



▲ **Emmaus UMC** of Stratford Hills, Richmond, offered joined hands of the Korean-speaking congregation and the English-speaking congregation to serve Haitian brothers and sisters in Port-au-Prince in June. The mission team of 12 members, including two pastors, worked on laying the foundations of a new home and medical care facility in scorching heat and rainy days. In this land of tears and devastation, all the team members were deeply touched by the powerful presence of the Lord who was working through the continual relief efforts of Christians worldwide and through the vital ministry of Haitian local churches.



◀ Members at **Bethia UMC**, James River District,

started a prayer shawl ministry in 2006 that has been a blessing to many people. They meet twice a month and pray over the shawls as they are being knitted or crocheted. Once they are complete, the shawls are placed on the altar rail for the congregation to lay hands on them in prayer during worship. To date, more than 600 shawls have been given out. There has been at least one sent to someone in every state in the U.S. and in numerous other countries. Pictured are (from left) Ellie Rose and Maxine Warner.



Singing "Jesus is The Rock" with the Rev. Keary Kincannon (right) and the Rising Hope Band are (right to left) the Revs. Ken Jackson and Tuck Bowerfind, Del. Scott Surovell, Mount Vernon supervisor Gerry Hyland, Venisa McCormick and Thella Jacobs.

Rising Hope Mission Church launches yearlong celebration

Spiritual beacon for the homeless and needy of the Route 1 Corridor, Rising Hope Mission Church launched its 15th Anniversary Kick-off Celebration in June in a joyous, two-hour-long swirl of Christian rock music, 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 longtime congregation member who saluted Rising Hope's pastor, the Rev. Keary Kincannon, as "one of God's shepherds."

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.

Original member Barbara Sharif recalled how Kincannon had written in an early flyer that "hope is rising on the Route 1 Corridor." The flyer led her to suggest naming the church "Rising Hope." "It was like the story of the mustard seed, the way it grew," she said. The church currently meets in a three-story building with a skylight-lit chapel, food pantry, clothes closet, dining hall, kitchen and offices.

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."

"What the state can do," commented Del. Scott Surovell, "and what the county can do, isn't enough. That's where you guys come in."

Ultimately, 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."

And Bishop Charlene Kammerer wrote that "God has a special place in His kingdom for all who are in solidarity with the marginalized and those who live in conditions of poverty."

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 yearlong celebration of Rising Hope's 15th anniversary includes a dinner, dance and auction on Sept. 30 at the Mount Vernon Country Club, an evening of Christian comedy Oct. 23 with Scott Davis, and a concert in 2012.

— Ed Simmons Jr.

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