



# Celebration Journal

The Periodic Newsletter of Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church

Spring 2009

## Reflections of the Pastor

### "CHARITY IN THE FACE OF POVERTY"

These are difficult and uncertain times. Nowhere in Northern Virginia is this more evident than at Rising Hope. At the beginning of 2008, our food pantry was serving an average of 160 needy families every week. Today we are serving on average of 350 families a week. To put this in more stark terms, nearly 1400 low-income people survive every week, in part, because of the food that Rising Hope makes available to the community.

Many in our low-income community have lost their jobs as businesses are scaling back on their employees in an effort to cut costs. As many as 50 people are regularly joining us for our daily noon prayer service. As our numbers grow, so does the frequency of prayer for 'work'.

Allen is a trained butcher who has joined us in prayer from time to time. He speaks eloquently of the difficulty of holding down a job while being homeless. The lack of affordable housing for low-wage workers in our community is a sin. This difficulty is compounded because today there are fewer jobs available to the low-income community.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, is clear that in the face of poverty there is a great need for charity. The Bible uses charity as a synonym for "love." Wesley feared that most people would reduce charity's meaning from caring, sacrificial love to acts of mere almsgiving.

Wesley is clear that aiding the poor means making them more capable to fulfill their God-given gifts; it does not mean making them dependant. At the same time it is very difficult to fulfill one's God-given gifts, let alone make it to work refreshed and clean, when the only place you have to sleep is riding around on a bus all night.

Giving money to charities that help the poor can be a means of extending God's Grace to those in need. Almsgiving is one factor in releasing the poor from poverty, but it must be coupled with addressing all the dimensions of poverty — economic, political, cultural, physical, and spiritual. This means, of course, that the systems causing impoverished conditions must be changed. But it also means that disciples of Christ must be intimately related to the poor so that the poor can be fully brought into life-giving community.

Rising Hope is a place of hope not only because the alms given to us support our Ministries of Mercy to the poor. Rising Hope is a place of hope because we are creating a community where everyone's God-given gifts (poor and middle-class alike) are being developed to further God's Kingdom on earth. I invite you to come and see for yourself.



Your brother in Christ,  
*Kevary Kincannon*

### Lenten Season — An Opportunity

Caryll Whipple, Fund Development & Stewardship Committee

*Jesus answered, "The most important [commandment] is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'*

*The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

Mark 12:29-31 (ESV)

As readers of this journal, you know Rising Hope as part of God's ministry to the least, the lost, the lonely, and the left-out along the Route One Corridor in Alexandria. During my participation in this ministry over the past ten or so years, listening to the testimonies of and watching the Spirit work in the lives of those reached and helped by Rising Hope has been both a thrilling and a humbling experience. In this time when we, together with people around the world, face new and unprecedented challenges, our opportunities to reach out in Christian love and put our faith into action are even more significant.

Each year the Lenten Season affords us opportunity to pause and consider our Christian walk. Using the famous words from Richard of Chichester's prayer, how are we seeking "to know Jesus Christ more clearly, to love him more dearly, and to follow him more nearly"?

You will not be surprised to know that Rising Hope is receiving ever-increasing requests for both physical and spiritual assistance. Your prayers, your gifts, and your service always make a wonderful difference, and now more than ever, they are very much appreciated.



Rising Hope members distribute flyers and pray for the people and needs of the surrounding neighborhood

## Rising Hope Partners with International Ministry for Children

Samaritan's Feet is once again coming to Rising Hope to hand out new shoes to the children of our church and neighborhood. The goal is to reach 500 children up to the age of 18 through the Rising Hope event.

This year's events will begin at the Lincoln Memorial on Saturday, April 4, 2009, at 8 AM. Anyone who wishes to participate may walk with Manny Ohonme, founder of Samaritan's Feet. He will walk from the Lincoln Memorial to Paramount Baptist Church where the first distribution will be held. This church is in Southeast DC in a very needy neighborhood. Volunteers are still needed for that event which is from 10 AM - 5 PM.

On Sunday, April 5, Christian recording artist Damien Horne will be performing a free concert at City Church, 4100 River Road NW at 5 PM. Transportation will be provided from Rising Hope for those who call the church office at 703-360-1976.

On Monday, April 6, from 10 AM - 5 PM, Rising Hope will be the distribution site. Again, shoes will be handed out to children through age 18. *If you would like to volunteer, please contact LuAnn Mudrak at 703-360-1976 or [luann.mudrak@gmail.com](mailto:luann.mudrak@gmail.com).* We are especially in need of nurses, face painters, clowns, balloon artists, etc. There are also other volunteer positions like foot washers, runners, stockroom, Bible club, or outside support. Training for volunteers is scheduled for Thursday, April 2.

Prayer walks are scheduled for the neighborhoods around Rising Hope. They will be held on March 21 (1:30-4:30 pm), March 28 (1:30-4:30pm), March 29 (2:30-4:30pm), and April 4 (1:30-4:30 pm). We need your participation. Sign-up at the church for the day you can come and hand out flyers and pray in our neighborhoods for the people who will receive new shoes.

If you can't volunteer, consider making a contribution of a new pair of tennis shoes (youth sizes especially) or donating by check to Samaritan's Feet, designated DC event. A donation of \$20 can provide 5 pairs of shoes from Fila.



## V.O.I.C.E. is Being Heard (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement)

On March 8, 2009, 25 members of Rising Hope participated in a VOICE Action with Fairfax County Chairman Sharon Bulova and Supervisor Catherine Hudgins. They made a public commitment to not cut the One Penny Fund for Affordable Housing in the 2010 County Budget; to fund Fairfax's share of adding a dentist to the Northern Virginia Dental Clinic; and to provide an accounting of where and how English as a Second Language funds are being spent in the County.



Sam Mudrak, Rising Hope liaison to V.O.I.C.E., at March Action meeting

Margaret Davis, a frequent participant in Rising Hope's ministries and a resident of the Hypothermia Shelter hosted by Rising Hope, gave a heart felt plea to the supervisors to not cut housing or human service programs. She explained that she had just had major surgery, had no job, and as a result was homeless. Without the support of the County and Rising Hope, Margaret said she would have no hope of survival.

Rev. Keary Kincannon reminded the Supervisors that every budget is a moral document that reflects our values. He then challenged the crowd of 300, representing 15 Fairfax congregations, to let the supervisors know that we value the least among us as much as God does. If budget revenues are kept at levels at least equal to last year's revenues it should be possible to prevent cuts to housing and human service programs.

The 15 congregations present then made a public commitment to generate over 4,700 post cards urging the Supervisors to support the Penny for Affordable Housing Fund and the additional dentist for the Northern Virginia Dental Clinic. Sam Mudrak, Rising Hope liaison to V.O.I.C.E., led our delegation in pledging 300 of those post cards.



Board of Supervisors Chairman, Sharon Bulova, speaks to V.O.I.C.E. delegation

Supervisors Penny Gross and Gerry Hyland were unable to be present at this meeting, but they sent letters supporting all the concerns raised by VOICE. In addition Gerry Hyland indicated his support that 30% of the affordable housing units being considered for North Hill be created as rental housing for people whose income is 30% or lower than the Area Median Income. This issue has been of prime importance to Rev. Kincannon and the members of Rising Hope who stand to benefit.

## One Rising Hope Recipient Says Thank You for All



*"Praise God from whom all blessings flow. .... You are truly angels and I am sincerely honored to have been a recipient of your generosity and thoughtfulness through the Angel Project. My joy is great.*

*Membership in Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church has given me many blessings that I did not anticipate, and the gifts from the Angels were one of them. Your selections were fabulous and right on according to our requests. The power of Christ that rested upon you. God will never let you go, and you made me feel significant at this time of year. You are faithful and filled with Christ and will be blessed a thousand fold.*

*Economically, the latter part of this year posed an unanticipated hardship and gifts to my family would have been a luxury I could not afford. They too praise God for your love. His love is forever faithful and you contributed to a new spirit within all of us. THANK YOU.*

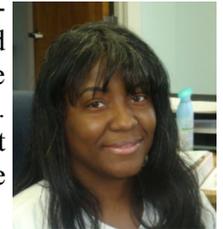
*Yours in Christ, Doris Woods"*

This was the way one of the recipients of gifts and food and blessings from Rising Hope expressed her gratitude in a letter to us. It is just one example of the multiple expressions of appreciation voiced by many. Thanks to all of you who make these ministries so successful.

## Staff Spotlight

### Stephanie Simmons Coordinator of Children's Ministries

Not all of us are called to be an ordained minister, but all of us are called to do God's work in this world. Some of us come to this realization late in life. Some lucky few realize early on that they are part of God's plan. Stephanie Simmons is one of those lucky ones.



Stephanie grew up in Pennsylvania. Early on she felt called to minister to the least, the lost, and the lonely of God's people. At one point she even started her own charity to help those in need.

When she moved to Virginia she would drive by the Rising Hope building wondering what was inside. She looked Rising Hope up on the website, then came for a visit. She walked through the doors and felt at home. At last she had found a church in Virginia that not only ministered to the souls of its members, but ministered to their hearts and minds and all their physical needs. "It's a blessing to be part of Rising Hope" Stephanie said.

Stephanie has been with Rising Hope for over three years in various staff and volunteer capacities. She has worked in administration, shared her skills as part of the music department, been a worship leader, as well as taught in the children's Sunday school. Now she is pleased to be the Coordinator of Children's Ministries, a position she has held for the last few months. Stephanie is a shining example of the joy we feel when we answer God's call.

## Dates to Note



### Samaritan's Feet Shoe Distribution and Celebration Service

Monday, April 6, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

### VIC-HOP Volunteer Recognition

Sunday, April 19, 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

### Nathan Tasker Benefit Concert - Wesley UMC

Thursday, April 30, 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

### USPS/NALC Food Drive

Saturday, May 9, 3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

### Welcome Home Celebration and Update to Donors

Sunday, May 31, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

### Family Fun Fair

Saturday, June 13, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

### Camp Rising Hope

Monday, July 20 – Thursday, July 23

### Vacation Bible School

Monday, August 17 – Friday, August 21

### School Supply Distribution

Tuesday, September 1 – Thursday, September 3

### Silent and Live Auction

Saturday, November 7, 6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

## Fun for All - 6th Annual Family Fun Fair

The Family Fun Fair will be held this year on Saturday, June 13, from 10 am - 2 pm here at Rising Hope. We are focusing on reaching out to the community along the Route 1 Corridor. We are excited about the opportunity to welcome new families to the ministries at Rising Hope. Free food and prizes will be given out. There will be games for children, special gifts to win, and musical entertainment to stir the soul and enliven the neighborhood.



We are in need of many volunteers for this day of "community celebration". Tasks include preparing and serving food, monitoring games, helping with crafts, setting up, cleaning up, and signing up children for our many summer and fall programs.



It is our hope that you can join us for the day and take part in the festivities. If you can assist by volunteering or donating items needed, please contact Stephanie Simmons, Coordinator of Children's Ministries, by calling her at Rising Hope at ext. 4 or [ssimmons@risinghopeumc.org](mailto:ssimmons@risinghopeumc.org).

## Volunteer Spotlight

### Sheila Finley

Several years ago Sheila left her home in New York and moved to Virginia to help take care of some family members. But leaving her life-long home in NY left her feeling lonely and disconnected from any sense of community. She used to travel back to New York every other weekend.



Then about a year ago she started volunteering in the Rising Hope food pantry. Sheila had come in as a constituent, but soon realized that the pantry needed more volunteers. Sheila says that she really enjoys her work and loves all the people she meets at Rising Hope. "Pastor Keary is a down-home person who shows love to everyone," she raves. She hasn't been back to New York since she started volunteering.

On Sunday, March 8, 2009, Sheila officially joined Rising Hope Church. It was her birthday that Sunday. "I love to give," says Sheila. So she decided to give to her new church family by cooking a big chicken dinner with all the trimmings in celebration of her birthday. All of her children, grandchildren, and one great grandchild were on hand to help her celebrate along with the nearly 70 attendees in her new Rising Hope family that Sunday.

Sheila has certainly demonstrated that in giving we receive. In showing God's love and acceptance to others, we feel that love returned and know we belong.

## Nathan Tasker Benefit Concert

Thursday evening, April 30, Rising Hope will be blessed with a benefit concert by Christian music artist Nathan Tasker. This event will be held at 7:00 p.m. at Wesley United Methodist Church, just a half mile from Rising Hope, at 8412 Richmond Avenue.



Tasker is an Australian native with a passion for ministry. Admission to the concert will be a bag of non-perishable foods for Rising Hope's food pantry, Milk and Honey Ministry. A love offering to benefit Rising Hope will also be taken. No tickets required.

## You Too Can Volunteer

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

- Participants in Prayer Walks to distribute flyers about Easter Celebration services
- Workers at Samaritan's Feet event Monday, April 6, 9:00 am - 6:00 pm for many different tasks



- Food pick-up, sorting, and stocking for NALC/USPS food drive on Saturday, May 9, 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm
- Drivers to pick up food at local stores or deliver to homebound adults on Wednesdays
- Cooks, craft teachers, game monitors, clowns, face painters, registrars, etc. for Family Fun Fair on Saturday, June 13, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
- Teachers and aides for the Children's Sunday School held 9:00 - 10:30 am on Sundays
- Receptionists Tuesday-Friday from 9:30 am-4:00 pm (full day or half day shift, as available)
- Greeters at front door to direct constituents to appropriate ministries Tuesday-Friday
- Resource aides to listen to needs of constituents, assist with referrals to special services, and research local resources available
- Cooks to prepare and serve food for weekday lunches Tuesdays - Fridays

To volunteer in the above positions, please contact Deborah Lloyd Allers, Administrative Secretary, at 703-360-1976 ext 8 or e-mail at [dallers@risinghopeumc.org](mailto:dallers@risinghopeumc.org).



## Plans Aplenty

Lots of special events the next several months to benefit Rising Hope's ministries. Underway at the present time are planning meetings for these future programs:



- ~ Major Donors Celebration and Update - late spring
- ~ Jeff Majors Benefit Concert - early-mid summer
- ~ Silent and Live Auction - early November

Watch for future details on all these events.

**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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