

and agency offices. In that way, the staff, and often the Center's Board, could preclude a worsening of a person's crisis.

The room at the basement of the Henry St. John building also became a place where people could store their personal belongings. This latter is a good example of a need that the planners of the Center had not anticipated. For some reason, in all the previous discussions of site needs, it had not occurred to anyone that droppers-in, especially the homeless and transient, would need a system for storing and securing such items.

In some ways, a day in the life of the newly-established Friendship Center could be as varied and unpredictable as the world itself often seemed to those who dropped in. In the winter of 1988-1989, a twenty-year-old man arrived at the Center one morning, accompanied by William "Butch" Howard, the shelter coordinator for the Southside Community Center. The man had been thrown out of his home by his father, had lost his girlfriend, and had lost his job. He had come to the Southside Shelter and had been on the phone to the Suicide Prevention Service until 2 a.m. The Center provided a place where volunteers could talk to him and keep an eye on

him, while at the same time people could help him get another job. On another day, a seventeen-year-old woman came to the Center after having been thrown out by her family on Christmas Eve. In another case, a couple had had a fire in their apartment and the landlord tried to evict them. They came to the Center, where they were put in touch with legal aid, since the eviction had been attempted illegally. They were back in the apartment the next day, while at the same time the Center was helping them to find another. The woman was pregnant, so other volunteers helped her apply for WIC aid at the Department of Social Services.

In the following months and years, as will be reported in the next installment of the story, the Center was able to remain

“A seventeen-year-old woman came to the Center after having been thrown out by her family on Christmas Eve.”

flexible enough to respond to new needs and to carry out the work required to identify and assess them. It was able to do this despite the

difficulty it experienced in finding a permanent home with a landlord willing to give it a long lease and a neighborhood that would welcome it. Perhaps this problem was somehow appropriate. After all, after He left Nazareth, the Inspirer of the Center's ideal of Christian friendship never had a permanent home Himself.



PRESBYTERIAN YESTERDAYS

"ITEMS OF ENDURING INTEREST FROM THE HISTORY OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ITHACA, NEW YORK"

Issue #7

May, 2008

MEMBERS' MINISTRY MONEY (TRIPLE M):

By Lucia Armstrong

One of the exciting and challenging programs of the First Presbyterian Church in Ithaca came about just before the turn of the century. In 1998, the church sold the Mission Apartments, which it had owned in Collegetown since the early 1950s. The story of these apartments is told elsewhere, but when it became clear that the apartments were no longer needed as part of our mission program, the church decided to sell them. The General Assembly held title to the property. After the sale, GA agreed that a percentage of the funds which our church had invested in the original purchase would come back to us – as long as these proceeds were used “to further the general purpose of the church.”

A total of about \$320,000 came to the church. There were many ideas about how the church could use that money, from putting money into the church budget or saving for a rainy day. Rev. Anita Cummings proposed the extraordinary idea of using this money to give each member money to use in some form of ministry. The Session

agreed that we should look at our vision, mission, and values statements and ask what God was calling all the members of this church to do. More than money, the proposal was considered an opportunity to educate, nurture and equip members for a personal ministry in mission.

This proposal, which was launched in the fall of 1999, became known as Members' Ministry Money, (also known as “Triple M”). A Triple M Steering Committee was established, and a Ministry Involvement Coordinator (Rev. Carolyn McPherson) began developing the guidelines for giving all members (on the active rolls as of November 1, 1999) the opportunity to use \$500 for a particular mission project in which they had a personal interest.

In November, letters about the project were sent to all active and affiliate members, as well as to the church youth groups. The letters contained a Personal Ministry Request form, which was to be returned to the church by January, 2000. Accompanying the request form were some guidelines about the criteria used to evaluate the mission requests. The money, \$500, was to be given as a block to one ministry project, or it could

be used collaboratively with other \$500 grants. All grants were to be consistent with Christian values. Grants could go to projects currently funded by the church's ongoing mission projects or to newly-identified congregational, local, national, or world projects. Members had opportunities to learn about projects through sermons, descriptions in Good News, and three adult education programs. A Triple M Fair was held in Dodds Hall. Thirty-one tables, with mission projects ranging from the IC Protestant Community to day care to effective black parenting were set up to provide members with ideas of how to use their mission money.

All requests for personal ministry projects were reviewed by the Triple M Steering Committee. After projects were approved by Session, checks were mailed to the requested ministry project. The total number of ministry requests from members and youth groups was 314. Over \$150,000 was used in over one hundred different ministries in Ithaca and around the world. It was an extensive list of 102 different projects. A large number of requests went to support the Durfee Tutoring Project and the Ethiopian Rural Education Project, as well as funding two Heifer Project Arks. A complete list of the various ministries supported in this project can be found in the June, 2000 report in the church archives.

Even with the large expenditure of money, there remained about \$170,000 in

the Triple M Fund. The Triple M Steering Committee made recommendations to Session for spending the remaining Triple M Fund. A new committee, The Triple M New Directions Committee, was formed to continue the mission project funding of the remaining \$170,000.

Newsletters were sent out to new members who had joined the church since the original mailings in 1999 and to those who had participated in the first round of funding. Since some Triple M grants were considered "seed money" for new programs, participants were asked if additional follow-up monies might be needed. The letter also solicited proposals for entirely new mission ministry projects. At the end of the second phase of giving, 77 members had sent money to 33 different ministries.

This unique Triple M program provided opportunities for many in our church to reach out and support mission with money as well as with their personal involvement of prayer and hands-on work projects. Reading the list of organizations which received support from Triple M reflects the caring and diverse interests of our congregation in the local community, as well as in places throughout the world.

A MISSION TO INDIA:

By Dr. Harold Purdy

In 1967, Rev. Paul Clark, his uncle, Ted Stevensen, and I got together and

came up with a mission project for our church.

It was to be in Firozpur, Punjab, India, at the Frances Newton Hospital (Presbyterian Hospital) run by John Rollins. Cy Syton was the head surgeon; all were Christians.

The Christian Dental Society had sent equipment over there, but had no one to set it up. Apparently, it was my time to go – barring the fact that I still had Dental School debt and four young children!

When I arrived, I found the equipment was made for a left-handed dentist, so I had my task cut out for me.

Once this was set up, I began training nurses from the hospital to do some dental hygiene, and I began seeing patients in the new dental clinic.

Once the hospital staff found out that I had put the equipment together, they began bringing all kinds of electrical things that needed repair – toasters, refrigerators, etc.!

When a patient came to the hospital for care, their family came along, too. They would prepare food for their relative and bring it into the hospital. That patient didn't eat the hospital food, as they were Hindu.

I was there for three months and interviewed an Indian dentist. She took over the clinic.

It was an experience I'll never forget,

but I was very glad to get home!

KOININIA:

By Jane McGonigal

The primary goal and responsibility of a Koininia program is to provide a specially-trained group of church members of all ages to serve as lay ministers to the congregation. The program began at First Presbyterian in 1981 with training provided to six teams in skills including “tender loving care,” communication, concern, and support for others, to encourage and enfold prospective members, to reach out to the disaffected, and to encourage potential leadership among members and prospective members. A clergy member of First Presbyterian was actively involved in the program, and the teams worked closely with the Deacons. Each of the forty Koininia program members was asked to make at least two calls per month and to commit to one year in the program. Follow-up with new members of the church was a priority, as was support for one's team members. The program continued into 1989, when a staff person was employed to head First Presbyterian's Lay Ministry program.

SPIRIT IN MOTION:

By Jane McGonigal

This program for young adults at First Presbyterian Church in Ithaca

developed and flourished between 1999 and 2003. It began as P2T2 (Presbyterian Persons in their 20s and 30s) – and for some time had a mailing list of sixty-five women and men at many different points in their life journeys. They came together for fellowship, Bible study, worship, discussion, and fun. Dinner meetings were often held in the homes of older church members. The total responsibility for a Sunday morning worship service focused on how the process of questioning serves to strengthen one’s faith journey. Along with Young Kim and Ed Chan, members of the First Presbyterian clergy were influential in establishing the program.

WIGGANS FUND:

By Lucinda A. Noble

Roy G. Wiggans gave a restricted gift to the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca, NY by way of a written agreement dated August 18, 1970. The agreement stated:

“1. The said fund is known as the Edna Wiggans Memorial Fund.

2. The fund is administered by a committee, appointed by Session, consisting of five members. The members need not be members of the Session (or) members of the First Presbyterian Church. Their terms of office shall be designated by the Session. It is required, however, that one of the members shall be a ROY G. WIGGANS, a descendant

of ROY G. WIGGANS and EDNA WIGGANS, or a person selected by them.

3. The donor is attempting to create a fund large enough from which the income will make a significant impact on the needy people of Tompkins County, irrespective of race, creed, education, or status. This fund may be used for the aid of individuals or groups, incorporated or unincorporated, either materially, spiritually, educationally, or, hopefully, a combination of all. It is hoped that the proceeds from this fund will be thrice blessed: by those giving of their time, talent, and substance, and by those receiving and by those inspired thereby. The donor believes the strength and future of the Church depends upon the involvement by the people of the Church in living a good Christian life and in helping others do the same. This fund is set up to give material aid to this philosophical concept.

4. In order to create a fund large enough to meet the above needs, and yet to also give some immediate impact, the income from the fund shall be accumulated and reinvested... as enacted and hereinafter amended from time to time.

5. In addition to the above, the Edna Wiggans Memorial Fund Committee may, in their sole discretion, acting unanimously as a committee, pledge and enter into any agreement, contract, or writing pursuant to the uniform

commercial code to pledge any or all of the principal of said Fund as security for the aid of individuals or groups, incorporated or unincorporated, for the purposes set forth in this instrument, so long as the moneys or credit secured thereby do not exceed, at the time of the loan, thirty percent (30%) of the value of the principal of the Fund, as determined by the committee.

6. It is the hope of the donor that the committee administering the said fund will also attempt, where possible, to secure matching funds from within the Church or within the community."

Following the death of Edna Wiggins' husband Roy on August 19, 1971, the Memorial was changed to read: "the Edna and Roy Wiggans Memorial Fund, First Presbyterian Church, Ithaca, New York."

In a letter to Session members dated March 22, 1985, Pastor G. Daniel Little advised that "action (was) needed to preserve the cash value of nine insurance policies related to the Wiggans Fund."

The amount of the original gift was approximately \$100,000.00. The first grants were given in 1980. From 1980 through December of 2004, sixty-six groups have received monies totaling \$107,088.00.

Taken from information located in the church's archival files by Lucinda A. Noble, October 29, 2007.

ITHACA AREA CHILD CARE:

(IACC DAYCARE)

By Lucinda A. Noble

This child care program was initiated by the Ithaca Area Council of Churches (IACC) in the mid 1960s. June Rogers was a member of IACC as well as a member of First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca, and her husband William (Bill) was the Presbyterian Student Pastor at Cornell United Religious Work. June initiated a conversation with IACC about the growing need for a child care facility in downtown Ithaca. At the time, there was a church being sold that was located by the Cayuga Lake Inlet. It was decided by a group of women representing the Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches that the resulting funds from the sale of the Inlet church could aptly be used to fund a child care center.

The First Presbyterian Church was in the process of remodeling their Sunday school rooms, and was amenable to housing the newly-established child care center. It was named the Ithaca Area Council of Churches Child Care center.

Mrs. Virginia Ainslie was asked to be the center's director in 1967. She has a bachelor's degree in home economics from Kansas State College and had worked several years in the field prior

to her employment at IACC. Her responsibilities included purchasing and setting up equipment and supplies, working with the Department of Child Care in Albany on the regulations, and working with Cornell's child development department in the College of Home Economics. Mrs. Ainslie was responsible for employing the staff of head teachers and assistant teachers, as well as a cook and custodian. Initially, she was the liaison to the church officials before a Child Care Board was established. The center opened in September of 1968 with two rooms and a bathroom for three- and four-year-olds.

In the beginning, the center used some of the facilities of the Baptist church. A play yard was established across Court Street behind Associate Pastor Patton's home.

When Mrs. Ainslie retired in 1973, Gay Dobson was appointed the director. Mrs. Alene Wyatt, a member of AAUW, was employed as Assistant Director from 1980-1982, and then as Director from 1982 to 1987.

THE FRIENDSHIP CENTER STORY, PART 3:

A BAPTISM BY FIRE

By John Weiss

The Friendship Center, still the recipient of our church's largest contribution to local mission work,

faced some unexpected challenges in its first month of operation, between mid-December, 1988 and mid-January, 1989. The biggest came first. The Center's recently constituted board, chaired by John Weiss, and its new director, FPC member Terry Pasco, hired at the beginning of January, underwent a baptism by fire.

Literally.

On January 12, 1989, a major downtown fire left twenty-three low-income renters homeless. Following upon two similar fires in June and December of 1988, the January 12th incident destroyed most of the remaining low income, single room occupancy (SRO) housing in downtown areas. Some of those burned out, in fact, were former residents of other destroyed buildings who now found themselves made homeless twice in one year. In the immediate aftermath of the January fire, the Friendship Center became a major source of support for the victims, providing daytime shelter, coordinating information, and helping personnel from the Red Cross and the Department of Social Services to identify all fire victims and link them to emergency services.

The fire increased both the severity and the visibility of the homeless problem in the city. The Center's board and staff thus found themselves becoming community advocates for upgrading the community's low-income housing

policies. In their first report, distributed in the summer of 1989, and in meetings of local congregations and other community groups, they pointed out that “despite the formation and repeated meetings of local government committees and other task forces, little has been accomplished.” Low-income housing planning was quickly joined on the Center’s agenda by other activities.

In the winter months of January and February, daytime use of the shelter proved heavy, with a daily drop-in average of twenty individuals, most of whom spent the major portion of the day at the center. Center hours during this “baptismal period” of the first half of 1989 ran from 7:30 a.m. (that is, immediately after the Southside Shelter closed its doors for the day) to 9:30 p.m. (when the Shelter re-opened), seven days a week, including Loaves and Fishes mealtimes. Rochester Gift Center, one of the models for the Friendship Center that the founding committee had investigated during the previous two years, had not reached this level of activity until the end of its first year of operation, probably because it did not have the same close relations with local counterparts of Loaves and Fishes and Southside. In any case, during the summer of 1989, the number dropping in declined. At least half of that decline could be attributed to the fact that the Center or one of its cooperating agencies had found the dropper-in a home, and sometimes a job.

The sizeable clientele and long hours meant that the Center was able to deliver a large amount of its principal “currency,” active friendship and caring relationships, both referred to by some of the planners and volunteers as Christian advocacy. Such friendship was not confined to small talk. During its first six months of operation, for example, volunteers found themselves dealing with suicide threats on half a dozen occasions. None of these threats was carried out, but the discovery of the problem prompted the Center to arrange a session for volunteers (also attended by droppers-in) led by Marian Van Soest of Ithaca’s Suicide Prevention Service. A training tape made from this session remained in use at the Center.

The Center came to be used in several other ways during the early months. Some of the functions begun at that time disappeared over the years, but others persist to this day. One of the most important was the Center’s role as a place where people could receive messages, use the telephone (and get assistance using it), and pick up mail. The visitors, living in unstable and not-very-regularized situations, needed a place where they could be reached and could reach other people and agencies. The Friendship Center was often the only place that fit the bill. Performing this function also meant that the Center allowed its staff and the staff of agencies with which they worked to track individuals, especially those in crisis, as they shuttled between the Center