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Dedication of Bishop Felton Edwin May Resource Center Sign

By Tamara Ward

On Saturday, December 10th the Peninsula-Delaware Conference honored Bishop Felton Edwin May in a dedication ceremony for the renaming of the Resource Center in Dover, Delaware in his name.

It is a pleasure to be able to recognize Bishop May in our conference because of his significant work in our midst from the time of his coming to be on the staff of the Methodist Action Program (MAP) to his election as a bishop in 1984. Following his years at MAP, he went on to serve as Senior Pastor of the Ezion-Mt. Carmel UMC, uniting the formerly separate congregations of Ezion and Mt. Carmel and constructing a beautiful new church facility at 8th and Walnut Streets in Wilmington, Delaware. He subsequently became Superintendent of the Easton District and then served as the Conference Council Director from 1981 until his election to the episcopacy.

The celebration included remarks from Bishop Marcus Matthews, Dr. J.T. Seymour, Director of Connectional Ministries, and Rev. Richard C. Stazesky. Other participants included Dr. Sandra Steiner Ball, Dover District Superintendent, Mrs. Betty Gooch, Associate Conference Lay Leader and musical selections from Frances and Grover Johnson and Jean Sarg.

Rev. Stazesky told the participants that he was the one that contacted Bishop May while he was serving in Chicago and offered him a position with the conference "about 38 years ago." He closed his remarks by saying that Bishop May "honor(s) us by allowing us to have your name on this building." Bishop Matthews said that by "honoring him today, we honor not just the individual but we honor his ministry that he has given of himself in so many ways."

Bishop May was very honored and gave all glory to God for his accomplishments and gave praise to his wife, Phyllis, who joined him in this honor. When accepting the position in the conference he said that they had a "feeling that God had something for us to do." He went on to say "I am what I am and have done what I've done because I just could not help myself. Christ is in you, the hope of glory. Christ is in me, the hope of glory. Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit . . . thank you so very much."

Bishop and Mrs. May retired from the Baltimore-Washington Conference and the episcopacy in 2004 and reside in the Arizona area where he currently serves as the Dean of the Harry R. Kendall Science and Health Mission Center at Philander Smith College in Little Rock.



Welcome to
Our Sacred Space
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Bishop Felton Edwin May and Bishop Marcus Matthews stand near the new office sign.



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Resource Center
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Bishop May and Bishop Matthews share a word prior to the dedication ceremony.



Camping & Retreat
Ministries
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Bishop May and his wife, Mrs. Phyllis May, along with Bishop Matthews and Dr. J.T. Seymour participate in the dedication ceremony.

Vision Statement

The Peninsula-Delaware Conference, as the body of Christ, will live out the ministry and teaching of Jesus Christ – boldly, cooperatively, and inclusively – through life-changing communities of compassion.



Grover Johnson, Jean Sarg and Frances Johnson perform a selection during the ceremony.



Bill and Ginny Durant chat with Bishop Felton Edwin May, Mrs. May and Rev. Elaine Ayres.



Rev. Richard Stazesky shares with the participants Bishop May's 'first days' after coming to the Peninsula-Delaware Conference.



Bishop May thanks the conference and others for the honor of naming the Resource Center for him.

Welcome to Our Sacred Space

Read Luke 2:22-40

For all of you that find yourselves getting over the Christmas celebrations, too many meals, gift giving and receiving, special worship services, crowded stores and putting up and taking down Christmas decorations, etc., we can exhale now. Thanks be to God we've entered 2006.

Now I can imagine some of you thinking, "What's so great about a new year?" When we read the newspaper or watch television, go to our church services, or spend time chatting with our friends, it seems like nothing has changed. We still have wars and rumors of war. People are still unemployed, homeless, and hungry. Our prisons are crowded and violence is everywhere. Our medical facilities are developing new medicines and people are concerned about health cost. Most of our church services still have a magic starting and stopping hour and we continue to have the same smile, and same conversations with family and friends who mostly look like us, think like us, and act like us. Soon the preparations for Ash Wednesday, the Lenten season, Holy Week and Easter will begin. The predictable routine of the church will continue, like the routine of those in the government, the workplace, and the schools. To add to the mix it's time to file taxes.

Yet, on January 6, 2006, we celebrated the Epiphany of the Lord and for the next weeks we will be reminded of God revealing God's self to us in Jesus of Nazareth. It is the time between Christmas and Lent when we find that our expectations of a risen savior are real. It's the time to rejoice in the reality of Immanuel, God with us. It's an opportunity to say to self and others when we or they have



Rev. Elaine B. Ayres

an "AHA" moment, **THAT'S GOD**. It is a special time that prepares us to hear the call to discipleship and gives us hope for the future and strengthens our faith. It makes us aware of the assurances of the promises of God when nothing seems to change or gets worse. We are called to expect God's presence, experience, receive and respond to God's spirit living in us, around us, and through us and others in the midst of ordinary and extraordinary times.

Wow, for me it's beginning a New Year, and new month, with new eyes, ears, hands and heart, welcoming new starts, possibilities, and challenges. While knowing that God has shown and continues to show God's love for us in our risen savior Jesus Christ. Like Simeon and Anna, who believed and expected to see the savior to come into the world, may we continue to believe and expect to see God's grace, love joy and peace be in our life, in the lives of others, and in the world.

May God bless and gift you with priceless **THAT'S GOD** moments throughout the year especially when you need them the most.

Shalom,
Elaine

UMCOR Offers New Calendar for 2006

The United Methodist Committee on Relief is introducing a new inspirational resource, the UMCOR 2006 calendar, Harvest of Hope. This 13-month calendar and CD highlight UMCOR's work in the US and around the world through rich photography, inspiring vignettes, and special holidays in the calendar, as well as a slideshow presentation, printable bulletin inserts, and a screensaver on the CD. You can learn more about the calendar and see some of its images at: <http://gbgm-umc.org/umcor/print/calendar.html>.

As you turn the calendar's pages you will encounter programs that sow seeds of mercy and compassion and reap a harvest of hope. UMCOR bears witness to the gospel of Jesus through programs that address hunger, poverty, sustainable agriculture, international and domestic emergencies, refugee and immigrant concerns, global health issues, and transitional development.

The calendar and CD are available through the General Board of Global Ministries' service center and online E-Store for just \$10. If you would like to order your copy of the calendar online, go to the GBGM E-Store at <http://gbgm-umc.org/e-store> and type "calendar" in the search field. To order by phone, call the Service Center directly at 1.800.305.9857.

From Your Wesley College Chaplain

Today (January 4th) I took the ornaments off of the Chapel's Christmas tree. I love Christmas trees so it is always bittersweet to take them down. I miss them but then I can now look forward to their return. So now I am looking forward to the next semester here at the College as the students return for the beginning of classes on January 9th. On the 14th we have our Winter Commencement. We will celebrate and say good-bye to some of our students — another bittersweet moment. Wednesday Worship at Wesley starts up on January 25th and I am excited that our "kick-off" will be Christian worship in the Native American tradition! It will be led by our very own Ragghi Calentine, Boe Harris, and Odette Wright. This will be an eye-opener for our Wesley College community. You are all welcome to come to the Chapel on the corner of Division and Bradford Streets that Wednesday (or any Wednesday!). Wednesday Worship at Wesley begins usually at 12:15 and ends at 12:50 but you might want to come a little earlier. I'm not sure what Boe, Ragghi and Odette have in store for us.

Another treat for us in worship will be on March 8th. The Bethune-Cookman Gospel Choir will be singing for us for our Wednesday Worship at Wesley. Bethune-Cookman is a United Methodist-related school in Daytona Beach, Florida. We are blessed that the Inspirational Choir is able to fit us into their

tour itinerary. They will really raise the roof! I know our own Gospel Choir will be inspired. Once again, you are welcome to come but come early! This service will be from 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

There will be many other things: I'm eager to get our pick-a-scripture study going once again and to see how that pans out. A service trip to the Gulf over spring break is a long shot now but still a possibility; and after the semester ends we will head south to Birmingham, Alabama for our service project/Civil Rights educational trip. I'm hoping more people will join our veterans from last year. So the semester will be over before we know it, if it is anything like last semester. We will have our spring commencement and celebrate and say goodbye once again. But before you know it, it will be fall and time to get out the Christmas ornaments once again!



Mark Pruett-Barnett

Your Brother in Christ
Mark

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Camping And Retreat Ministry



Pecometh's South African Connection

Pecometh's summer program has recruited international staff for decades. The sharing of cultures is an important part of both the camper and staff experience. In the past several years, South Africa has become a "pipeline" for outstanding summer staff, providing a dozen or more persons every summer. Two of those staff recently returned, one to continue his great contributions to Pecometh's ministry, the other to continue the tradition of cultural exchange.

JuJu Returns

Just about anyone who has been involved with the summer program over the last four summers knows that Julian "JuJu" Pietersen is THE Man. JuJu started as a counselor in the summer of 2002. His leadership skills became quickly evident and he returned in 2003 as the Riverside Program Coordinator. In 2004 and 2005, JuJu served as the Program Assistant, the seasonal staff person responsible for the entire summer program.

JuJu returned home to Cape Town in September, but instead of waiting until next June to return, he came back a month later. JuJu will now be living and working at Pecometh on an 18-month training program designed to give him camp management skills. He will be given many training opportunities and, at the same time, will contribute greatly to the operation of the summer program.

"Camp has been like home to me," said JuJu. "I'm really excited to be a part of the full-time staff and look forward to making even greater contributions to the summer program." JuJu's enthusiastic personality is contagious and has been a hit with campers and staff. His big emphasis this spring will be on recruiting staff and visiting churches to promote camp. You can contact him at 410.556.6900 x128 or juju@pecometh.org if you'd like to schedule a church visit.

A Life-Changing Experience

Joseph Ramathula served as a counselor in 2001, then as Riverside Coordinator in 2002. One of his claims to fame was his brief interview on the Summer Camp promotion video where he shares how his experience at Pecometh led him to change his career path from accounting to teaching. He now serves as a teacher at Durban High School in South Africa.

Joseph recently returned to the US as a leader in the



JuJu Pietersen (left) and Joseph Ramathula play in the Pecometh snow.



The Durban High School basketball team on the Pecometh pier.

first U.S. tour of a South African high school basketball team in the post-apartheid era. The tour was sponsored by AND1, the popular sneaker manufacturer. The team arrived at Thurgood Marshall BWI airport on November 30 and spent two weeks touring the Charlottesville (VA), Northern Virginia and Washington D.C. They visited schools to learn about the US culture, as well as play against their host teams.

After visiting Central High School and touring the AND1 headquarters in Philadelphia, the Durban team arrived at Pecometh on December 13. Pecometh provided free lodging in the 24-bed Talley House. They spent their last seven days using Pecometh as a base, while they competed in Baltimore, went sight-seeing and spent a day volunteering by clearing trails at Pecometh. They even witnessed a light snowfall, a first for most of the team.

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Interfaith Resource Center

VBS Workshop Reminder!

VBS (Vacation Bible School) Workshops are underway. On Saturday, January 28, 2006, the IRC (Interfaith Resource Center) will host its first VBS workshop from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at St. Alban's Episcopal Church, home of the IRC, at 913 Wilson Road in Wilmington, DE. An additional workshop is planned for Saturday, February 11, 2006 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Wesley United Methodist Church, 209 South State Street in Dover. Madeline Beall, the conference representative for Cokesbury, will be at each workshop to demonstrate the Cokesbury programs and offer significant discounts as part of the VBS Value Days. I will overview the wide range of other programs available. If you haven't signed up yet, please call the IRC at 302.477.0910 or toll-free at 1.800.336.6152. The cost is \$5 per person or \$10 for 3 persons from one church.

New study kits and videos at the IRC

Women's circles or Bible studies are a mainstay of many Christian education programs in area churches. In 2003 Abingdon Press began publishing the "Sisters Bible Study for Women" series, six-week studies targeted to women's faith concerns. The IRC has maintained the earliest study programs, **Knowing God** and **Finding Balance**, for well over a year. They have proved to be very popular. Recently we have added their newest entries into this series. **A Mile in Her Shoes** is a study of



Paula Hartzell

the Old Testament. **Wising Up** examines the book of Proverbs. All these kits are available in either DVD or VHS format. Cokesbury sells individual participant's workbooks and leader's guides to facilitate group discussion.

Theologians Under Hitler is a 64-minute DVD exploring the lives and thoughts of 3 great Christian theologians who embraced the Nazi Party in Germany and who became, by word, supporters of the Holocaust. Paul Althaus, Emanuel Hirsch, and Gerhard Kittel all fell under Hitler's spell, and Kittel actually worked for the Nazis to find a "moral" rationale for Hitler's final solution. This is a must-see video for those concerned about the separation of church and state. Special segments include an interview with a confessing pastor and a tour of an archive holding baptismal records used to search out Christians of non-Aryan descent.

Bioethics and the Book of Life is an extensive examination

of the moral and ethical questions related to the recent scientific advances in bioethics. Segments include the mapping of the human genome, stem cell research, and human cloning. Produced by Religion & Ethics Newsweekly, it includes a study guide with bibliography.

The Changing Face of the African American Church: Ministry to Young Adults is a DVD produced by the Presbyterian Church (USA) focusing on the challenges of building relationships between African American young adults and members of African American congregations. While developed for the Presbyterian Church, the material in this program would be helpful for all those in mainline churches seeking to enhance their relationship with young adults of color.

Living the Vision: Becoming a Multicultural Church is a DVD in English with Spanish open-captions and Korean subtitles, which examines at the topic of the multicultural nation and the opportunity for witness. Produced by the Presbyterian Church (USA), it contains insights relevant to all mainline denominations. The program contains 3 segments approximately 15 minutes in length and is supported by a study guide.

For these or any materials and resources that you may need for your study groups, Sunday school classes, etc., please contact the Interfaith Resource Center at 302.477.0910, toll-free 1.800.336.6152, e-mail us at resource.ctr@dol.net or visit our website at www.interfaithresourcecenter.com.

Health Ministries

2006 — Better Health for the New Year No Resolutions Needed!

By Ann Murphy

Oh, the New Year, a fresh start. It is the time for resolutions. A time to hope for the best again, or maybe for the first time.

But it seems that resolutions often don't work. New Years resolutions tend to arise from negative perceptions of ourselves. We need to be thinner, more attractive, more active, more involved, more better! We tend to drop these resolutions quickly because they are a reminder of how inadequate we are.

Perhaps we should consider a different approach. Instead of making resolutions based upon negativity, we should take a more positive and spiritually centered approach to improving our health:

- Think of an activity that nurtures or boosts the mental, physical and spiritual aspects of your health. These could be things such as adding more fruit or whole grains to your diet, reading the comics each day, working crossword puzzles, walking, stretching, praying or meditating, reading the Bible, or listening to music
- Write these activities down and place them in a location where

you will see them regularly. Be creative — there are more places than just the refrigerator. How about in your PDA, on your computer desktop or propped up on the bedside table.

- Include these activities in prayer. Ask God to help you help yourself to add more of these activities to your daily routine.
- Be realistic. You want a little challenge — you don't want to set yourself up for failure. You may want to start with just one activity and add new ones as the year unfolds.
- Tell a friend or family member, maybe over a cup of tea. (green tea of course)
- Read your activities list regularly. It's easy to forget.
- Be patient with yourself. Change takes time.
- Be willing to start again — more than once. Don't be discouraged because tomorrow is always another day.

By adding a few activities to your routine you may soon find yourself on the road to better physical, mental and spiritual health. And you didn't make a single New Years resolution (not really). Improving our health and well-being is a journey, for most us one that is lifelong. Let's remember, all our days and activities

Legendary Family Singers Coming to the Easton District

By June Clark,
Event Chairperson

Centreville United Methodist Church (along with Centreville National Bank) will be sponsoring a concert featuring the Blackwoods, a family gospel group from Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. The concert will be held on Saturday, February 11th, 2006 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Todd Performing Arts Center on the campus of Chesapeake College in Wye Mills.

The Blackwoods are a legendary family that have won 8 Grammy Awards, 27 Dove Awards, and 5 all American Music Awards. Elvis, The Statler Brothers, and The Oak

Ridge Boys are among the roll call of stars who have said the Blackwood Brothers inspired them to sing. They have appeared on numerous TV music shows and currently are appearing live in the all-new Blackwood Brothers Breakfast Show at the Black Bear Jamboree in the beautiful Smokey Mountains of Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.

We invite you to join us for this extraordinary concert experience. Tickets are \$21.00 and may be purchased through the box office by calling 410.827.5867. Proceeds will benefit the Centreville United Methodist Church Building Fund.

For further information or if you have questions, please call the church office at 410.758.0868.

Camping

Continued from page 4

Hold Those Dates

Don't forget Pecometh's 60th Anniversary the weekend of July 14-16, 2006. The weekend will include many opportunities to visit with long-time friends, enjoy old and new camp activities and get caught up with the goings-on at Pecometh. The high point in the weekend will occur on the evening of Saturday, July 15, when the Charlie Barton Rec Hall, which has been recently renovated, will be re-dedicated. The re-dedication will be followed by a special Galilean service in the Outdoor Chapel, with Bishop Marcus Matthews preaching. Make sure to set aside this time to come and celebrate the life-changing ministry of Pecometh. Details on lodging and food options will be provided by late winter.

Conference Calendar of Events

January 2006

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|-------|--|----|
| 26 | Annual Conference Sessions Meeting, Wesley College: Malmberg Hall, 114, 6:30 p.m. | |
| | Black Methodist Preachers Meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 12:00 p.m. | 16 |
| 27-29 | African-American Clergy Mini-Convocation, Ocean City, MD: Grand Hotel, 7:00 p.m. | 20 |
| | | 21 |

February 2006

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| 1 | UMCOR Interest-Ministry of Caring, Wilmington: St. Paul's UMC, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. | |
| 2 | Resource Development and Management Team meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 9:30 a.m. | |
| | Leadership Development Resource Team Meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 7:00 p.m. | |
| 4 | Board of Stewards Meeting, Camp Pecometh, 9:30 a.m. | |
| | Hispanic Task Force Module I, Bethesda UMC in Middletown, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. | 23 |
| 13 | Peninsula United Methodist Homes Meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. | 28 |
| | CARE Team Meeting, BFEM Resource | |

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|--|---|--|
| | Center, 10:00 a.m. | |
| | Credit Union Annual Meeting, Dover: Whatcoat UMC, 11:45 a.m. | |
| | Health & Welfare Task Force Meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 10:00 a.m. | |
| | BFEM Resource Center, Closed - President's Day | |
| | Council on Finance & Administration Meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 9:30 a.m. | |
| | Equitable Compensation Meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 1:00 p.m. | |
| | Insurance Committee Meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 3:00 p.m. | |
| | Investment Committee Meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 3:00 p.m. | |
| | Advocacy Resource Team Meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 3:00 p.m. | |
| | Board of Pensions Meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 5:00 p.m. | |
| | Annual Conference Sessions Meeting, Wesley College Rm. # 206, 6:30 p.m. | |
| | Bishop's Lenten Day Apart, Wilmington: Aldersgate UMC | |
| | Conference United Methodist Men Meeting, BFEM Resource Center, 7:15 p.m. | |

A Brief History of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

by Sr. Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA,
Associate Director
Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute,
New York, NY

A worldwide observance, the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity began in the Episcopal Church in 1908 at Graymoor, in New York's Hudson Valley. Ten years earlier Paul James Wattson, a priest of the Episcopal Church, co-founded the Franciscan religious congregations comprising the Society of the Atonement at Graymoor with Lurana Mary White, also an Episcopalian. Wattson was a vigorous advocate of Anglican and Roman Catholic reunion, and he emphasized the role of the papacy in the reunion of Christians.

Fr. Wattson had few supporters in his church. One of them was the Rev. Spencer Jones, a rector of the Church of England, and noted catechetical author. In 1907 Jones suggested to Wattson that a day of prayer for Christian unity should be observed throughout the world every year on the Feast of St. Peter (June 29). Fr. Wattson liked the idea but recommended a "Church Unity Week" beginning on the Feast of the Chair of Peter (at that time January 18) and ending on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul (January 25).

First observed in 1908, Church Unity Week was eventually called the "Church Unity Octave" by Fr. Wattson, since there were eight days between the two feasts. The following year the members of the Society of the Atonement were corporately received into the Roman Catholic Church. As part of their commitment to pray and minister for the fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus 'that all may be one', the Friars and Sisters of the Atonement continued promoting the Church Unity Octave. Meanwhile, the Faith and Order movement expressed interest in common Christian prayer for unity and in 1926 published "Suggestions for an Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity," proposing that more Christian churches pray together for unity. In the 1930s Wattson changed the name "Church Unity Octave" to the "Chair of Unity Octave," emphasizing the role of the papacy in the union of the Christian churches. In 1935 Abbé Paul Couturier, a Catholic priest in France, advocated a "Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" during which Christians would pray together 'for the unity Christ wills by the means He wills'. Common Christian prayer for unity continued to grow throughout the world.

With the Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965, an increasing number of Roman Catholics joined other Christians each year in January for common prayer for unity. The council's Decree on Ecumenism, promulgated in 1964, called prayer the soul of the ecumenical movement and encouraged the observance of what is now known as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In 1966, the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Vatican Secretariat (now Council) for Promoting Christian Unity began collaborating on a common international text for worldwide usage. Since 1968 these international texts, which are based on themes proposed by ecumenical groups throughout the world, have been developed, adapted and published for use in the United States by the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute. To assist in this endeavor, the GEII invites contributions from ecumenists and church leaders in America.

By 1991 an observance called Ecumenical Sunday had also become fully integrated into the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. It began as a response to local councils of churches which hoped to find a common Sunday when local churches might interpret to their members the meaning and work of the ecumenical movement.

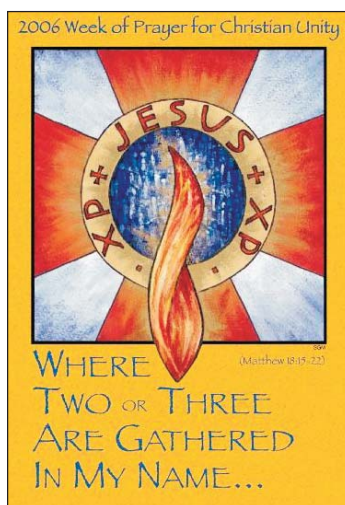
In 1983, the National Council of Churches' Governing Board urged their member communions to name such a Sunday. Eventually, conversations among organizers of the Week of Prayer and representatives of the NCC and local councils led to placing Ecumenical Sunday within the Week of Prayer context.

Each year the theme and texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity are initially prepared by an international group whose members are appointed by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The international committee preparing the Week of Prayer resources divides into two working language groups, French and English. Based on the texts of these groups, the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute prepares the present resources for the observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in the United States.

This year's materials were prepared by the churches in Ireland. Those responsible for preparing the first draft of this year's Week of Prayer materials were conscious of the rich spiritual heritage of Ireland with roots in ancient Christianity and thus shared by all Christian traditions. They were equally conscious that the Christian churches have been caught up and ensnared in the conflicts and tensions which have shaped Irish life in past centuries. There are deep wounds that have been caused or made more painful by Christian divisions. Over the past twenty-five years the draft texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared in Ireland, against the backdrop of a decreasing level of violence and an increased hope for a Christ-filled peace. Conscious of Ireland's rich but complex history, this year's source group had several reasons for choosing Matthew 18:15-22, "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (v. 20), as the biblical text and theme for the 2006 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Firstly, they wished to draw attention to Jesus as the source of our unity, emphasizing that he has already shown us the way to be instruments of the unity which God desires for us. Secondly, while hopes often rise and

fall in relation to larger gestures and initiatives for peace, the members of the source group wished to draw attention to the simplicity of two or three coming together in Christian mutual love as a vital means of building up relations between divided peoples and communities. It is often the case that small gatherings, local relations and friendships can have a powerful impetus in creating a spirit of peace and reconciliation. Many experiences in Ireland's recent history bear witness to this. Thirdly, the drafters were mindful that peace and reconciliation in the present as well as hope for the future necessarily involve dealing with painful memories and

hurtful grievances of the past. Christian discipleship compels us to assist in finding constructive ways of dealing with past wounds and giving common witness in seeking and choosing paths leading to reconciliation. It is in that spirit that all Christians who use these Week of Prayer resources are encouraged to come together in Jesus' name, in prayer and in mutual love to seek to understand each other amidst differences. We can then become ever more powerful signs of reconciliation and witnesses to the healing presence of Christ's love. To this end, Graymoor's planning committee crafted the following wording as the textual theme for the observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in the USA: "Where two or three are gathered in my name..." (Matthew 18:20). The features provided in this year's resources thus intend to evoke a sustained reflection on Jesus' invitation to gather in his name and on the meaning such gathering holds for the unity of the church and the renewal of the human community.



Una Breve Historia de la Semana de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana

por la Hermana Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA,
Directora Asociada, Instituto Ecuménico &
Interreligioso de Graymoor, New York, NY

La celebración mundial anual de la Semana de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana comenzó en la Iglesia Episcopal en el año 1908 en Graymoor, Valle del Río Hudson en el Estado de Nueva York. Diez años antes, Paul James Wattson, un sacerdote de la Iglesia Episcopal, co-fundó las congregaciones Franciscanas que forman la Sociedad de la Reconciliación, en Graymoor con Lurana Mary White, también Episcopal. Wattson fue un vigoroso defensor de la unión de las iglesias Anglicana y Católica Romana, y enfatizaba el rol del papado en la unión de los cristianos.

El Padre Wattson tenía a pocos que lo apoyaban en su iglesia. Uno era el Reverendo Spencer Jones, rector de la Iglesia de Inglaterra, y conocido autor catequético. En 1907 el Padre Jones le sugirió al Padre Wattson que debería ser observado un día de oración por la unidad cristiana todos los años en el mundo entero en la Fiesta de San Pedro (29 de junio). Al Padre Wattson le gustó la idea, pero recomendó más bien una "Semana de Unidad Cristiana" comenzando en la Fiesta de la Cátedra de Pedro (la cual era entonces, el 18 de enero) y terminando en la Fiesta de la Conversión de San Pablo (25 de enero).

Celebrada por primera vez en 1908, la Semana de Unidad de la Iglesia eventualmente fue llamada "La Octava de Unidad de la Iglesia" por el Padre Wattson ya que había ocho días entre las dos fiestas. Al siguiente año los miembros de la Sociedad de Reconciliación fueron incorporados por la Iglesia Católica Romana. Como parte de su compromiso de orar y trabajar por el cumplimiento de la oración de Jesús 'que todos sean uno', los Frailes y Hermanas de la Reconciliación continuaron promoviendo la Octava de la Unidad de la Iglesia. Mientras tanto, el movimiento Fe y Orden expresó su interés en la oración común entre cristianos, y en 1926 publicó "Sugerencias para la Octava de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana," proponiendo que más iglesias cristianas oraran juntas por la unidad. En 1930 el Padre Wattson le cambió el nombre de "Octava de Unidad de la Iglesia" a "Octava de la Cátedra de Unidad," enfatizando el rol del papado en la unidad de las iglesias cristianas. En 1935 el Abad Paul Couturier, un sacerdote Católico en Francia, abogó por una "Semana Universal de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana" durante la cual los cristianos orarían juntos 'por la unidad que Cristo desea por el medio que Él quiere'. La oración común cristiana por la unidad continuó creciendo a través del mundo entero.

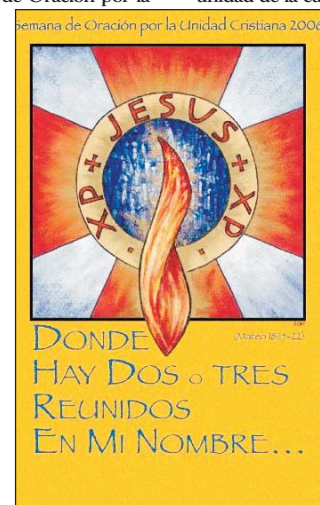
Con el Concilio Vaticano Segundo, 1962-1965, un creciente número de Católicos Romanos se unían a otros cristianos cada año en enero para orar en común por la unidad. El Decreto del consejo sobre el movimiento Ecuménico, promulgado en 1964, declaró que la oración es el alma del movimiento ecuménico, y animó a la celebración de lo que ahora se conoce como la Semana de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana. En 1966, la Comisión de Fe y Orden del Consejo Mundial de las Iglesias y el Secretariado del Vaticano (ahora Consejo) para la Promoción de la Unidad Cristiana comenzaron a colaborar en la elaboración de un texto internacional que se usaría comúnmente en todo el mundo. Desde 1968 estos textos internacionales, basados en temas propuestos por grupos ecuménicos alrededor del mundo, han sido desarrollados, adaptados y publicados para uso en los Estados Unidos por el Instituto Ecuménico e Interreligioso de Graymoor, el cual invita a contribuciones de ecuménicos y líderes de las iglesias en América.

Ya para el 1991 la celebración llamada Domingo Ecuménico había sido completamente integrada a la Semana de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana. Comenzó como una respuesta a los consejos de las iglesias locales los cuales esperaban contar con un domingo en común donde las iglesias pudieran explicar a sus miembros el significado y la labor del movimiento ecuménico. En 1983, la Junta Gobernante del Consejo Nacional de Iglesias exhortó a sus iglesias participantes a que

nombraran tal domingo. Eventualmente, conversaciones entre los organizadores de la Semana de Oración y representantes del Consejo Nacional de Iglesias y de los consejos de las iglesias locales condujeron a la ubicación del Domingo Ecuménico dentro del contexto de la Semana de Oración. En los años en que el programa de la Semana de Oración incluye dos domingos, el segundo es designado como el Domingo Ecuménico.

Cada año el tema y los textos para la Semana de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana son inicialmente preparados por un grupo internacional cuyos miembros son seleccionados por la Comisión de Fe y Orden, del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, y el Consejo Pontificio para la Promoción de la Unidad Cristiana. El Comité Internacional encargado de preparar los recursos para la Semana de Oración se divide en dos grupos por idioma, el Francés y el Inglés. Basados en los textos de estos grupos, el Instituto Ecuménico e Interreligioso de Graymoor prepara los recursos para la celebración de la Semana de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana en los Estados Unidos.

Los materiales para este año fueron preparados por las iglesias en Irlanda. Los responsables de preparar el primer bosquejo de los materiales para la semana de oración de este año estaban conscientes de la rica herencia espiritual de Irlanda con raíces en el cristianismo antiguo y así compartidas por todas las tradiciones cristianas. Erán igualmente conscientes de que las iglesias cristianas se habían involucrado y atrapado en los conflictos y las tensiones que han formado la vida irlandesa durante los siglos anteriores. Hay heridas profundas que han sido causadas o hechas más dolorosas por las divisiones cristianas. Durante los últimos veinticinco años los borradores de texto para la Semana de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana han estado preparados en Irlanda, en un ambiente de violencia aminorada y de esperanza creciente para una paz llena de Cristo. Consciente de la rica pero compleja historia de Irlanda, el grupo de origen de este año tenía varias razones para escoger (Mateo 18:15-22) "donde hay dos o tres reunidos en mi nombre, ahí estoy yo en medio de ellos" (v. 20), como el texto y el tema bíblico para la Semana de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana del 2006. En primer lugar, deseaban atraer la atención a Jesús como la fuente de nuestra unidad, acentuando que Él ya nos ha demostrado la manera de ser instrumentos de unidad de la cual Dios desea para nosotros. En segun-



do lugar, mientras las esperanzas a menudo suben y bajan con respecto a gestiones e iniciativas mayores para la paz, los miembros del grupo de origen deseaban atraer la atención a la simplicidad de que dos o tres se reúnen en mutuo amor cristiano como un medio vital de construir relaciones entre la gente y las comunidades divididas. Es a menudo el caso que las reuniones pequeñas, las relaciones locales y las amistades pueden tener un ímpetu de gran alcance para crear un espíritu de paz y de reconciliación. Muchas experiencias de recientes hechos históricos en Irlanda atestiguan de esto. En tercer lugar, los redactores tenían presente que la paz y la reconciliación en el momento así como la esperanza del futuro necesariamente implica el ocuparse

de memorias dolorosas y de agravios perjudiciales del pasado. El discípulo cristiano nos obliga a ayudar a encontrar vías constructivas de tratar con las heridas del pasado y a dar testimonio común para buscar y escoger los caminos que conducen a la reconciliación. Es en ese espíritu que se anima a todos los cristianos que utilizan éstos recursos de la Semana de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana a que se reúnan en el nombre de Jesús, en la oración y en el amor mutuo para buscar entenderse en medio de sus diferencias. Entonces podremos ser signos más fuertes de reconciliación y testigos a la presencia curativa del amor de Cristo. Con este fin, el comité de planeamiento de Graymoor desarrolló la siguiente frase como el tema textual para la observancia de la Semana de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana en los E.E.U.U.: "donde hay dos o tres reunidos en mi nombre..." (Mateo 18:20). Los rasgos proporcionados en los recursos de este año entonces intentan invocar a una reflexión sostenida de la invitación de Jesús a unirse en su nombre y en el significado que tal asamblea sostiene para la unidad de la iglesia y de la renovación de la comunidad humana.