

the *Ecumenical Messenger*

January, 2006

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**Mayor-Elect Bob Duffy to Greet the  
Faith Community at  
GRCC's Annual Meeting**

**January 23, 2006 -- Noon til 2:00 pm**  
**Baber African Methodist Episcopal Church**  
**550 Meigs St. Rochester, NY 14607**  
**Meigs St. at Broadway, Lot & Street parking**  
**585- 461-1395 Church Office**



In his report, **"Impact Rochester,"** Bob Duffy said: "I'm going to put every ounce of passion and energy into three things; economic development, education, and safe streets. We're not only going to build bridges, we're going to walk across them. I've walked the streets. I know the problems we face, but I also know our potential. I believe we can create a better future, as one community with no limits for anyone and a common destiny for everyone."

GRCC has asked Mayor-Elect Duffy to come and talk to us about his hope for the City of Rochester, and how the faith community can engage its energy and resources in addressing the issue of poverty.

Marvin Mich, GRCC Officer for Social Justice Issues shares a concept that is used to illustrate how poverty could be addressed. He says it's like a table and the legs that support addressing the elimination of poverty are Government, Faith Communities and Organizations, Businesses, and Individual Families/Households.

Come and join members and friends of GRCC at this meeting which will take place at Baber African Methodist Episcopal Church, 550 Meigs Street, (corner of Meigs and Broadway,) January 23<sup>rd</sup>, beginning with lunch at Noon. After a short time of business and reports, the group will move into a place of worship where Bob Duffy will address the group. There will be time for questions and comments. Please call ahead of time to RSVP. A free-will offering will be taken for lunch. All are welcome. For further information call GRCC at 254-2570.

**Call ahead to reserve your place at this important event.**  
**Call GRCC at 254-2570 or register on-line with an email to**  
[grcc1@frontiernet.net](mailto:grcc1@frontiernet.net).

Please include the words **"Annual Meeting"** in the subject line.  
*Fax reserve at: 254-6551*

GRCC is an association of churches, ecumenical clusters, religious organizations, individuals and denominations working together in our community – sharing in worship, prayer, interfaith dialogue, and justice ministry.

### Greetings from the President



#### *Katrina Uncovers Massive Generosity*

It has become commonplace to say that Katrina exposed the profound poverty that many of our fellow citizens suffer. It shone a light on what we had pretended did not exist. The chief revelation of Katrina was not poverty but our collective indifference to it.

But, something more important happened. Katrina also uncovered massive generosity. Last week, even as Katrina survivors moved away from the cold of Rochester, two more apartments were offered in the Rochester area for the homeless.

Christmas is God's demonstration that generosity is stronger than indifference. Manger power overcomes Herod's rage. The cry of a Child woke up the world.

The role of GRCC is to testify to the light. We already know about darkness. The poverty did not surprise us. We had underestimated the generosity. Nearly a hundred places to live were offered, clothing more than could be even counted, furniture, cars, job offers. The best theological word for it is Wow!

By the mercies of God we have been given both a fierce commitment to relieve the poverty in Monroe County and many new friends. GRCC Board members are in conversation with multiple groups from the faith community. Different faith cultures all agree, we must take on the poverty in our town and we must do it together.

I made a promise to the Poverty Truth Commission at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School on December 17 that as long as I am involved in the Greater Rochester Community of Churches, I will work to make sure we live up to our name. That is, that we will be a community. We will link city and suburb and churches of all kinds to make a way for the massive generosity of God to undermine the roots of poverty.

At our Annual Meeting on January 23 we will report to you and to our guest speaker, Mayor-Elect Bob Duffy about initiatives we will be taking in the next year.

Come and share your thoughts with Mayor Duffy at 12 Noon, January 23 at Baber A.M.E. Church, 550 Meigs Street. Call in your lunch reservation at 254-2570.

I believe that before the year is out, new networks will be formed, new friendships made, new resources discovered, and profound changes will begin.

*Richard Newell Myers*

#### **GRCC Receives Grants**

Rochester Area Community Foundation awarded GRCC a \$5,000 grant for work in "civic engagement." This money will be used to continue our Focus On Democracy programming, and to provide other opportunities for the faith community to continue working together toward addressing the issues of poverty. A grant was received from the Wilmott Foundation to help GRCC continue outreach through digital communications. We are very grateful for the design and upkeep of our website located at [www.grcc.org](http://www.grcc.org) that is the creation of our web-manager, Sherry Ellington. We are also grateful for grants from the McCurdy Trust Fund, Rochester Gas & Electric, The Presbytery of Genesee Valley, The Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, The Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America-Finger Lakes Conference, The American Baptist Churches-Rochester Genesee Region, and the United Church of Christ-Genesee Valley Association.

*We are thankful for the support of our members, partners, and individual donors.*

Your financial support to GRCC is very important. Won't you take a moment to send your personal contribution to: GRCC, 2 Riverside Street, Rochester, NY 14613 . To find out more, call: 585.254-2570 or fax: 254-6551

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## **Christmas Healing Service in the Prison, 2005**

An experiential memoir by Gloria Ulterino, VP  
for Program & Discipleship

On the evenings of December 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, the GRCC Worship and Discipleship Team went to prison... for the fourth year in a row. And I'm not sure who appreciated it more, the inmates or our team. But, this I know. We celebrated Christmas, all of us. And we knew, once again, that these services were an important and sacred part of Christmas for us all.

This year we almost didn't make it to prison. Security issues have become much tighter, with gangs making their way into prison, as well as on the streets of Rochester. But Lt. Prinzi, who agreed that our service was a valuable one, found a compromise for us. On Monday night, we went into a unit for 16-18-year-old males in the downtown jail; and on Tuesday night we prayed with the sentenced women residing in Henrietta. Each evening was unique; both were a real celebration.



On Monday night we were brought into a "smallish" room because the deputy didn't think many would be joining us. We began with maybe a dozen young men. But, as Dean Santos led a spirited (in every sense of the word) rendition of "*O Little Town of Bethlehem*," another 4 or 5 men made their way inside. Then, as I was beginning Mary's story, dressed as a first century woman, another 3 or 4 came in. (There were glass windows separating us from the larger unit.) They were so responsive... to the stories (Dave Inglis was a shepherd), to the music, and to the prayers led by Odessa Lybrand. They prayed for their families, for their recovery, for their strength, for all that they

needed. And, when we concluded with "Joy to the World," they wanted to sing it again! Afterwards, the deputy in charge said, "They were really attentive. It was astounding, but they were attentive."

Tuesday night was a "high" for us, as well. As the women filed in, I could see on their faces that some *really* wanted to be there. Others seemed more interested in getting together with friends, with a diversion to the usual routine. But, once we started, they all tuned in. Again, thanks to Dean's marvelous leadership in song (this time joined by his daughter Krista, on the saxophone). Their response to Mary's story was every bit as lively, though they all agreed that Joseph would *never* believe Mary-- while the men thought he would. Interesting. Again, the prayers poured out of their hearts, most often for their children. And the final hymn elicited hand clapping and a true sense of celebration. We were grateful for the opportunity to be part of their Christmas.

I acknowledge those who led the service: Rev. David Inglis, pastor of Henrietta United Church of Christ, Marcie Gass, Odessa Lybrand, Betty Stevens, as well as myself. Judith Stellpflug was part of our planning but could not be with us due to an injury. I cannot close without mentioning Dean Santos. His powerfully moving rendition of "*Mary, Did You Know?*" truly capped an entire evening of spirit-filled music. We look forward to next year in jail.

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## **Ecumenical-Interfaith Archives Relocates**

A major step was taken recently towards establishing the Ecumenical and Interfaith Archives of Rochester (EIAR). Historical records in temporary storage at the Pastoral Center of the Roman Catholic Diocese were moved to a permanent site at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension, the same building where the GRCC Office is located.

This collection is composed largely of records documenting the life of GRCC and its predecessor organizations going back to 1919. In recent years EIAR has accepted as well historical records of other local ecumenical and interfaith organizations. GRCC sponsors the archives as a service to the community. After the organizing and indexing of the material is completed, the collection will be open to the public. Researchers will be able to gather information on how religious groups in Monroe County have cooperated and collaborated in meeting human need and building social justice.

Volunteers interested in local religious history are needed to assist with preparing these materials for public use. Training and supervision will be provided. For further information, please call Larry Witmer, chair of the EIAR Management Team (342-6376).



Greater Rochester  
Community of Churches  
2 Riverside Street  
Rochester, NY 14613

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## News Notes and Calendar Events

- Fourth Annual Essay Contest on the theme, "Building Community: Bridging Our Differences," sponsored by the Interfaith Forum of Rochester as a memorial to the Rev. James Rice, a founder of GRCC and IFF. The Awards Celebration will take place on **Sunday, January 8, 3:00 - 4:30 PM** at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church (121 North Fitzhugh St. in downtown Rochester). Prizes will be awarded to the winning essayists, and they will engage in conversation about their "bridge building" experiences with a panel of religious leaders. A reception will follow to which the public is invited. Call: 342-6376
- The Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Gospel Songfest, **Saturday, January 14, 2006, at 6:00 PM** at the Aeon Baptist Church, 175 Genesee Street. All are welcome.
- The Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Ecumenical Worship Service will take place **Monday January 16, 2006** at the Eastman Theater located at 26 Gibbs Street. It will begin at 8:45 a.m. with music by the Community Choir directed by Julius Dicks. The program will begin at 9:00 a.m. and finish by 10:30 a.m. After the Eastman portion of the program there will be a reenactment of the Civil Rights March to EOC (SUNY Brockport's Educational Opportunity Center) located at 305 Andrews Street. There will be community dialogue about the book, "Where Do We Go From Here -- Chaos or Community" led by Dr. Richard Williams. There will also be age appropriate activities for young people. Lunch will be provided at no charge. This year's Drum Major for Justice Award recipient will be Minister Franklin Florence.
- MetroJustice Annual Meeting, **Saturday, January 21, 2:00 pm till 5:00 pm**, First Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Rd. South
- **February 4<sup>th</sup>** – PEARL Orientation and Registration, Black Church Studies Program: Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, 1100 South Goodman Street; 10:00 AM. Call: 340-9645
- **February 13<sup>th</sup>** – Movie Night at the Divinity School (1100 S. Goodman) 7PM, "Malcolm X", (Black Church Studies Program) Call: 340-9645)
- **February 14<sup>th</sup>** – Movie Night at the Divinity School (1100 S. Goodman), 6PM, "Monsters' Ball" (Women and Gender Studies Program) Call: 340-9645
- In recognition of Women's History month, Women of the Well will present 2 dramatic presentations of "**Re-Membering**", free to the public: **March 7<sup>th</sup>** 7:30 PM at CRCDS, 1100 S. Goodman St., and again on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 PM at St. Anne's in Palmyra, 136 Church Street.
- **April 6-8** – Mordecai W. Johnson Institute Lecture Series at the Divinity School: Dr. Jacqueline S. Mattis, speaker. Call: 340-9645

For more calendar items go online to [www.grcc.org](http://www.grcc.org) and click the calendar tab.