

## Circle of Mercy 2012 Highlights

### *Notes from our common life*

- *January 6-8:* Nine youth gathered for a winter retreat at Eagle Lake—the first ever of its kind, reflecting the emerging teen presence in our midst.
- *January 15:* Our annual observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.
- *January 28:* Children & youth workday at MANNA Food Bank.
- *February 5:* Several in our community help organize and lead the 25th anniversary service for the Alliance of Baptists (one of our denominational partners), held at First Baptist Church, Asheville. (Two of our members were on the Alliance's founding board.)
- *February 12:* Children and youth make Valentine's Day cards for inmates at Marion Correctional Institution.
- *February 25:* COM's Christians for a United Community representatives take part in the organization's annual planning retreat.
- *February:* Began formal conversation with Leah Knox, a candidate for ordination.
- *February 26:* COM commissions Tamara Puffer and Michael Galovic for their work in initiating a support group, BrainStormers, for people living with traumatic brain injury.
- *March 3:* Circle of Mercy's annual planning retreat. Among the agenda items was further refinement of our "Peace Church" statement.
- *March 4:* Youth visit Haywood Street Congregation, many of whose members are homeless, and tour downtown locations which provide services.
- *April 5-8:* Our first Easter Vigil, including a Maundy Thursday foot washing, Friday Taizé service, Stations of the Cross on Saturday evening, all-night bonfire vigil and Easter morning sunrise prayer service, at Swan Mountain Farm.
- *April 8:* Members lead the annual Easter morning worship service at Marion Correctional Institution.
- *April 14:* Yard sale to support our Cuba Partner Mission Group.
- *April 22:* Our annual Earth Day celebration.
- *May 6:* After a three-year process of conversation and editing, COM gives final approval to our historic "Peace Church" statement.
- *May 27:* Celebration of Jody Roberts' graduation from high school.
- *June 1:* MANNA Food Bank workday with children and youth.
- *June 20:* Several COM women lead a "blessing way" ritual for Beth Honeycutt prior to her giving birth.
- *June 25-28:* Circle of Mercy kids (and adult volunteers) participate in our annual "Marketplace," an ecumenical vacation Bible school hosted by First Presbyterian Church.
- *July 1-6:* Seven youth attend Youth Camp.
- *July 8:* Commissioning Beth Maczka for service as the new executive director of the YWCA.
- *July 15:* Our youth lead the COM worship service.
- *July 29:* Commissioning Marc Mullinax for his year of teaching in Korea.
- *August 19:* Ordination of Leah Knox to the Gospel ministry.
- *August 22:* Cuban pastors Wanda Hernandez & Orestes Roca lead us in a day focused on ritual and the arts in worship.
- *September 2:* Our annual "blessing of the animals" service.

- *September 7-9*: Annual Family Retreat at Hinton Rural Life Center, Hayesville, NC, exploring the theme of “Becoming One Body” (*cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 26; Romans 12:4-6*).
- *September 23*: Blessing for the marriage of Hillary Brown and Kirsten Smith.
- *September 29*: MANNA Food Bank workday with children and youth.
- *September 29*: COM volunteers prepare evening meal for Room in the Inn.
- *September 30*: Children’s education classes observe Sukkot, the Jewish festival of shelters/booths, which then carries over into the evening worship.
- *October 14*: Taize service, led by Mark Siler.
- *October 22*: COM’s first young adult group (*20-somethings*) has its first meeting.
- *November 5*: Circle of Mercy members prepare dinner for 25 participants in Just Economic’s economic literacy training.
- *November 12 & 19*: “Discovery” classes for those considering membership in our congregation.
- *December 2*: Celebrating the 11th anniversary of our life together.
- *December 3*: Mark Siler returns to Cuba to continue prison chaplaincy training sponsored by the Cuban Council of Churches. (Kiran Sigmon, Leigh and Joy join him 2 weeks later, for a visit to our partner church, Iglesia Getsemani, in Camagüey.)
- *December 9*: Children & youth “cookie palooza” baking, in preparation for the Christmas program at Marion Correctional.
- *December 12*: COM co-sponsors annual Christmas program at Marion Correctional.
- *December 24*: Our second annual “Christmas Eve” vigil, held at Swan Mountain Farm.

**Half our mission grant budget** of \$8,300 is equally split between our denominational partners, the Alliance of Baptists and the United Church of Christ. The other half is given in small grants to the following: Trauma Resource Institute; Christians for a United Community; Western NC Women’s Congress; Mission of the Good Shepherd (Belize); RAMPS (Radical Action for Mountain People’s Survival); Just Economics; Homeward Bound’s “Hope to Home” initiative; Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists; the UCC Coalition on LGBT Concerns; Asheville City Schools Foundation; St. George’s Episcopal Church (our landlord, contributing toward the recovery from major flooding); Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America; Center for Participatory Change; Center for Diversity Education; Tar Sands Keystone XL Pipeline blockade; Hands and Feet of Asheville. (Several other grant recommendations will be considered in early December.) In addition, our quarterly food donation drives in support of MANNA Food Bank netted approximately 1,000 pounds of food, which translated into 770 meals. And our modest congregational savings, invested in community development banks and microlending organizations, continues to leverage working capital where it is most needed: in poor countries, throughout our nation and here in Asheville.

**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 (their own and/or others); recycling; keeping informed about a variety of public policy issues; Bible study and prayer in light of current events; 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 own own); the discipline of centering prayer; 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; caring for family members facing severe health crises; providing leadership in our own worship and Christian education; 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.