evening, he is active and involved in Rising Hope and has been since last October. That can probably be traced

back to how he got involved with the church in the first place.

Kennard was once homeless and staying in the Kennedy Shelter himself. His first Sunday there, a driver from Rising Hope came and asked if anyone wanted a ride to church. Kennard says he came, quite simply, because he loved God. He's stayed put with us for that very same reason.

Mr. Watkins attributes his faith to a turning point he had a year ago. Before that point, he had been heavily involved with drugs and alcohol.

"God found me," he said, while he was incarcerated. After that night when he "put everything out before Him," Kennard hasn't looked back. "This is a totally new life for me," he said — and that totally new life is an inspiring one. He also credits Rev. Bob Driscoll, his mentor, in helping make such a huge turn-around.

In addition to working for VDOT by day, Kennard makes time for his volunteer duties at Rising Hope and also speaks at area churches and functions where he gives his testimony. He enjoys spending time with his children: Ashley, Chaylena, Kennard, Katia, Naya, and Jasahn. Kennard discovered hope, health and help in Christ and he passes it on to others. We at Rising Hope are glad to

Credit Card Giving

Contributions may now be made to Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church via credit card. Anyone desiring to give in this manner may contact Laura Derby at 703-360-1976 ext.5 or e-mail lderby@risinghopeumc.org Capability of doing so directly will soon be available on the Rising Hope website at www.risinghopeumc.org.

Second Annual "Rock Award" Presented

Three outstanding volunteers have completed 10 years of continuous service to Rising Hope. This is the second year for presenting the prestigious "Rock Award". The three ladies in this category are Marionette Changes, a member at Cameron UMC (pictured at right with Pastor Keary Kincannon and Executive Director Laura Derby); Sharon Emory, of Christ UMC; and Virlinda Snyder, Washington Street UMC. Each were recognized at the "Celebrating Rising Hope" event on June 22 and received a plaque in honor of the occasion.



Marionette Changes has served in the Milk and Honey food ministry, preparing bags for home deliveries for her ten years of volunteer service. At plus-80 years old, she is perhaps our elder stateswoman of volunteers. Sharon Emory began service designing decorations for Vacation Bible School in 1998 and has served in many capacities, currently as Chair of the Route One Ministry Board. Virlinda Snyder also began in the Vacation Bible School and has taught in that ministry for the past ten years, in addition to serving in other areas of the children's ministries.

You Too Can Volunteer

Volunteer needs in Rising Hope ministries at the present time are the following:

- Teachers and aides for the growing Children's Sunday School held 9:00-10:30 am on Sundays
- Aides for Girls Club Wednesdays from 3:30-5:30 pm
- Assistants and drivers for Guys Group on Tuesdays from 3:30-5:30 pm
- Drivers to pick up food at local stores or deliver to homebound adults on Wednesdays
- Greeters at front door to direct constituents to appropriate ministries Tuesday-Friday



To volunteer in any capacity, please contact Laura Derby, Executive Director, at 703-360-1976 ext 5 or e-mail at lderby@risinghopeumc.org

Celebration Journal is a communications tool of Rising Hope. We send out **Celebration Journal** on a regular basis. Your support and assistance is critical. Without your support many on the Route One Corridor will not know the love and power of God to change lives. Many thanks to those who provided articles and pictures for their contributions to this newsletter.

Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church

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