

The Campus Mirror

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE KAY SPIRITUAL LIFE CENTER:
A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN
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A NOTE FROM THE UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN

Coincident with the election of President Obama, the religious communities of greater Washington immediately started lobbying the first family, each trying to outdo the other in offering hospitality in hopes that the first family would make their congregation their “church home.” Before moving to D.C., President Obama was a member of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, and the expectation was that he and the family would associate with a downtown church.

But all this outreach and petitioning from local churches went to no avail as it now appears that, at least for the time being, the Obama family will not be associating with a District of Columbia congregation, but rather will worship at their weekend retreat at Camp David. Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said that “he has attended services at the chapel there. He enjoys the pastor there... and that there is a very personal nature to one’s spirituality.” Gibbs goes on to say that the President fears that his presence might be disruptive and interfere with those seeking a place of peace to praise and worship God.

But the door was left open for eventually identifying a local site for the first family’s religious affiliation. As American University is about solutions – the Kay Spiritual Life Center is eager to step up to the challenge and throw its hat into the ring by offering ourselves as the perfect compromise for the congregation-less First Family. The KSLC indeed provides the perfect remedy to the president’s search for a place for family worship. While it cannot claim to be a neighborhood religious venue, it is (according to MapQuest) but a mere 4.99 miles from the White House to AU, in other words a leisurely 10 to 15 minute drive, and, with a police escort and motorcade, the trip would be made in half the time.

It really only makes sense. Rather than associating with one Christian denomination and risk alienating the rest, or even really associating with a particular congregation, the KSLC offers a wonderful array of faith options. Remember the words President Obama uttered at his inauguration: “For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus — and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; ... that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.” While these are not the words that are usually ascribed to the Kay Center, they coincide perfectly with the Center’s spirit and ethos.

In his Cairo speech, he said that “there must be a must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground. As the Holy Koran tells us, ‘Be conscious of God and speak always the truth ... [I am] firm in my belief that the interests we share as human beings are far more powerful than the forces that drive us apart.’” He then goes on to say that this “conviction is rooted in my own experience. I am a Christian, but my father came from a Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims. As a boy, I spent several years in Indonesia and heard the call of the *azaan* at the break of dawn and the fall of dusk. As a young man, I worked in Chicago communities where many found dignity and peace in their Muslim faith.”

Again these words capture perfectly the defining character of the Kay Center. It is a place where everyone is invited to explore the deeper urges of the human spirit in an environment that is rooted in an unbreakable commitment to radical hospitality – in fact, the leitmotif of the Kay Center is inclusion. No one should feel or be considered the least or the left out.

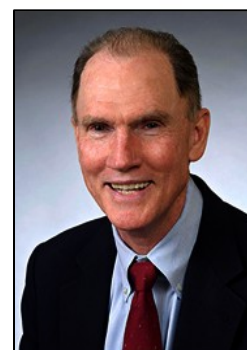
And we certainly don’t want the president to feel spiritually bereft, especially since the celebrated split with the former pastor of Trinity UCC, the controversial Rev. Jeremiah Wright.

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University Chaplain
Rev. Joe Eldridge

- Kurt Karandy, Editor
- Joe Eldridge, University Chaplain
- Christine Gettings, Assistant Director

In addition to the more than twenty-four different faith communities that call the Kay Spiritual Life Center home, Kay also provides a wealth of educational programming for the American University community.

The following articles provide examples of some of the events held in the Kay Center, including our Table Talk Lunch Series, annual R. Bruce Poynter Lecture, and Human Rights Defenders series.

These events bring together members of the American University and D.C. communities for discussions on issues of ethical, social and moral concern. They could not happen without your support!

RUSSIA: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK?

by David Lewis, Contributing Writer

Two experts on Russia met in the newly-refurnished basement of Kay Spiritual Life Center on March 4 to lead a discussion about the possibility of the largest nation in the world returning to its former status as an empire. The panelists explained that though Russian leaders strive to be the empire it once was, it is not close to doing so.

Professor Christian Maisch, who teaches foreign policy at American University, brought his students to the forum and offered this observation.

“Russian foreign policy has changed in recent years. I’m curious to see what these people have to say about that.”

Maisch and others heard from two panelists, Eric Lohr, a professor in the Department of History at AU, and Svetlana Babaeva, the US Bureau Chief for Russian News and Information Agency. Lohr started the discussion with last summer’s Russian-Georgian conflict for control over the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Lohr argued that even with the Russian victory over the Georgian army, Russia lost just as much as its opponent in the war.

“Russia lost a great deal internationally in terms of its prestigious standing,” said Lohr, referring to the international backlash against the country’s action during the conflict. “I don’t think there’s a single winner in this war.”

Lohr further downplayed the notion of a returning Russian empire by citing a survey he conducted which measured Russia’s influence in neighboring countries.

“We were very surprised to find out that Russian soft power declined throughout the 90s,” said Lohr. During the 1990’s several former Soviet states broke from Russia, Ukraine and Georgia

being prime examples. Though Russia attempted to influence elections in these states toward its favor, doing so yielded negative results for the world’s largest country, a point made by Lohr during the discussion.

“We shouldn’t get too alarmist about the return of the empire striking back,” he said.

Babaeva continued where Lohr left off, pointing out new trends in Russia on its approach to the United States.

“Main Russian TV channels are requested not to broadcast the United States as angry and aggressive,” said Babaeva. “So we definitely get a real improvement in bilateral relations now.”

Babaeva then cited certain criteria for what she said a country needed to be an empire.

“To be an empire you must bring something new to the world,” she said. Babaeva also said that “to be an empire you must have a mission. I don’t think Russia has a mission.”

The Russian journalist listed historical examples of imperial dominance: the Roman Empire, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and even the United States. Babaeva said that Russia—in its current state—does not fit the criteria for an empire.

Babaeva went on to analyze Russia’s recent actions and argued that it was a shell of the country’s former strength.

“This demonstration of power is a shape to protect the real weakness,” she said. “So, you know teenagers’ manner: you want to assure someone how hot you are. It’s not a force, it’s something different.”

After the two panelists spoke, University Chaplain Joe Eldridge offered concluding remarks and said, “So maybe [Russia] is not striking back as vigorously as we might imagine.”

Spring 2009 Semester Table Talks:

- Russia: The Empire Strikes Back
- The Stimulus Package: How Much and For Whom?
- Obama’s Foreign Policy: Where’s it Headed?

Check our website soon to see the Table Talk lineup for the upcoming Fall semester!



Joe Eldridge at the stimulus package Table Talk on April 1, 2009.

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN DELIVERS SEVENTH ANNUAL R. BRUCE POYNTER LECTURE

by Kurt Karandy, Contributing Writer

Marian Wright Edelman, president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), spoke at the seventh annual R. Bruce Poynter Lecture at Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church on January 22, about her newest book, *The Sea is So Wide and My Boat is So Small*.

Edelman's speech, delivered only a few days after the inauguration of President Barack Obama, echoed the president's nationwide call to service.

Her lecture, entitled "Charting a Course for the Next Generation," discussed the precarious state of children in America today and how to change the systems that promote child poverty, neglect and abuse, and how to establish health coverage for all children.

Edelman, a proud grandmother of four, spoke passionately about the need to care for and work for the well-being of all children.

She said that one in six children in America faces inadequate healthcare, education and physical abuse. She said that that statistic is like one child in a family not receiving access to the resources that the rest of the family's children have.

During the lecture, Edelman said that the problems children face today are the result of adults' irresponsibility. "Adults are what's wrong with our children," she said.

Adults have created the major problems children face today and the duty to solve these problems rests with the adults, Edelman said. In *The Sea is So Wide and My Boat is So Small* she writes a series of inspirational open letters to parents, teachers, community and faith leaders and elected officials, calling upon each group to take more responsibility and care for children.

In her lecture, as in the book, she criticized each group for its complacency and demanded more from all adults.

Edelman connected the problems children face today to the vast disparities in wealth between the rich and the poor, the largest gap in American history. Taking greater ownership of our children requires that we reevaluate our cultural and national priorities, she said.

"Child poverty and neglect, racial disparities in systems that serve children and the Cradle to Prison Pipeline are not acts of God," Edelman writes in her book. "They are America's immoral political and economic choices that can and must be changed with strong political, corporate and community leadership."

In the prophetic tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Edelman challenged the system of perpetual poverty in the United States and called for a more equitable system, instead of rewarding the richest and most privileged of Americans.

She said that the policies that favor the wealthy over the poor and most vulnerable are irresponsible, because those funds could be better put to use ensuring for all children healthcare, quality education and reducing parental neglect and abuse.

Edelman called on American political leaders to put an end to these existing policies and create a plan to provide all children healthcare and end the high risk of incarceration that youth in America face, which CDF calls the Cradle to Prison Pipeline. In doing so, she not only criticized America's economics of inequality,



Edelman speaking about children at Metropolitan Memorial UMC. Photo credit: Jeff Watts, American Today

but also the nation's criminal justice system, referring to incarceration as "the new American slavery."

Concluding her lecture, Edelman reminded her audience that her call to action did not end with elected officials, but included all adults in the U.S. She reminded the audience that charting the course for the next generation is the responsibility of all, not just a select few.

Poynter lecturers are invited to speak because they embody the ideals of justice and compassion for a world in distress. Edelman, the first woman to deliver the lecture, joins the ranks of a prominent list of religious, civil and political leaders, a list of whom is provided below.

R. BRUCE POYNTER LECTURERS:

Since the inaugural lecture in 2003, Poynter lecturers are invited to campus to speak because they exemplify the highest ideals of justice and compassion for a world in travail. Below is the list of lecturers, the positions they held at the time of the lecture and the topics on which they spoke.

2009: **Marian Wright Edelman**, president and founder of the Children's Defense Fund — Charting a Course for the Next Generation

2008: **The Honorable Ron Dellums**, mayor of Oakland, Calif., former Congressman — Legislating for the People

2007: **The Honorable John Lewis**, Congressman — The Civil Rights Struggle

2006: **Dick Gregory**, comedian, author, and civil and human rights activist — The Struggle for Nonviolent Change

2005: **The Rev. Dr. Jim Forbes**, Senior Minister of the Riverside Church — The Mandate for Prophetic Justice

2004: **Mr. Taylor Branch**, Pulitzer Prize winning civil rights historian — Promise and Myth in Democracy: Brown Plus 50 Years

2003: **The Rev. Dr. William Sloane Coffin**, Pastor Emeritus of the Riverside Church, former Yale University Chaplain — U.S. and Iraq and Nuclear Weapons

Continued from page 1

With the weight of the world weighing down on his shoulders, it is clear that he will have to turn somewhere for spiritual guidance and the KSLC provides a talented and committed staff of chaplains representing all the major faith communities. During the academic year the Center's more than 20 chaplains provide a stunning range of opportunities for worship, prayer, meditation, religious education and community and social justice outreach. AU also boasts having a remarkably high volume of students who are involved with volunteering and community based learning. Suffice it to say that there would be no problem at all identifying chaplains or students eager to provide spiritual direction for Sasha and Malia. As they explore their own spiritual proclivities, they can call on the guidance of a rabbi, an imam, a pastor, a Catholic priest, a Buddhist monk or a Hindu priest. How many congregations in the greater DC area can claim a similar diverse feast of religious instruction?

If the first family needs solace and serenity, devoid of people, might we recommend the Kay Chapel on a *Saturday* night?

Before the first family gets settled into the routine of worship in the Camp David Chapel, the KSLC at AU humbly declares our willingness and eagerness to become their religious home. It will provide a good escape from the fishbowl of the White House as well as the potential locus for interfaith exploration and spiritual discernment. And who knows, he might also get some good political advice from the faculty.

by Rev. Joe Eldridge, University Chaplain

MURDER IN THE AMAZON: THE STORY OF SISTER DOROTHY

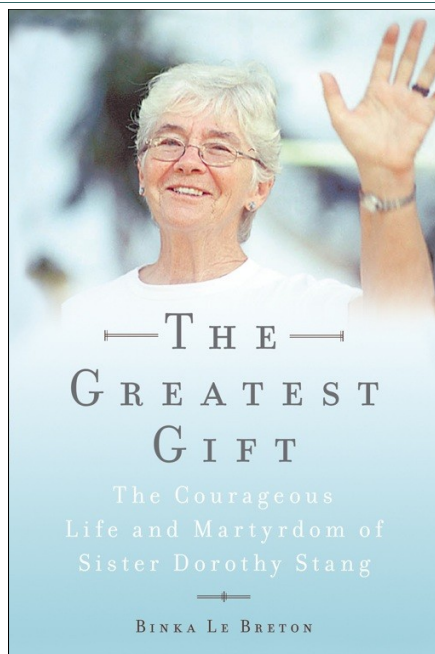
by Mariana Reyes, Contributing Writer

Binka Le Breton, British journalist and author of *The Greatest Gift: The Courageous Life and Martyrdom of Sister Dorothy Stang*, spoke at the Kay Spiritual Life Center on April 9 about Sister Dorothy's journey and mission in Brazil.

An award-winning writer, environmental and human rights activist, and non-profit director, Le Breton spoke eloquently about Stang's life.

Sister Dorothy Stang arrived in Brazil as a missionary in 1966 and fell in love with the people of the country. In 1982, she moved into the Amazon with a community of poor farmers to help them live in the area. She later became their protector from loggers and land developers who pursued that same land.

She would testify to the govern-



ment about those aggressors and immediately became a common enemy for the companies in the area trying to make a profit off the people. Despite the threats to her life, Sister Dorothy was persistent in finding peace between the two parties. In spite of her activism, she was murdered on a rural Amazon road.

Joined by the relatives of Sister Dorothy, Le Breton offered a compelling narrative about the role Sister Dorothy played in challenging vested agricultural interests. Land titles are often manipulated to give ownership not to those who dwell on it or work the land, but to politically connected absentee landlords.

Sister Dorothy's murder shed light on the massive problem of the landless movement in the Amazon. The Brazilian government has made significant strides to resolve the problem, but there is still much work to be done.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS: COLOMBIA AND MEXICO

by Mariana Reyes, Contributing Writer

Protecting human rights in Latin America is an ongoing struggle.

At a roundtable discussion about the various threats to human rights defenders in the region, Kay Spiritual Life Center hosted Peace Brigades International in voicing their many concerns.

Peace Brigades International (PBI) is an international grassroots NGO promoting nonviolence and protecting human rights since 1981. PBI facilitates peace-building initiatives and sends international volunteers to areas of conflict, providing protective accompaniment to human rights defenders threatened by political violence.

Two of their international volunteers joined the discussion to share their individual experiences.

Tita Radilla, a volunteer in Mexico, strives for accountability for the crimes committed during and outbreak of violence in the region in the 1970s. Throughout this time hundreds were detained, tortured and raped, resulting in over 1200 disappearances.

Radilla, with the support of PBI, created *La Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos y Víctimas de Violaciones de Derechos Humanos en México* (AFADDEM) to pressure the government in finding those guilty of the horrendous crimes. She contin-

ues her struggle seeing few advances by the government.

Gloria Gomez also spoke about her mission to find accountability in the ongoing violence in Colombia. Her organization, *Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos – Desaparecidos* (ASFADDES), meets many challenges as the conflict continues and the government fails to show efforts to fully investigate all sources of the violence.

Both of these strong women are motivated to pursue justice because of their personal ties to the conflicts. They are very clear that reconciliation cannot be achieved without truth and because of that, they persist in their demand for an end to violence without impunity.

ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMERO, *PRESENTE!*

By Claudia Rodriguez, Contributing Writer

With festive progressive Latin American songs, testimonies and reflections, ARAMARK workers, students, faculty and members of the Salvadoran community celebrated the life of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero on March 25 at the Kay Spiritual Life Center. Bishop Romero was killed by Salvadoran military forces in 1980 just at the beginning of the bloody civil war that lasted 12 years.

The service for Bishop Romero has been celebrated at American University for many years under the sponsorship of the Office of the University Chaplain and lately also by the SHARE Foundation, a development and solidarity organization that works in El Salvador. The service is offered especially to the ARAMARK workers at AU who are mostly Salvadoran.



Nueva Cosecha provided the music for the service celebrating the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero.

This year's service was also attended by a group of students who went to El Salvador as electoral observers through the Alternative Spring Break Program and the SHARE Foundation. The event was participative and cheerful.

University Chaplain Joe Eldridge, students, workers and SHARE's staff read quotes of the prophetic homilies of Bishop Romero and reflected on how his message is still relevant in today's context. An ARAMARK worker who knew the Archbishop also shared a moving testimony.

The Salvadoran band *Nueva Cosecha* (New Harvest) has a tradition of playing at the service, cheering everybody up with their Central American beats. After the service, everybody gathered to enjoy the delicious "panes con pollo" (chicken sandwiches) Salvadoran style.

But, who was Bishop Romero and why was he killed? Oscar Romero became Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977 when the country was on the verge of a civil war. The country had been under an oppressive military dictatorship since 1932 and social unrest and political resistance were on the rise.

Many Salvadorans lived in extreme poverty, which was perpetuated by an economic system that only privileged the coffee oligarchy. The dictatorship was able to keep the status quo as a very repressive regime. The murder of peasants, union leaders and activists or anybody who organized for social change was wide-

spread.

Many Salvadorans looked for hope and strength in the Catholic Church. A progressive religious grassroots movement called *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* or CEB (Grassroots Ecclesial Communities) inspired by Liberation Theology took root. CEB members, priests and nuns represented a threat to the military dictatorship and were targeted by death squads.

In this context, Romero used his position as Archbishop to denounce what he called "social and structural sins". In the light of the Gospel, he denounced violence, poverty and injustice but also brought hope and faith to Salvadorans. Bishop Romero became the "voice of the voiceless." From his pulpit he was not afraid to speak up against the violence and lawlessness.

A month before his death, Bishop Romero wrote a letter to President Carter urging him to stop the US military aid to El Salvador. However, fearing that El Salvador was going to become another Nicaragua or Cuba, over the decade of the 1980s the US invested \$ 7 billion to finance the Salvadoran civil war.

Bishop Romero knew that his denunciation would eventually cost him his life. But he said, "If I get killed, I will resurrect in the Salvadoran people." His prophetic words became true when death squads assassinated Bishop Romero while he was holding up the Eucharist during a mass.

But Bishop Romero *is* resurrected in the Salvadoran people. Bishop Romero lives in the hearts of Salvadorans, filling them with hope. He is considered by many as a prophet and a patron saint of the Americas, or "*San Romero*" as Salvadorans like to call him.

In 1997, a beatification and canonization process was opened and is still in process. His statue is also depicted at the Westminster Abbey in London as one of the ten twentieth century martyrs.

Every year thousands of people from different faith traditions celebrate the life of Bishop Romero. His witness of love and hope transcends the Salvadoran borders as he is remembered and honored in many countries around the world.



ARAMARK employees joined AU faculty, staff and students in participating in the event in the Kay Center. Ana Urutia (right) reads a selection from one of Archbishop Romero's prophetic homilies.

Religious Communities' Updates

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY ALIVE!

by Fr. David Mott, OP, Catholic Chaplain

What makes a Catholic community? Scripture shows that the early Church found itself at odds with the worldly values. "Peter was exhorting them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation'" [Acts 2:40].

Many students choose American University for its reputation for students dynamically interested in a better world. Today, as a thriving and growing Catholic Community of students, faculty, and staff at American University, we too are driven by a faith set on higher and greater hopes in the greater context of divine salvation and an eternal and providential reality.

As the early Christian community "devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" [Acts 2:42], the Catholic Community at American University continues in devotion to furthering our knowledge and understanding of the faith of the apostles, to communal fellowship and service, and to divine worship.

In the coming year, as in past years, the Catholic community will continue to offer opportunities for growth in knowledge and understanding of apostolic teaching. Our small but growing Catholic library in Kay offers students opportunities to borrow books, read, study, or just lounge on the couches and talk in a faith-safe setting.

We are looking forward to another great line up of speakers on various topics of faith at our monthly community dinners for the 2009-2010 academic year. More than just a great meal (and dessert!), these are great chances to learn and discuss ideas in open and joyful fellowship. Both the Catholic Chaplaincy and Catholic Student Association have day trips and service opportunities in the works to practice our faith in action. Not to be missed is the annual ECHO peer-led retreat in February and the Spring Break mission trip! In and outside of Kay, our community is a sanctuary for growth in faith.

Communal fellowship is supported by weekly men's and women's group meetings fostering great friendships that have lasted well beyond graduation. Pizza and the Gospel go hand-in-hand as our daily lives and the divine word become demystified in open



discussion. Having studied the scriptures in advance, students repeatedly remark how much more meaning the readings hold at Sunday Mass. Prayer takes on a whole new meaning as well, when you know the struggles and triumphs of those with and for whom you are praying. Daily and Sunday Masses are often followed by groups making plans and going out to eat together at TDR. Game nights and dances are just some of the community's social outlets. Our fellowship enhances our worship and our worship unites us in fellowship.

In the Kay Center, God has blessed the Catholic community with the freedom to celebrate our faith openly at the heart of American University. Students often mention that one of their deciding criteria in selecting American University for higher studies was an openness to celebrating their faith on campus. Our Catholic Community begins, but does not end, at Sunday Mass. There is so much more to discover. Catholic Community is ALIVE at American University!



Photos (clockwise): Students on the Catholic Spring Break mission trip to Appalachia, a Catholic Community Dinner followed by a talk on violence in the Bible, and students taking a break from exams at the CSA Christmas Party.

UNITED METHODISTS LEAD THE CHARGE FOR JUSTICE

by Rev. Mark Schaefer, United Methodist Chaplain

The United Methodist-Protestant Community often seeks to challenge the broader AU community's stereotypes about Christians and, in so doing, to provide alternative entry points into the community for those who are reluctant to cross the threshold of the chapel. As in years past, this entry point has proven to be the community's unwavering commitment to social justice and Christian social action.

The cornerstone of the United Methodist-Protestant Community's social justice ministry is a program entitled "The Other Six Days." Begun in the fall of 2004, this ministry seeks to integrate the Christian teachings and faith the community celebrates on Sundays with what is done "on the other six days" of the week.

Every month, the community examines an issue of moral or ethical significance in the context of Sunday worship, through an educational program, and with an opportunity for Christian action. The spring 2009 semester was no different.

The semester began with an exploration of the crisis of illiteracy and with reflections in worship on the Christian tradition of supporting education and promoting literacy. In March, the community focused on domestic violence and violence against women. In addition to our worship service, we had an alumna of the community, Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger, from

the DC Rape Crisis Center, lead a workshop on domestic violence. Students also prepared a meal for the women at Calvary Women's Shelter downtown.

But it was the Coca-Cola campaign that caught the most attention. For years, the United Methodist community on campus has boycotted Coca-Cola due to allegations of human rights violations in Colombia and environmental degradation in India. This year, as Coke's contract with AU came up for renewal, that social justice commitment became the cornerstone for a student movement to encourage the University as a whole to follow suit.

Under the leadership of Kurt Karandy, our Social Justice Coordinator, a coalition of students was brought together, representing different faiths and different political backgrounds. They tabled on the quad. They distributed free soda alternatives. They petitioned the administration. And in so doing they showed that people of faith can care about justice; that committed Christians can work alongside of people of different faiths, or no faith, to effect social change.

As with past campaigns, this provided a new face to the university community for the UM ministry, and students who would not otherwise have darkened the door of the chapel, felt welcomed and affirmed through the common cause of justice.



Katie Gerry, above, participated in a mock funeral as part of the Coke campaign.

CHI ALPHA TRAVELS TO YUCATAN, MEXICO

by Rev. Mike Godzwa, Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship Chaplain

When we walked into the church in Muna, Yucatan, Mexico before the Sunday morning service, we were greeted like family. Not surprising since we've been getting to know the members for the past three years.

From March 7 to 14 of this year, I led a group of students from both American University and Northern Virginia Community College back across the border to serve with my brother Dave for spring break. It's been a standard formula for us, hard work in the mornings, followed by outreach in the church and community in the afternoons and evenings, but the results are far from ordinary.

This year we rolled up our sleeves and helped to pour a side-

walk in Opichen. We put the finishing touches on an expansion of the sanctuary in Muna (dug the foundation for it last year) and spent two days clearing a field for a new church plant. The rocks are big in Muna!

We were also able to lead or participate in six services and reach out to families in the community. The team prepared several new dramas and songs in Spanish and thanks to Dave and several of the team members' translation skills, we were able to make a real connection. A definite highlight was watching one of our new friends begin her relationship with Jesus during our visit to her home.

Here's what some of our team members said about the trip:

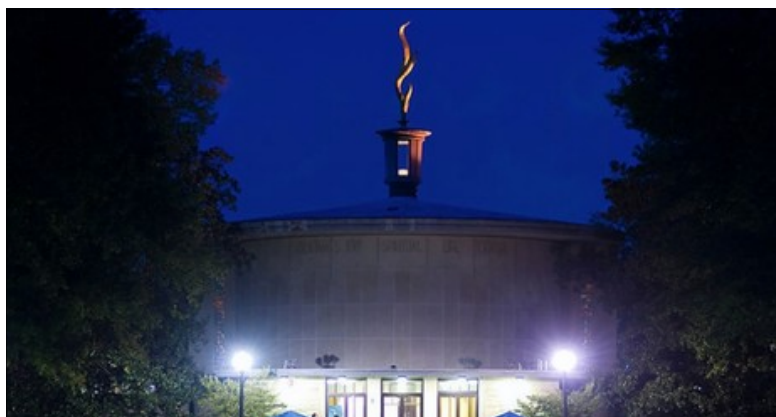
"I was praying next to an older women and I remember thinking that even though we are very different people from different countries and we don't even speak the same language, we are sisters in the family of God, and that makes us closer than even if we were related by blood." -Erin

"While on the Mexico trip, I encountered the power of the family of God. I walked into this little, precious community in the Yucatan and found the love of my life, Jesus Christ, as present among them as He is with me at home in DC. I was blown away by being able to instantly connect with people because the authority and love of God had already united us."

This trip was irreplaceable as are the people I met, and I brought the truth I learned home with me. With it I'm learning to love my spiritual family here with more fervor than ever. What a wild, surprising thing to be a part of a global family, where my failures and successes and hurts and celebrations fit. I'm overwhelmed that this is real." -Heather



Chi Alpha members with church members in Muna, Yucatan, Mexico.



Your Contributions to the Bruce Poynter Endowment at American University allow us to reach out to students through our Table Talk programs, Alternative Breaks, and Speaker Series.

We thank you for your generosity!

To make a donation, please visit

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Kay Spiritual Life Center
American University
4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016-8010