



# The Caller

Issue 71 - January 18, 2010

## Pastor's Corner

The earthquake in Haiti last week caused incredible loss of life and property. Some of the stories and pictures are almost too horrible to see. The loss of life almost rivals the tsunami a few years ago. Jim Wallis of Sojourners pointed out in his blog last Friday that in this kind of natural disaster, it is always the poorest who suffer the most. Those who have the least to lose are often those who lose the most. Life is always hardest for poor people living on the edge. And Haiti is the poorest country in the hemisphere.

Even in normal times, poverty is hidden and rarely reported. It's there, but it doesn't seem to merit a story except when the annual statistics about the percentages who are under the poverty line are released. The discussion is then about the trend line or who is to blame for their predicament. David Brooks, in his *New York Times* column, wrote that the earthquake in Haiti is really a poverty story not a disaster story. He mentioned that the October 17, 1989 quake that hit the San Francisco bay area registered the same 7.0 magnitude as the Haiti quake. In San Francisco, also a densely populated urban center, 63 people were killed. The Red Cross estimates the toll in Port-au-Prince at between 45,000 and 50,000. In very poor countries the buildings are poorly constructed; there is very inadequate infrastructure and terrible public services. When disaster strikes, the consequences are dire.

Tragic moments also bring out the best in American citizens. We put aside differences and unite to support people and their families. The amount of money that was raised via cell phone transfer alone was staggering. A former colonel in the Navy once told me that real relief doesn't start until the American military takes charge. No other organization in the world can mobilize the level of resources needed in such a short period of time.

The tragedy in Haiti reminds us that our brothers and sisters around the world (and sometimes across the CCPC atrium where Warm Nights is located this week) suffer not only from tragic events but from the everyday grind of poverty.

## Worship Schedule Sunday, January 24<sup>th</sup>

In Luke 4:14-31, we find Jesus and his disciples back in his hometown of Nazareth. During the morning worship service, Jesus is asked to read the lesson from a scroll of Isaiah. He then offers a few interpretive comments. At first the town folks were impressed by his wisdom. Then his comments hit too close to home and they almost threw him off the cliff. It's always been hard being a prophet. The sermon is "Preaching from the Brow of the Hill."

### Haiti Relief Efforts

CCPC will be making a contribution to Haiti relief and we will immediately pass on any offering that were given this past Sunday to the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance relief efforts.

### SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

CCPC received a gift of \$10,000 from the estate of Thomas C. Phillips IV, a prior member of the church.

The Session approved an Operating Budget for 2010 for \$531,950.

Work continues in moving the Bowie Food Pantry from spaces in Dodds Hall to the Education Building and upgrading spaces vacated by the Pantry to classroom and meeting spaces.

## Reflections on Christmas Families 2009

The Christmas Families project is a marvelous opportunity for us to work as God's hands and feet. It involves so many of us, and touches so many people, that I wanted to share some of the "stories" from the 2009 experience. Here are some "Reflections on Christmas Families 2009."

My first real experience with the "business side" of Christmas Families occurred in the fall of 2008. I assisted Sue Cobb when she was the coordinator. I really didn't feel like I was doing all that much work, but I really enjoyed working along side Sue as she demonstrated her selfless giving, calm – but strong – leadership, and sincere, authentic Christianity. It was a blessing to be her assistant. I knew Sue was fighting a battle with cancer, but it never occurred to me that she would not be here to take the lead on Christmas Families in 2009. As you know, Sue lost her battle with cancer in July 2009. I felt God's call to pick up where she left off with Christmas Families, and the time we had spent together on the project the previous Christmas would prove to be my training period.

The coordination process begins in earnest in mid-August with requesting referrals from our three main referring organizations – Prince George's County Public Schools, the Bowie Therapeutic Nursery and the Bowie Interfaith Food Pantry. It became clear early on that our numbers would be up this year. At one point I sent Rev. James an email letting him know we were approaching 200 children and asked if that worried him. He quickly responded that "200 children was a great opportunity." His support gave me the confidence to move forward and was a reminder that God was our most important partner in the project and all would work out just fine. No worries!

The next indication that God was with us occurred on Sunday, November 15 – the designated program kick-off day. I made an announcement at the first service about the project and proceeded to Dodds Hall for a cup of coffee. Chills came over me as I pulled a mug out of the rack and saw Sue Cobb's name on it! Could there be any doubt that Sue was also with us again this year? That chilly feeling soon turned to a warm glow.

The final numbers came to 91 families with 264 children – a 55% increase over 2008. One family (with three children) was referred just one week before Christmas. We were able to provide an abundance of gifts for these children – mostly from an assortment of items donated by a church member who had cleaned out the home of a loved-one who had died earlier in the year. It was like our own loaves and fishes story!

And then there was the snow storm! What a curve that threw us. But the people of CCPC showed up in droves on Friday evening to help wrap gifts. People showed up again on Saturday in the middle of the snowfall to continue wrapping gifts and prepare for food sorting. And they came back again on Sunday to sort food, even though the parking lot had not been plowed. People found a way to get their turkeys to the church too. We were very prepared for Monday, the scheduled pick-up day.

I wanted to share one story about pick-up day. We had an abundance of volunteers on Monday morning, partly due to the snow storm and the fact it closed the Federal government and local schools. We were at a slow point mid-morning when a very petite woman walked into the building. She moved slowly to the registration table, and it looked like it was taking all of her courage to put one foot in front of the other. She timidly handed me her confirmation letter and the volunteers quickly went to work gathering her gifts and grocery bags. As I explained to her that an envelope I was handing her also contained a gift card from Giant Food, she became overwhelmed and began to tremble. Marilee Neff gently wrapped her arms around the woman. She began to sob uncontrollably, thanking Jesus and letting Marilee know she simply did not know how she was going to provide for her family. Others in the room began to realize what was happening and everyone moved in closer and closer to the woman as tears welled up in our eyes. Just when the moment was getting a little too heavy for any of us to bear, this very wise woman lifted her head and said "I feel like I'm on the Oprah Show!" The heavy moment was lifted and everyone laughed. The woman then said that we had made her Christmas. I told her no, she had made our Christmas. This moment put the entire Christmas Families program into the right perspective. Memories of all the hard work and late nights melted away as we witnessed Christ in our Christmas.

Thank you to everyone for being a part of Christmas Families 2009!  
Roxanne Johnson, CCPC Christmas Families Coordinator

## Events at CCPC ...

**Warm Nights Program in Dodds Hall (January 17-23)**

**Library Committee Meeting—Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> and February 3<sup>rd</sup>** (1-3 PM) in the Library

**Mixed Bag Sewing Guild—Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>** 7 PM in the conference room.

**Meeting Announcement! Organization of All CCPC Storage Space—Friday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>** from 7-8 PM in the conference room. This meeting is being called to discuss the organization of the closets and storage space throughout the building. Any group with storage and items on-site is strongly encouraged to attend. For information contact: Allison Harriman.

**Knits and Sticks—Wednesday, January 25<sup>th</sup>** 1-3 PM in the parlor.

**Paper Tigers Breakfast—Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>** 8-10 AM in Dodds Hall.

**Children's Ministry Game Night—Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup>**

7-8:30 PM in Dodds Hall. We are having an intergenerational game night! We are encouraging everyone to come! This is an opportunity for old and young to learn and play games together. Snacks and drinks will be available.

**Gadabouts Meeting—Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>** at 12 noon in the conference room.

**QUARTERY CARPET CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE—Saturday, January 30<sup>th</sup>** (Dodds Hall and church)

### Item Found

A round, gold earring was found at Jane Sumner's front door. Perhaps you visited the Sumner's lately and are missing an earring that matches this description? If so, please call Jane.

### *Special Thanks*

*Thanks to the Circles for all the contributions for my homeless bags. The response was "pretty good." The next time will be in March. I will contact the Circle leaders for what I will need. Just remember I send 60 bags. Thanks, Jane Sumner*

**\* Next Caller Distribution: 2/2/2010 \***

**Articles are due by Thursday, 1/28.**

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CCPC, the first Protestant church in Levitt Bowie, was born from a passion for Christian mission in the local community, and this focus continues.

### *Our Mission:*

*To worship God, to grow in faith and community, and to place our gifts in the service of Jesus Christ.*