

AVENEWS

Newsletter of THE NEW YORK AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Washington, DC

The Reverend Dr. Hector Mendez Inspires NYA Members

NYA members fortunate enough to be in attendance at the early service on Sunday, May 6, witnessed just what it means to be a brother or sister in Christ.

Reverend Dr. Hector Mendez touched members of the congregation with examples of what it means to lead a Christ-filled life. He also described what it was like to be a Christian in Cuba during the 1960's and 1970's when the State discouraged Christian organizations and churches. Was it difficult? Absolutely. But Rev. Mendez emphasized that following in the footsteps of Jesus is challenging wherever one lives, and that the challenges and temptations presented in more westernized countries such as our own, present their own set of issues. Preaching from a sermon entitled "Mission Impossible," Rev. Mendez challenged us to step up to the mission laid out before us by God regardless of where we live and the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

In an emotion-filled presentation following Rev. Mendez' sermon, Rev. Roger Gench pre-



sented Rev. Mendez with one of two identical stoles commissioned by NYA from vestment artist Susan Tilt. Rev. Gench was presented with the other stole. According to Ms. Tilt, the stoles were designed to reflect the sisterhood of The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church with The First Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Havana. They also tell of God's creation and speak of the beauty of two countries with symbols of each and references to our lands, skies, and sea.

Ms. Tilt began the stoles with fabric representing the night sky across the shoulders with a cross centered on the back. The images move from darkness into daybreak with the purples and pinks of early morning and planets scattered randomly as she found on the windows of NYA. Billowy clouds and bright sky bring brightness to the stoles and represent the light of Christ and the light we are called to share with the world. "Emmanuel" is written on the fabric. (see Stole page 3)

John Hope Franklin

Pre-eminent American Historian Hosted by New York Avenue



Kurt L. Schmoke, (left) Dean of the Howard University Law School converses with John Hope Franklin about his fifty-year career teaching about Lincoln and African American history.

By Wilson Golden

On April 15, New York Avenue was honored to serve as host of a public conversation sponsored by the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission with pre-eminent American historian John Hope Franklin. The program was part of the commission's on-going series exploring the evolving views of African Americans on Lincoln. Kurt L. Schmoke, dean of the Howard University Law School, led the dialogue.

Following a welcome by Rev. Roger J. Gench, an audience of nearly 400 heard Professor Franklin, 92, reflect on his fifty-year career teaching about Lincoln and African American history. Questions from the audience followed the exchange between Franklin and Schmoke. The many dignitaries and Lincoln scholars present included Jack Kemp, former New York Congressman and 1996 Republican vice presidential candidate. Kemp highlighted his (see page 2)

Mary Weithers Announces Her Retirement After 39 Years at NYA!

By Jack E. McClendon

I am privileged to have been invited to write a word about my dear friend, Mary Weithers. Unfortunately, I will not be present when she is honored on May 27. I will be in New York City attending the school graduation of my great nephew, my namesake, Jack Henderson.

We all grieve the pending departure of Mary Weithers and celebrate her many years of devoted ministry with us. Mary has indeed, been a presence at NYA — a person who has the historical memory of persons and events, — no other staff person enjoys that privilege. Along with Mary, I shared that honor before I retired in 1991.

Mary has worked with five senior ministers, numerous associates and many other staff persons. In her present administrative position, she has employed many staff persons.

My dear Mary, what will NYA do without you? You have been of inestimable value to the staff and membership, dearly beloved by all who encounter your lovely personality. Mary does her work with dedication and commitment to the life of the church.

Mary could have left many times, having been offered more lucrative positions. Yet, she remained because of her deep love for the people at NYA.

Mary began her ministry with the Rev. Andrew Ransom, our first African American staff person. In subsequent years, she exer-

cised her gifts in myriad ways, working with the membership lists, sometime with finance and in the latter years as the administrative minister with all that entails. Indeed, Mary's position will be difficult to fill. We will soon learn of the many things



she does, behind the scenes, unobserved, being present, whatever the weather.

Mary has been our gift. A caring, loving person who traveled the second mile with the congregation — and many unnamed persons who were blessed by her graciousness.

Since her office was relocated in the building, numerous persons have inquired about her. Is she still here? May I see her? May I just ask her a question? — If Mary doesn't know the answer, she will find it!

Go merrily into the next chapter in your life Mary, and know assuredly that you are leaving a host of friends, present and past... Well done! Well done! You have given of yourself to so many, especially to Jack McClendon who will miss you greatly.

Memories from Mary...

WOW, so many, both good and not so....some I can share and some others would be embarrassed if I did so I'll stay somewhere in the middle.

First, coming to New York Avenue:

My best girl friend was already on staff as secretary to the SEA Minister. She informed me that the Associate Pastor, Dr. McClendon, was looking for a secretary and asked if I was interested. Of course I wanted to work near her and applied. I was interviewed and given shorthand and typing tests, but was told by Dr. Jack that though my skills were great, I was just too young and so he didn't offer me the position. A short time later, my girlfriend decided to concentrate on having a family and asked if I was still interested; I then interviewed and tested for her boss, then Andrew Ransom, and was hired on the spot; that was April 28, 1968.

I remember being awed over seeing famous movie persons coming to the church to take a break before their next scene while filming in DC and political figures coming to worship and using rooms for meetings; I would quietly peek through windows to get a glimpse, always too shy to meet them.

I also remember my first impressions of Jack McClendon....I would say to myself, "Good Lord, what's with this man". I observed him when I was ever in his space or he in mine. (see Memories pg 5)

John Hope Franklin (from page 1)

attendance at the event in a column about DC voting rights featured on Townhall.com.

John Hope Franklin, the James B. Duke Professor Emeritus of History at Duke University, is considered to be the "dean" of American historians. In 1995, Dr. Franklin was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. His service on many national commissions includes chairing President Clinton's *One America: the President's Initiative on Race*.

As author, educator, and historian, Dr. Franklin has woven blacks into the tapestry of American history through numerous publications including *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African-Americans*, now in its seventh edition, and his latest book, *My Life and an Era: The Autobiography of Buck Colbert Franklin*, an autobiography of

his father that he edited with his son, John Whittington Franklin. His work and legacy are continued through the John Hope Franklin Center for Interdisciplinary and International Studies established at Duke University in 2000.

Kurt Schmoke became the first elected African American mayor of Baltimore in 1987. During his 12-year tenure, he initiated a number of programs in the areas of housing, public health, and economic development. His efforts in promoting adult literacy were recognized by President George H.W. Bush in 1992 with the National Literacy Award. Schmoke is a graduate of Yale University, Harvard Law School, and Oxford University, where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar.

The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission was established by Congress to plan educational, public, and legacy events to mark the 16th president's 200th birthday in 2009. The ALBC aims to renew Americans' appreciation of Lincoln's ideals of freedom, equality and opportunity. NYA has formed a collaborative partnership with the commission to showcase our role as Lincoln's place of worship and spiritual nurture during the Civil War period.

The Franklin conversation continues the ALBC's exploration of views of the African American community toward Lincoln to be incorporated into new curricular materials developed for the 2009 Lincoln Bicentennial. The proceedings were taped by C-SPAN for future broadcast.

Rick Ufford-Chase Speaks at *War, Peace & Justice Forum,* Leads Christian Peace Witness For Iraq

By Marilyn J. Seiber

On March 16, 2007, former PC(USA) Moderator, Rick Ufford-Chase, spoke at New York Avenue's War, Peace & Justice Forum as a prelude to the "Christian Peace Witness for Iraq" that began that evening at the National Cathedral with spillover participants hosted at New York Avenue. Ufford-Chase began with a text from I John saying that "Love is boldness on the day of judgment--just as God is in the world, there is no fear in love, for you cannot love God and hate your brother." He recounted a story of a trip to Pakistan and visiting a village where a mob had burned a Presbyterian and a Catholic church. The response of the pastor, priest, and parishioners was to reach out and ask how the breach could be closed within the village.



Rick Ufford-Chase

Ufford-Chase said that peace is created by pulling people from the pews and into the community and world, to put declarations of peace into action. He advocated being "intentionally Christian" by standing against injustice and war. By being intentional about our faith, we can stand against war but care for soldiers and their families. He believes churches can take the lead in a long-term construction effort in Iraq, stand against torture, and stand for fundamental rights. At the same time, we can bring the war money home to build security in the U.S. through jobs, health care, and education. The churches can become a prophetic voice for peace and justice. We must shun the seductive habit of not saying what we believe; apathy is not allowed. Instead we must bring passion to what we believe as Christians, and where passion exists, the money to rebuild Iraq and our security will follow.

NYAPC was the "headquarters" and staging area of activities for the Peace Witness that included the evening's ecumenical service displayed in the sanctuary on a large screen simulcast from National Cathedral and follow-up workshops the next day. NYA's staff was wonderful and selfless as they stayed through the night welcoming guests and Witness participants.



Stole (from pg 1)

Fabrics that speak of the plains, the tropics, fields, and trees were used to further depict the creation of God with the Cuban mariposa embroidered on one side and the appliquéd symbol of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. on Rev. Gench's stole to rest over his heart and the symbol of the Cuban Presbyterian Church placed on Rev. Mendez's stole to rest over his heart.

Ms. Tilt intermixed the images of the countries and churches to denote the intertwining of the people, the relationships, and the similarities we share as people of God. She used a silk screening process to produce images of the church steeples superimposed on cherry blossom fabric for New York Avenue with palms and mariposas surrounding First Havana. Above the New York Avenue steeple rests Ms. Tilt's rendition of the creation window with the six rings of colors for the six days of creation. Both steeples have bright suns and First Havana is anchored by a banner reading, "Una Luz en la Ciudad" – A Light in the City.

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The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church
welcomes all people

into community, worship, service and leadership.

The **Reverend Dr. Bryant George**, M. Div., Litt. D. passed from this earth to be with our Lord Jesus Christ on May 8, 2007. Rev. George was a shining light at New York Ave. and he will be greatly missed — though the work that he did here among us and in countries throughout the world will continue to shine and inspire all of us for many years to come. A memorial service celebrating the life of Rev. George was held at NYA on Saturday, May 19, 2007. A longer tribute to Dr. George and memories of his work will follow in the next issue of *AveNews*.

First "Class" of 30 Orphans Celebrated in Kenya

By Kirsten Kingdon

On February 10, the Presbyterian church in Njoro, Kenya, held a joyous church service celebrating the 30 orphans in the first "class" of a joint project to improve their lives. The project grew out of concerns expressed by members of a National Capital Presbytery (NCP) mission trip to Kenya in 2003. I was commissioned by NYAPC to be a part of that trip.

The generosity of NYAPC members, through the Alternative Christmas Store, provided the money to do a needs assessment and feasibility study of the problems and needs of orphans in Njoro. That survey – which identified 701 orphans in a town of about 25,000 – had a tremendous impact in the church in Njoro, leading to enthusiastic support for the program. The Boys and

Girls Brigade and the Women's Guild are all involved in working with the children. Most of them are in good health. Look for their pictures and names on the bulletin board near the elevators on the first floor.

The heart of the program occurs on Saturdays. A teacher, cooks and volunteers provide food, help with school assignments, sports activities and loving care. The provision of school uniforms and supplies is an important part of the help they receive. In addition to breakfast and lunch, bags of corn flour are sent home with them so that the other children and adults in the families caring for them receive benefit as well as the 30 children. This is an innovative and important outgrowth of the survey finding



that the guardians caring for these children are often elderly and poor. The volunteer program coordinator, Jeremiah Nduyu (who was a participant in the original discussions back in 2003), is

trying to find sources of income to further assist these families, with the help of NYAPC Deacon Fritz von Fleckenstein. This is a program which is truly carrying out the word of God to care for the helpless and needy – the "least of these." It could not have happened without the active participation of people on two widely separated continents. In this country, NYAPC has provided support through Alternative Christmas Store contributions in three different years. The Deacons have made a very generous grant to assure that the first year of the project is fully funded. Lewinsville PC is also supporting it through Alternative Christmas Store contributions. Other members of NCP – particularly those involved in the 2003

mission trip – have visited Njoro and assisted with their knowledge, experience with other programs and communications. In Kenya, Jeremiah Nduyu has been involved in every phase of the program. The current chair of the Njoro church's development committee, Mr. Francis Muchemi, is also in close touch with us through the marvels of e-mail. The church members have taken it to heart, and are using the resources of their church, which includes a pre-school facility, a hospital and an HIV/AIDS testing and counseling center in addition to the very active Boys and Girls Brigade and Womens Guild. This is a long-range program which has been endorsed by the NYAPC Deacons. To look at the faces of the 30 children in the program is to know that once you provide help to these children, you cannot abandon them. Someday we may be able to arrange a delegation to visit Njoro and see the children for ourselves. In the meantime, all of your prayers of gratitude for what has been accomplished and of supplication for the great needs which remain would be appreciated.



NCP members including Kirsten Kingdon (4th from left) along with Njoro church leaders

During the February 10th program, participants from NCP were delighted to see how the orphans were integrated with the children in the church. One of the greatest needs orphans often have (which is easily overlooked in the light of pressing survival needs) is simple emotional and spiritual support, and that seems to be something the Njoro church members are lovingly supplying.

The 30 children in the program were selected using the data from the survey to identify those with the greatest needs. There are 14 girls and 16 boys ranging in age from 3 to 13, with most of them ages 7 to 11. They live in various areas of the town and attend different schools. Some are Presbyter-

ian, but most are not. Most of them are in good health. Look for their pictures and names on the bulletin board near the elevators on the first floor. The heart of the program occurs on Saturdays. A teacher, cooks and volunteers provide food, help with school assignments, sports activities and loving care. The provision of school uniforms and supplies is an important part of the help they receive. In addition to breakfast and lunch, bags of corn flour are sent home with them so that the other children and adults in the families caring for them receive benefit as well as the 30 children. This is an innovative and important outgrowth of the survey finding that the guardians caring for these children are often elderly and poor. The volunteer program coordinator, Jeremiah Nduyu (who was a participant in the original discussions back in 2003), is trying to find sources of income to further assist these families, with the help of NYAPC Deacon Fritz von Fleckenstein. This is a program which is truly carrying out the word of God to care for the helpless and needy – the "least of these." It could not have happened without the active participation of people on two widely separated continents. In this country, NYAPC has provided support through Alternative Christmas Store contributions in three different years. The Deacons have made a very generous grant to assure that the first year of the project is fully funded. Lewinsville PC is also supporting it through Alternative Christmas Store contributions. Other members of NCP – particularly those involved in the 2003



Meet NYA's New Members



Peter Boeve was born and raised in New Rochelle, NY. He graduated from Wooster College and San Francisco Theological Seminary. He served several congregations and hospitals in Long Island, New York City,

Michigan, Illinois and Minnesota. Peter is the father of two delightful grown children. He recently moved to D.C. to retire and to pursue efforts to change global economic systems and the help save the planet from destruction. Peter likes to read, bike and slow dance. Peter will be joining National Capital Presbytery.

Barbara Lancaster grew up in the United



Church of Christ in Chagrin Falls, OH. She has attended church services off and on since she came to Washington but had not found a congregation she wanted to join. She started tutoring in Community Club and found in NYA a spiritual community in which she feels welcomed. Barbara likes to read, knit, analyze politics and policy and be involved in various outdoor activities. Barbara joined by Transfer from the Federated Church of Chagrin Falls, Ohio.

Margaret Carolla hails from Springfield, MO. She works on the Latin America and Caribbean team at the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and enjoys traveling and playing sports in her free time. She is looking forward to being a part of the congregation at NYA. Margaret joined by Letter of Transfer from the First and Calvary Presbyterian Church of Springfield, MO.



Youngmin Chang lives in Alexandria and works in Washington for a group helping to provide clean water in Haiti. She was raised in a Presbyterian family in Seoul, South Korea, and is joining NYA to find a sense of community. She believes this activist church will provide it. She holds a master's degree in international relations from UVA. Youngmin joined by Reaffirmation of Faith.



Kathy Doan, her husband, Don Kelly, and their daughter, Elizabeth, are part of the L'Arche community in Washington, DC, a faith-based organization where those with intellectual disabilities and those who assist them work, play and pray together. Kathy has also spent many years working in various capacities with the Central American immigrant community in the Washington metropolitan area and currently works for the Central American Resource Center in Columbia Heights, which has programs in the areas of housing, immigration, legal services, (see pg 6)

Mary's Memories (from pg 2)

I was always "at attention" when he arrived...you didn't dare miss a word....he didn't have time for repetition. I began to notice he was quick, because there were so many demands made on him and I also noticed how caring he was about the disenfranchised – I watched him, learned many things from him, and grew to love and respect him. I will always hold him near and dear to my heart.

Memories of working with loyal, giving volunteers, I will keep close to my heart. Mary Wood who continues on Wednesdays when she can, who has the voice of an angel when she speaks and the heart of one as well; Lyn van der Linden, who knows of my love for antiques and always shares one of her finds with me; and Jim Davidson, who uses his gift of wording to create the weekly care list. And then there are those that I can no longer touch physically, but have left me with memories that touch the heart. The gentle touch of Wilma McKee – she would carefully touch you to get your attention, almost apologetic and then sweetly ask a question. Gloria Forbes, who in her last few days, kept calling until she reached me; Emma Montgomery, who when she heard I cut my hand washing a glass, brought me in a long handled brush to prevent another accident—how thoughtful and sweet.

I always feel safe when leaving in the evening since most of the homeless men who practically live around the church, know my name; once I parked my car at a meter in front of the church and upon leaving, walked past the triangle park to retrieve it from the other side and one of the homeless men shouted, "Mary, where are you going? Your car is in front of the church". I smiled, thanked him and felt a little ridiculous.

I remember John Mason, a sexton here for many years, who passed away during the time of Rob Craig. I remember seeing him outside jotting something down on a piece

of paper, while an older, rather fragile member got into a cab; I asked him what he was writing and he said, "the name and tag of the cab"; he felt the older lady was vulnerable and if anything happened to her, he at least had the cab information. Now that's from the heart.

New York Avenue will often get donations of clothing and the givers will frequently indicate, they don't care where it goes. I remember a former bookkeeper on staff had a visit from one such member and after the member left, the bookkeeper came out of his office and said, "Gee, he would visit me when I'm wearing his suit."

And, then there was the volunteer who was helping to repair an office computer, under a desk, on the floor. When he finished he was having a terrible time getting out from under and standing back up; as he laughed at himself, I also began to laugh, but he stopped laughing and I didn't and when he finally got up, I was still laughing; he then seriously looked at me and said, "it wasn't **THAT** funny. What can I say; these are the little things that have kept me going and joyful throughout the day. I suppose I'm just a funny kinda girl.

Yes, many pastors during my time, from Dr. Docherty to Roger Gench. I remember each in different ways, of course. But there are always things that make some stand out, like interim pastor Bill Fuerstenau, for knowing just how to speak to you on any subject with tact and sensitivity and Roger Gench, whom I witnessed, take on formidable situations that others just didn't know what to do with.

There are so many wonderful people here, at New York Avenue. I will carry many, many memories with me and hope that the many here will carry many fond memories of me as well. May God bless us all.

(A reception honoring Mary will be held at NYA on May 27 at 11:00 am.)

More New Members!

community support services, citizenship preparation and advocacy. Kathy joined by Reaffirmation of Faith.

Anne Laroche was born in Texas but returns to Washington from Montreal, Quebec, where she was a member of the United Church of Canada. Granddaughter of Presbyterians who established a university in



Puerto Rico (now called Inter American U. of Puerto Rico) and daughter of the former director of Spanish work for the Board of National Missions, UPCUSA, she has also lived in Quebec City, Paris, France, Scarsdale, New York

and Boston. She decided to live downtown within walking distance from NYA where earlier she had been a volunteer at Community Club (1968-1970) and met Marilyn Seiber, who became her housemate. Anne is back, and joined as an Affiliate Member.

Lauren and Ben Leo live with their seven-month old daughter, **Layla**, in Alexandria. Lauren works in leadership development at the NASA and Ben is Dir. for Afri-



can Affairs of the National Security Council. They share not only Layla but a love of hiking. They look forward to being a part of the NYA community.

Lauren joined by Letter of Transfer from the First Presb. Church of Virginia Beach. Leo joined by Reaffirmation of Faith.

Larry Mabry is an Elder, Deacon, Lay Minister, Stephen Minister and Leader in the Presb. Church USA. Larry has been active in his faith all of his life having been born into a family of deep and abiding faith. Larry comes to NYA as an



Affiliate Member expecting to be fully immersed in the life of the church. Larry currently is CEO of Collington Episcopal Life Care Community.

Michael Smith has visited New York Avenue for many years. He is now the husband of Molly and the son-in-law of members Paul and Barbara Dornan. Mike



works in software research and development and lives in Northeast D.C. with his wife and enthusiastic hound, Sophie. Mike joined by Reaffirmation of Faith

Kriss Wagner comes to New York Avenue from the First Presbyterian

Church of Stuart, Florida, and the Sherman Oaks Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles where she was an ordained elder, a deaconess and a member of the choir. Her strong faith and experiences in youth ministries led her to volunteer work with runaway teens in Florida, earning her the state's Volunteer of the Year award in 1996. Kriss joined by Reaffirmation of Faith.



A native of Clinton, NC, **Bill Petty** had been a lifelong member of Graves Memorial Presbyterian Church. Bill now works Environmental Defense, where he serves as the National Field Director for the Climate Campaign. Bill joined by Letter of Transfer. **Patricia Weinart** was born and raised in Bavaria, (see pg 8)

Cuba Coffee Hour Brings Cuba to NYAPC

The NYAPC Cuba Working Group hosted a *Cuba Coffee Hour* after church in the Entryway on February 25, 2007 to highlight NYA's partnership with First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Cuba. Displays of partnership visits to Havana, sounds of Cuban music, presentation of the hit movie



"Suite Habana," Cuban crafts and books, and Cuban food livened the coffee hour. Delicious food of empanadas, black bean dip, rice and beans, Cuban fruit and vegetables did not last long!



"Suite Habana," Cuban crafts and books, and Cuban food livened the coffee hour. Delicious food of empanadas, black bean dip, rice and beans, Cuban fruit and vegetables did not last long!

The Cuba Partners Shared Bible Study gathered during Lent for three Sundays to consider "Reflections on Foot Washing" and "Woman Caught in Adultery." Discussions were led by Miriam Dewhurst, with texts from John 13 and John 7:53-8:11 and guidelines selected by Rev. Dr. Frances Gench. The *Cuba Partners Shared Bible Study* brings together participants from churches having Presbyterian partners in Cuba, all of whom do Bible studies simultaneously using the same text. Participants exchange notes of their discussions and then compare the different perspectives from each of the churches. Churches select the text on a rotating basis. It has been fun and fascinating to consider new perspectives and a different focus of discussion from our own for the same text. Churches participating in addition to New York Avenue with Church of the Pilgrims are First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana, Old First Presbyterian Church of Long Island, Westminster Presbyterian Church United of Gainesville, FL, and the Baltimore Presbytery. Wheaton Community Church in National Capital Presbytery will join the group's next study. All our welcome to participate in the next Bible study scheduled for June and July, led by Norm Herring with text selected by Westminster Presbyterian in Gainesville.

Photo at right: (L-R) Kirsten Kingdon, Miriam Dewhurst, Beth DuMez, Marilyn Seiber, and Chess Campbell compare notes with those of other participating churches in the Cuba Partners Shared Bible Study"



Over the Coffee Cups

By Mary Anne Davis

It seems as if our members are carrying NYA to far distant lands of the earth. During the last few weeks there have been visits to Alaska by Paul Gebhard; to Spain by Kris and Wilson Golden; to Cuba by Marilyn Seiber and others in our Cuba Working Group; to Holland by Kay and Kelsay Meek; a cruise to the Caribbean by Nancy Dickinson (then later a trip to New Orleans to see her granddaughter get her master's degree from Tulane); to Hawaii by Eleanor Pratt; and to Albuquerque for an Elderhostel by Gerald Moody.

Mary Lee Spatz, a science teacher in the Fairfax County Schools, is accompanying a group of students to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to an International Science Fair.

Hal Hiemstra and Dawn Hill, and their daughters Kylie and Julia, had a great

time recently in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula exploring Mayan ruins and Laguna Bacalar — one of the largest fresh water lakes in Mexico.

Others staying at home kept the sidewalks shoveled, the fires burning in the fireplaces, and struggled against the ferocious



winds. But Spring has crept up on us and soon the air conditioners will be humming and more people will be traveling to other foreign shores.

As this column was being prepared, we were awaiting the birth of a new member into the family of Stacey and John Gagosian and also another birth a couple

of weeks later when Meg and Rob Neill will become parents. (Note: the Gagosians' baby boy was born on Friday, May 4. Best wishes and congratulations to the parents!)

The Dewhurst Family was increased by one member when Lauren Richter became Mrs. Brian Dewhurst at their wedding in Haddonfield, New Jersey in April. Congratulations and best wishes to all.

Have you ever had the desire to be among the participants in our Sunday morning service as a greeter, a liturgist, or a tour guide? If so, please write a note, addressed to Mary Anne Davis, giving your name and telephone number, and leave it at the front desk in the Entryway to say that you would like to be called to serve.

As the birds and bees and gardens of flowers bring their beauty to us, we wish for all of you a truly great summer.

BCNU

PC(USA) Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick Meets with Cuban Ambassador

By Marilyn J. Seiber

On March 9, 2007, at the request of the First Secretary of the Cuban Interests Section, Alberto Prieto, and arranged by Marilyn Seiber, PC(USA) Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick was hosted for lunch by the Chief of the Cuban Interest Section, Ambassador Dagoberto Rodriguez Barrera. Rev. Dora Arce, Pastor of Luyano Presbyterian Church in Havana was in Washington, D.C. for meetings and was available to also attend the luncheon.

Ambassador Rodriguez and Stated Clerk Kirkpatrick had wide-ranging and warm discussions on conditions and issues of churches in the United States and Cuba, Presbyterian partnerships, as well as other economic and social issues of mutual concern.

Marilyn Seiber presented to the Ambassador and First Secretary framed drawings of The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in the late 1800s, as well as a framed excerpt from the forthcoming bicentennial history of NYAPC that quotes a sermon by Rev. Dr. Wallace Radcliffe in 1897 about the Cuban people.



(L-R) Marilyn Seiber, Rev. Dora Arce Valentin, Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, Ambassador Dagoberto Rodriguez Barrera, First Secretary Jose Alberto Prieto Sanchez.

Presbyterian Women in Cuba Celebrate 80th Anniversary

By Marilyn J. Seiber

Presbyterian Women in Cuba celebrated the 80th anniversary of its founding by Edith McClung Houston, a Presbyterian missionary from Lexington, VA. Marilyn Seiber represented The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church as one of three U.S. representatives from partner churches in Long Island and Gainesville, FL. The celebrations honoring Ms. Houston began with a memorial service at her crypt in a Havana cemetery with stories of Ms. Houston's dedication to the church in Cuba and her impact on the role of women in the life of the Presbyterian Church. A program celebrating the anniversary followed that evening at First Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Havana. On April 13, the anniversary day, we traveled to Camajuani in central Cuba and planted a tree in Ms. Houston's honor at the Presbyterian camp, mixing U.S. soil with Cuban soil. As a Virginia resident, Marilyn had the honor of pouring the U.S. soil into the planting hole around the tree. A service and program followed at the Presbyterian Church in Camajuani that featured past 'directoras' of the National Presbyterian Women, music, and a recounting of Ms. Houston's story. In remembrance of Ms. Houston's gift of a baby layette to a baby born on the day of Presbyterian Women's founding, baby clothes were collected to give to a needy new mother in Camajuani.

It was a wonderful celebration and a time of warm hospitality for the U.S. visitors! We were treated to dinners at the homes of the past national directors of Presbyterian Women, and we attended an excellent weekly Bible study called "Mary and Martha"—the Bible study and then the hospitality of refreshments. It was an amazing experience to share such joy and an important occasion with our Presbyterian sisters and brothers in Cuba!

New Members (from page 7)



Germany, home of Oktoberfest and beautiful castles. She has lived in the US on and off for the past 5 years where she went to law school and now works for an international non-profit organization. She has decided to stay in the area for several good reasons, the best of which is **Bill Petty** whom she will marry at NYA in November. Patricia maintains strong ties to Germany and her Catholic home church and therefore - for the time being - asks to be considered a "Friend of the Congregation."

Marsha Renwanz has turned a doctorate in anthropology into a driving force for legislative reforms on behalf of children, families and workers. She is especially fond of reading, creative writing, seeing foreign films and traveling. Marsha is grateful to her parents and friends in the Shetland Islands for her Protestant heritage. Marsha joined by Reaffirmation of Faith.

Solomon Abebe is a native of Ethiopia. Although Solomon's background is Pentecostal, he has felt drawn to the New York Avenue church community. He trusts that he will be enriched here and that New York Avenue Church will in turn be enriched by his presence here. Solomon joined by Reaffirmation of Faith.

More new members will be featured in the next issue of AveNews.

Celebrate These NYA Members!



Jessica Gebhard has recently chosen to accept Brown University's invitation to join its freshman class this coming fall. Jessica plans to be a Linguistics Major, focusing at least initially, on European languages. We can see it now, World Communion Sunday with Jessica addressing us in a dozen languages. Congratulations, Jessica!

Julia Hiemstra was recently chosen as one of "10 Who Are 10" among DC Public School students. Julia entered the city wide competition for 10-year-old children by initially writing an essay on what she would do if she were Mayor for a day. Her answer? Start cooking classes in every DC school. Julia eventually turned her essay into a video filmed in a real kitchen with Julia showing foods that she had prepared and describing how cooking can teach kids math skills, how to follow directions, how to make healthy food choices, and how to cook food for the homeless. Julia will receive a \$2,500 college scholarship at a banquet with Mayor Fenty on May 24. Congratulations, Julia!



Although just 8 years old, **David Clark** loves stopping in the Radcliffe room between church and Sunday School, shaking hands and saying hello to the individuals there. He has also befriended a woman who he sees each Sunday on a bench outside of the church. When his mom told him she was going to have a yard sale, he asked if they could give the money they made to the Radcliffe program? David raised \$80 at the yard sale and donated it all to the Radcliffe Ministry. Congratulations, David, and THANK YOU!

Stephen Dunlap has been accepted into the prestigious Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. Stephen plans to double major in music and neuroscience. Congratulations, Stephen!

Save a Tree & Save NYA money in postage!

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NYA Confirmation Class trip to Ghost Ranch Retreat and Conference Center



L-R: Rev. Tara Spuhler McCabe, Danny Ford, David Hoff (teacher), Genna House, Emma Gebhard, Betsy Merritt (teacher) and Lindsey Treweek.

By David Hoff

A spring break trip is a chance to:

- A) Have fun with friends, hiking, laughing, and enjoying meals together;
- B) Withdraw from the hectic pace of everyday life to reflect on the historic confessions of the faith in preparation of writing a personal statement of faith;
- C) Both.

For four teenagers in New Avenue's confirmation class, the answer is C.

Daniel Ford, Emma Gephard, Genna House, and Lindsey Treweek traveled to the Ghost Ranch Conference Center in New Mexico to spend Holy Week studying, practicing spiritual disciplines, and leading worship. They also challenged themselves on hikes in the canyons and up the mesas on the grounds of the retreat center in the mountains of New Mexico. By the end of the week, each of them had decided to join the church and started to write a personal statement of faith.

On May 8, they shared those statements with the Session, and on May 20, all four shared in leading both worship services and were formally welcomed into full membership of the church.

Those events marked the end of a two-year journey for these four. As part of that confirmation process in their Christian education class, they have studied the history of Christianity,

Protestant theology, and the unique rules of Presbyterian polity.

They also went on an urban retreat in November. Through the Church of the Pilgrims, they met formerly homeless people to learn about the helplessness of living without a shelter. Then they spent an afternoon preparing meals for homeless people and distributing them to people in the parks near our church. More importantly, they spent time talking to those people about their experiences on the street, treating them with the respect they often do not receive.

The final step of the process was to take a Holy Week pilgrimage together to Ghost Ranch. Yes, the trip was filled with fun events such as a full moon hike and an evening of playing favorite board games.

But it also was filled with studying the Apostle's Creed, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Presbyterian Brief Statement of Faith, as well as reflective moments to consider how they would define the meaning of their own faiths.

At the end of this two-year journey, these children of this church are now full members of the New York Ave. Presbyterian Church. Please welcome them.
