



Still Traveling To the Place Where Christ Resides

"So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." Luke 2:16-21

Recently, I was able to think back on our history together - first as the "Cooperative" struggling through all of the meetings, conflicts, dreaming, praying, rotations, worship, and financial work out of which came the UMC-MV. It seemed like Moses leading God's people in the desert towards the Promised Land.

Back in July of 2009, down-island United Methodists embarked upon a journey of epic proportions. Though we could have easily decided to give up buildings and merge to become one physical church, we took the less traveled road and kept all of our facilities intact. The route hasn't been easy, nor has it been without detours.

Thirty months later, we're still following that star. Just like the Magi, we kept God's light in sight and remained faithful, driven to finally reach that place where Christ resides. We're still traveling on that path towards Hope and new life. There is still much to do. How is God calling each of us into service in 2012?

My friends, the birth of Christ still heralds the coming of hope and the chance for a new life. Like that manger



under a bright shining star, UMC-MV is home to hope and a new life for "down-island" United Methodists on Martha's Vineyard. If we are faithful and bold we can be the messengers of God's love and find new ways to manifest that love in active service. God has put us together to do some pretty amazing things.

Together, we have shared in many moving, Spirit-filled times of worship. We continue to witness the development of our choir and music programs with its' director, Edward Rose. We've been able to produce some pretty amazing dramas and special summer services. The Clothes to Go ministry is going strong as is the Edgartown community suppers now in their 18th year. There is much more we need to do as the UMC-MV; our Parish House kitchen (now non-functional) has to be commercially upgraded or we can no longer serve the community as we've been called to do in the past. We have to infuse our worship with various forms of media and music that can "speak" to families, young adults, and people across all

ISSUE 1 – January 2012

age groups. Our bathrooms and showers at Christ Mission Life Center are idle, waiting to be transformed into part of a Summer Retreat Program for visiting youth missions. All of these projects need support if they're to under-gird our ministry for generations to come.

Consider this; I have been in retail marketing and graphics media for over 30 years. In that time I have seen many retailers struggle and finally close. Those who found themselves out of business had made the same four fatal mistakes: First, they each lost sight of the markets changing around them. Then they all took the less expensive route of only nurturing current customers instead of reaching and retaining new ones. Finally, when given the opportunity of funding growth, they just resigned their market to the competition and refused to invest in their future. An active church trying to grow faces the same dynamics as a struggling business.

We must nurture and empower the members we now have while simultaneously reaching out in creative ways to new young families and those who are searching to know Christ. We are first and foremost a United Methodist Church. We know in our hearts that our resources are for the Lord's work- not ours. Likewise, we should regard expenses (renovating the kitchen, restoring windows, upgrading baths and showers, adding technology, etc.) as opportunities to invest in the church's future.

At the end of the day, a church must have faith in what God can do or it cannot preach the gospel or glorify God with integrity.

As a vital congregation, we can have the faith to know and the confidence to believe that our investment in the future for Christ's church will return countless blessings.

Our Administrative Council met recently to take a detailed look at the church's financial health as part of the visioning process. Even though our congregation is in a state of flux as we pursue God's call in the midst of change, we are financially sound. It's a blessing to know that previous generations in addition to our own have invested in the church's future. It makes sense that we do the same for those coming after us.

Our current working capital (pledges, offerings, various accounts, etc.) when combined with our UM Foundation and other investments, leave us more than capable of funding vital ministries. Faithful stewardship objectives and a sound business plan for using our resources will ensure a return on our investments in ministry long into the future. What an opportunity to make vital dreams for mission and ministry a reality!

The Parable of the Talents illustrates that our resources are meant to produce a return for God. We don't bury what we have in the ground or be afraid to invest it in God. *In God we trust.* Previous generations invested in our future. It makes sense that we do the same for those coming up after us.

Our generation is called to seize the opportunity and boldly invest in building Christ's Church here on the Vineyard while we have the chance.

Our journey is not over. Following Christ's call is not only about reaching your destination. It's also about the journey we make while being faithful. Who we are as God's children, and what we do as Christ's Church is far from being fully formed. God is testing our resolve and helping us to decide where our heart resides.

God bless you all.

Pastor Rich



On the Road Again

Dear Partners in Ministry, It's been a while since I have been able to find the time to write to you.....this has been the busiest fall in my sixteen years as a Bishop. I am reminded of the person who wrote an irate letter to me a few years ago on one of those old manual typewriters that would skip spaces now and then. His salutation began, "DEAR BIS HOP." Well, the "bis" has gotten busier, and the "hop," hopper.

Since sending my last "Partners in Ministry," I have visited all nine districts for one reason or another, led six District Days, prepared and preached a dozen different sermons, including three in the last five days, plus the usual Cabinet meetings, periodic crisis, and appointments. In addition, as next spring's General Conference draws nearer, all of our Bishops are involved in meetings (I've been in a number in the last weeks.) preparing for some new ways of doing our "holy conferencing" as well as the major proposals that will be before us.

I ask for your prayers as I continue preparation to deliver the Episcopal Address to the General Conference on behalf of the Council of Bishops.

When Linda and I finally "hopped" in the car to go to be with some of our children and grandchildren for Thanksgiving (hallelujah!), we both spontaneously broke into singing "On the road again.....The life I love is

making music with my friends...." Sounds like the "partners in ministry" that we all are, on the journey with heaven and earth singing of the joy that has come to the world in Jesus. However busy all of us are, and however late this edition of Partners in Ministry, may Christ continue to lead us on whatever road we travel in His joy and peace.



Gluten-Free Broken For You

Thousands of people cannot eat the gluten which is found in wheat, rye, oats, or barley. Thus, they cannot receive communion bread or grape juice into which bread with gluten has been dipped. Even gluten free elements which touch or brush up against elements with gluten are unacceptable. Our churches must be sure that no one is excluded from communion or becomes ill, because we have not taken the steps to provide fully safe, gluten-free elements, separate from the elements with gluten.

Recently dear friends of ours were visiting us and came on Sunday to St. Johns UMC, Watertown (MA), where I was preaching (that proves they are really good friends). It was communion Sunday and sadly they were concerned because one of them has Celiac who cannot consume any gluten. Sadly, they had been in too many services where, even when it was announced that gluten-free elements were available, proper precautions had not been taken to separate the gluten-free elements from the gluten ones. They were delighted to discover that the proper preparations had been taken at Watertown....it was a sign of radical hospitality....full inclusion....the table of the Lord truly open to everyone!

Later, my friends wrote the pastor, Mike Clark, "thank you so much for offering a gluten-free communion station...I can't tell you how much that meant... You never know when a visitor will need the form of hospitality you showed!" During this season, many visitors may be coming to your church. Be sure to show them radical hospitality in many ways... including your preparations to welcome everyone to the Lord's Table. As we continue "on the road again" to Christmas, may we as partners in this wonder-full ministry always know Emmanuel: God with us!

Grace and Peace, **Pete**

Celebrate the Legacy of Dr. King

Martin Luther King, Jr. repeatedly says in many of his sermons that "...before I was a civil rights leader, I was a preacher of the gospel. This was my first call and it still remains my greatest commitment." Even if he had never been called to lead the Montgomery Bus Boycott, he would still have been an extraordinary man of God. He delivered his first sermon when he was 13 and was ordained when he was only 19. He skipped the last years of high school to entered Morehouse College by special examination. He received a BA in sociology from that college, went on to earn a second BA, this one in divinity from Crozen Theological Seminary and then a doctorate in theology from Boston University. Even before he received his degree, he was called to be the minister at the pretentious Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery.

His sermons reflect his commitment not only to civil rights, but to social justice, world peace, and the dignity of man. His deeply held belief that non-violence is the only solution to overcoming the aggression and hatred in the world we live in shines through everything he wrote. In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize, he wrote "Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way

to live in peace ... If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love."

The brutality he faced in his life and his ultimate assassination make his commitment to God's love even more extraordinary. In one sermon, he describes a night when he received one of many threatening phone calls. He prayed to God for strength and heard "an inner voice saying to me, Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness, stand up for justice, stand up for truth... I heard the voice of Jesus saying to fight on. He promised never to leave me alone. No, never alone. No, never alone"

The United Methodist Church of Martha's Vineyard will honor King this Sunday by using excerpts from his sermons and other writings as part of their regular 10 am Sunday service at Trinity Church. The selections come from church sermons given between 1954 and 1968 from all over the US including Alabama, Chicago, Detroit, and Montgomery as well as his 1964 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech.



Rev. Seok Hwan Hong

2011 CHARGE CONFERENCE!!

Our 2011 Charge Conference will take place on Saturday, January 21, 2012. You'll remember that our 2011 Charge

Conference was supposed to take place on October 30th of last year. Hurricane weather stranded our new District Superintendent, Rev. Seok Hwan Hong on Nantucket Island. Later, Seok Hwan shared with me that he grew to appreciate the often-difficult dynamics of traveling to and from the Islands.

Rev. Hong will arrive Saturday, January 21 and meet with the Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee (SPPRC) in the Chapel of the Edgartown Liturgical Arts Center at 10:30 am.

UMC-MV members are asked to come at 11:30 am to meet Rev. Hong in the Baylees Room for a working lunch of Soup, Chowder, various breads and salads. Our Charge Conference Celebration will take place during the meal. If possible please bring a desert to share. At about 1:00 pm Pastor Rich will meet one-on-one with Seok Hwan before he goes to the Chilmark CC for their 2:30 pm conference.

COMMITTEE POSITIONS NEEDED TO BE FILLED!

- Financial Chairperson
- SPPRC Chairperson
- Additional members of SPPRC
- Stewardship Coordinator
- Additional Trustee members
- More Altar Guild members
- Ad hoc committee members
- Pastoral Care Team (N.O.W.)
- Sunday School Teacher (Paid)
- Publicity Photo/Videographer
- Worship Multimedia Person
- Finance Committee members

Please call the Parsonage at 508-693-0589 if you are interested.

If you have an end of year report that you want to be part of the Conference Packet, it will be due to the church office by Thursday, January 17, 2012.

NOTE:

- February 22: Lent Begins**
- April 1: Palm Sunday**
- April 5: Maunday Thursday**
- April 6: Good Friday**
- April 8: Easter Sunday**



ANGELS AMONG US

Celebrating Gifted People in Our Congregation

This month, "Angels Among Us" shines the spotlight on Eileen Robinson who has been involved in so many aspects of our church that it's hard to list all the gifts she has shared with us over the years. Just a partial list of the many ways in which she has benefited our church shows a warm, loving, committed Christian.

Eileen is a faithful volunteer with "Clothes to Go" and a longstanding member of the choir. She was President of United Methodist Women and continues her long dedication to visiting homebound members of our congregation. She is a dependable hard worker in almost every Methodist fund-raiser, event or program. In addition, Eileen added her thoughtful insights and positive attitude during the years when the Cooperative Parish was working toward our unified United Methodist Church of Martha's Vineyard. As impressive as these accomplishments are, Eileen's most important quality is her steady, loving, patient, caring, cheerful presence among us. She is a modest person who personifies the spirit of giving to others.

Eileen was born on the island in 1929. Her parents and grandparents were active in the Old Whaling Church in Edgartown, though she was married in the Federated Church!

After graduating from high school on the island, she attended the Katherine Gibbs School in Boston, met her "husband-to-be" Rupert and was married in 1948. During her marriage, she worked for Blue Cross Blue Shield, the Board of Health and the Holden Library. Rupert and Eileen lived and worked in several Massachusetts communities but eventually returned to Martha's Vineyard 16 yrs. ago.



Eileen and Rupert Robinson

They have a home in the Campground. Eileen enjoys reading and visiting others, but her great love is her family. The Robinsons are proud parents of a son and three daughters, who live in Tennessee, St. Johns, Virgin Islands, New York state and Hopkinton, Massachusetts. Eileen glows when she talks about her nine grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

In addition to her many years of dedication to the church and to helping people in general, Eileen is now a caregiver for Rupert, who suffers from COPD and Alzheimer's disease. People ask her how she can be so patient, understanding and cheerful with these challenges, but she can't imagine how or why she would be anything else.

Eileen's life shows her love and concern for others, and her spirit is a gift to all who know her. But Eileen says that the support of our church means everything to her – "her staff".

Thanks to you, Eileen, for all you have given so many of us.

*If you'd like to recommend a special person in our congregation as an "Angel Among Us," please call the church office and let us know.
(508) 693-4424.*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY

1/15 & 1/23-Scottish Society Singers in ELAC Chapel: 2-3 PM
1/16, 23, 30-EDG Suppers 5 PM
1/18: PH-Trustees Meeting 7 PM
1/24: PH-Worship Meeting 5 PM
1/25-PH Admin Council 5:30 PM
1/28-S. Society Burns Supper

FEBRUARY

2/6-2/27- Mon. EDG Suppers
2/7- PH Now Team 5:30 PM
2/8-PH Worship Mtg. 5:30 PM
2/10-PH Ice Cream Social
2/21-PH Shrove Tues. Pancakes
2/21-TWC-Ash Wed. Eve Service
2/22-PH Trustees 7PM
2/29-PH Admin. Council 5:30 PM

**United Methodist Church
of Martha's Vineyard
508-693-4424**

**P.O. Box 2580
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557
Email:
umcmvoffice@comcast.net
<http://www.umc-mv.org>**