

Circle of Mercy Congregation

2010 Highlights From Our Common Life

- *Early January:* Assessing the impact of our involvement in the 26-28 “Feast of the Holy Innocents” interfaith service and march to the country jail in support of the plight of undocumented workers.
- Began the year with a commitment to double the hours of our new *Christian Education coordinator*, from 5 to 10 hours per week.
- Opened special savings account for our “*Peace Pilgrim Fund*” to provide grants to our young people for taking significant “boundary-crossing” experiences.
- Opened a special designated account to receive and disburse funds to support *Boris Ozuna*, from Sincelejo, Colombia, for his studies at Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia.
- Began implementation of our “*Safe Church*” policy.
- *16 January:* Supporting the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast in Asheville.
- *22-24 January:* First Circle of Mercy women’s retreat.
- *February:* With technical assistance from Chris Berthiaume, Kaki Roberts and Joyce Hollyday begin redesigning and updating our website.
- *10 February:* Council approves Marvin Schrock as our congregation’s first “Earth Advocate.” We then established recycling receptacles for proper disposal of electronic equipment, small batteries and compact fluorescent bulbs.
- *14 February:* Children write Valentine’s Day cards to prisoners at Marion Prison.
- *27 February:* Second annual Circle of Mercy Prom!
- *March:* One of our youngest members, Katie Buys (age 6), composes lyrics to a new song (“Let the Little Guys Have Peace”), put to music by Mark Siler.
- *6 March:* Annual COM planning retreat, where we discussed the question of “Are we a ‘peace’ church?”
- *7 March:* Commissioning of Greg Yost, just prior to his hearing before the NC Department of Public Education, to decide whether his 2009 act of civil disobedience against Massey Energy Company would be grounds for refusing to grant him a teacher’s license.
- *11 March:* Observing “Day of Prayer and Action for Colombia,” including writing letters to congressional leaders.
- *1 April:* Missy Harris becomes our new Christian Education coordinator.
- *4 April:* Annual Easter service at Marion Prison.
- *25 April:* Celebration of Earth Day and Blessing of the Animals.
- *1 May:* Yard sale to support our Cuba Mission Partnership.
- *2 May:* Commissioning Lee, Kirsty, Skyah and Eily Rule for the mission trip to Haiti.
- *10 May:* Release of *Faith Beyond Borders: Doing Justice in a Dangerous World*, by Don Mosley, co-authored by Joyce Hollyday.

- *28 June*: Marking the first anniversary of our commissioning the Walker Wilsons (Greg, Susanne, Caleb and Ascher) for their 3-year assignment in Colombia with Mennonite Central Committee.
- *28 June-1 July*: Co-sponsoring “Marketplace,” cooperative Vacation Bible School.
- *4 July*: Old-fashioned “pounding” for Annika Williams and Justin Bass, providing food staples ahead of their wedding.
- *25 July*: Commission the Sigmon Siler family (Mark, Kiran, Joy & Leigh) for their year-long mission in Cuba.
- *6 June*: After a year of discussion, congregation unanimously approves “Peace Church” proposal.
- *28 July*: “Mercy Movers” volunteer corps helps new music coordinator Brian Graves & family move in. Brian begins work on Sunday, 1 August.
- *27-29 August*: Circle of Mercy Family Retreat.
- *October*: Several members receiving training for organized silent vigils when county sheriffs set up traffic check-points designed to locate undocumented workers.
- *10 October*: Mahan Siler begins 10-week adult ed class on “spirituality and the 12-step movement.”
- *21 October*: Youth clean up Laurel River near Hot Springs.
- *3 November*: Sent Stephy Citron to Haiti to do counseling with older victims of trauma resulting from the devastating earthquake.
- *19-21 November*: Sent nine members to the annual School of the Americas Watch action at Ft. Benning, Ga.
- *21 November*: Special 80th birthday party for Louis Parrish.
- *21 November*: Children & youth create Advent wreaths.
- *5 December*: Covenant Sunday, marking Circle of Mercy’s 9th anniversary.
- *5 December*: Commissioning 10 members for their visit to Iglesia Getsemani in Camagüey, Cuba.
- *5 December*: Dedication of Asher Ray Lloyd Rule, born 4 October to Lee and Kirsty Rule.
- *12 December*: Children bake cookies for the Christmas program at Marion Prison.
- *15 December*: Circle of Mercy co-sponsors Christmas program at Marion Prison.
- *Throughout the year* more than 20 Circle of Mercy members preached or told stories of faith in our worship service.

Missions contributions:

- *In addition* to our grants to our two national partners, The Alliance of Baptists and The United Church of Christ, mission grants were also made to the following organizations: \$500 Disaster relief for Haiti (contributed via American Baptist Churches USA), MANNA Food

bank (via a half-share in Jake's Farm, a community-supported agriculture initiative), Christians for a United Community, Pastoral Discretionary Fund (to a family in our Circle dealing with severe financial circumstances), Coalicion de Organizaciones Latino-Americanas (to support sending members of their constituency to the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit), Rachel Rasmussen (subsidy for her Witness for Peace trip to the Oaxaca, Mexico), Dale Roberts (to purchase textbooks for his study group at Marion Correctional Institution), Mennonite Central Committee (the second contribution of our 3-year commitment of a total of \$1,000, in recognition of the Walker Wilsons' ministry in Colombia), Mark Siler and Kiran Sigmon (toward their travel and living expenses in Cuba), Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, North Carolina Council of Churches, Homeward Bound (faith support team of Asheville Homeless Initiative), Center for Participatory Change, Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns, All Souls Counseling Center

- *Our quarterly food donation drives* in support of MANNA food bank netted nearly 1,000 pounds of food, which translated into 770 meals.
- *Designated mission contributions* for 2010 were in excess of \$35,000. Most of these funds were contributed by people outside our congregation.
- *On top of these initiatives*—and many others via other organizations—members devoted literally hundreds of hours to some of the most basic forms of discipleship. To name just a few: nurturing children (your own and/or others); recycling; keeping informed about a variety of public policy issues; Bible study and prayer; writing letters to the editor; integrating faith-values into the fabric of our work lives; providing hospitality in our homes (both to friends and strangers); volunteering time to a wide range of nonprofit organizations; being patient with others' failures (not to mention your own); planting gardens and cultivating flowers; learning how to love "enemies" (even when it's uncomfortable or inconvenient); paying attention to energy use; taking specific steps to encourage others; making conscientious choices about the use of money; active resistance to bigotry and injustice in daily life; being faithful in relationships; incarnating mercy and forgiveness; refusing to let work demands steal playground time; generally keeping hope alive that another world is possible; and practicing resurrection everywhere we are and everywhere we go.