

Rising Hope Mission Celebrates 15 Years

“Manifesting the ministry that Jesus started.”

By ED SIMMONS, JR.
THE GAZETTE

Spiritual beacon for the homeless and needy of the Route 1 Corridor, Rising Hope Mission Church launched its 15th Anniversary Kick-off Celebration Sunday night in a two-hour-long swirl of Christian Rock, emotional testimonials, sacred dance and with elected officials and area pastors expressing support and praise.

“If God could create a miracle to part the Red Sea, he could do the same on Route 1 and did,” said Mary Baker, a long-time congregation member who saluted Rising Hope pastor the Rev. Keary Kincannon as “one of God’s shepherds.” His church, now in its 15th year, aids about 8,000 people yearly with food, clothing, shelter and opportunities to worship and transform their lives.

Another founding member Chuck Denton recalled how Kincannon began his ministry in 1995 “out of the back of his station wagon” gathering 11 members who first met in the community room at Westford Housing Complex in 1996.

Appointing Kincannon as pastor that year, said United Methodist district superintendent the Rev. Ken Jackson, “was probably one of the best appointments we made.”

Original member Barbara Sharif recalled how Kincannon had written in an early flyer that “hope is rising on the Route 1 Corridor” led her to suggest naming the church “Rising Hope.”

“It was like the story of the mustard seed, the way it grew,” she added. Located now



PHOTO BY ED SIMMONS, JR./THE GAZETTE

Singing “Jesus is The Rock” with the Rev. Keary Kincannon, right, and the Rising Hope Band are Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland, Del. Scott Surovell, the Rev. Tuck Bowerfind and the Rev. Ken Jackson. At left are Thella Jacobs and Venisa McCormick.

a tenth of a mile from Route 1 on Russell Road, the church presently meets in a three-story building with a skylight-lit chapel, food pantry, clothes closet, dining hall, kitchen and offices. Kincannon told the gathering he has a vision for an even larger church that will include the building of affordable housing.

Recalled Debra Brothman, Rising Hope was “a bright light in a very dark tunnel of despair,” and Robert Pailey described the original church as “a little congregation with a big heart with big dreams.”

Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland told how his visit on a freezing night with the homeless at the church’s Hypothermia Shelter “told me everything about Rising Hope” which led to his realizing that Kincannon is “a magnificent person we’re very fortunate to have helping all of us.”

“What the state can do,” said Del. Scott Surovell, “and what the county can do, isn’t enough. That’s where you guys come in.”

“You do the heavy lifting for us,” said St. Luke’s rector and supporter the Rev. Tuck Bowerfind, “the day-to-day forming of community with the least, the lonely and the left out.”

Rising Hope is a “beloved community,” said Dr. Fred Smith, professor of Urban Ministry at Wesley Theological Seminary. It is “ruled by love expressed in concrete acts” where “diversity is necessary to see the many faces of God” and “everyone’s worth is affirmed.”

At the conclusion of the evening’s festivities, Kincannon affirmed, “Together we are doing our best to manifest the ministry that Jesus started. This is a place where God’s love is going to change lives.”

The year-long celebration of Rising Hope’s 15th anniversary includes a “Dinner, Dance & Auction” Sept. 30 at the Mount Vernon Country Club, an evening of Christian comedy Oct. 23 with Scott Davis and a “Celebration Concert” in 2012.