

Metropolitan Community Churches

# Around The Fellowship

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**Judy Dale,  
Editor**

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Department

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## EASTER AND HOLY WEEK REPORTS

**Rev. Bruce Barton**, who is organizing an MCC church plant in Chico, California, preached at the First United Methodist Church of Oroville, California, for Palm Sunday and Easter Week services. His spouse of 30 years, former MCC Prison Ministry Chair, **Bruce Harmon**, is a Sunday School teacher there.

**MCC Albuquerque** (New Mexico) created a portable Labyrinth, which they premiered during Holy Week.

On Maundy Thursday, **MCC Melbourne** (Australia) served a meal before they engaged in the liturgy for the evening.

**A Church for Us**, a new MCC group in Sacramento, California, celebrated worship for the first time on Easter Sunday. They also hold Prayer Meetings on Monday nights.

**Rev. Elder Jim Mitulski** spent Easter with the congregation at **MCC Topeka** (Kansas).

The congregation at **Living Springs MCC** (Bath, England) filled mini egg tubes -- once they had devoured their contents! -- with coins throughout Lent. The church used the funds to purchase a new worship hanging.

More than 200 children, some with HIV/AIDS, received Easter baskets filled with gifts from congregants at **Sunshine Cathedral MCC** (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida).

An Easter Garden enveloped the altar at **First MCC** (Atlanta, Georgia) with Easter lilies and other flowers given in honor or memory of loved ones. They also requested that congregants place \$2 USD each day

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Deadline is the 15th of each month.

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during Lent into their God First banks, making Easter a Miracle Sunday.

The children at **Divine Peace MCC** (Pontiac, Michigan) were joined by children from the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency for an Easter egg hunt, prizes, lunch, and a visit from the Easter Bunny!

**Rev. Elder Glenna Shepherd** preached the Palm Sunday service at **Good Hope MCC** (Cape Town, South Africa).

The **Christ Chapel MCC** Actors (Santa Ana, California) had their first performance on Palm Sunday. They interpreted four scenes from Jesus' last week in Jerusalem. The group of seven members wrote their own biblically based scripts and created the props and costumes for the production.

**MCC Hartford** (Connecticut) joined with the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Holy Week Services, some in English and some in Spanish.

As an Easter gift, **MCC San Jose** (California) helped the Billy DeFrank Center open a room for LGBT youth, filling it with supplies and furniture.

**Casa de Luz ICM** (Monterrey, Mexico) held a retreat during Holy Week at their church, offering several activities each day, including prayer and meditation, workshops, talks, and discussions. English translators were available for non-Spanish speaking participants.

**Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson** celebrated Easter morning with **Spirit of Life MCC** (New Port Richey, Florida). She had previously preached at **Sunshine Cathedral MCC** (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida) on Palm Sunday.

Sleeping bags filled with hats, socks, and gloves were collected by the folks at **Healing Spirit MCC** (Rochester, Minnesota) and given to the homeless on Easter Sunday.

Rabbi Sheldon Pennes shared reflections on Passover with the congregation of **City of Angels MCC** (California).

Under the guidance of **Audrey Chmura**, the folks at **Holy Covenant MCC** (Brookfield, Illinois) learned how to make tamales, which were then served at their Maundy Thursday dinner. On Good Friday, the congregation joined with three local Methodist churches for an ecumenical worship service.

Over a ton? Yes, **MCC of the Coachella Valley** (Cathedral City, California) used over a ton of Easter candy to fill 900 baskets for the neediest children in the valley. Their assembly line filled six baskets a minute!

**Rev. Delores Berry** and **Judy Kiser** ministered at **MCC Knoxville** (Tennessee) during Easter weekend.

**MCC Newcastle** (England) hosted a special event each evening

of Holy Week, including study groups, a Prayer Party, and a Film Evening, during which they showed the *Manchester Passion*, a modern version of the Passion Play. They also shared in a joint Maundy Thursday service with St. James United Reform Church.

**ICM Los Angeles** (California) presented their highly acclaimed *Passion Play* in Spanish, along with English subtitles so that others could participate in worship with them.

Five hundred stuffed bunnies were donated by folks at **MCC in the Valley** (North Hollywood, California) to three missions in the Skid Row area of Los Angeles.

The Deacons at **MCC Omaha** (Nebraska) led in a contemporary Seder meal and worship on Maundy Thursday .



#### SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL CHURCHS AND LEADERS

**Nuevo Espiritu ICM** (Santiago, Chile) is working with college youth in Osomo, a town in southern Chile, to establish a new ICM. The youth are committed to MCC's mission. **Ximena Moreno** and her partner **Sandra** lead the group from Santiago. Establishing this new church has been the dream of **Tere/Franco**, a transperson in process from Tere to Franco, according to **Patricio Le Beuffe**, Nuevo Espiritu ICM's pastoral leader.

**Rev. Sherry Poepsel** led *The Five Languages of Apology* workshop at **MCC Albuquerque** (New Mexico) last month. It helped participants to better formulate their own apologies and to understand those of other people.

February was LGBT History month in the United Kingdom. **MCC Edinburgh** (Scotland) held special events throughout the month in Edinburgh, and as part of the church's outreach to Glasgow and Inverness. An enlightening review of their activities (including photographs) can be found at <http://mccedinburgh.com/historymonthreview.html>.

**David Norton**, a member of **MCC of the Coachella Valley** (Cathedral City, California), is currently displaying his figure studies from the past 20 years at an Art Show at the Desert Pride Center.

**MCC New York** (New York) was featured as *New Yorker of the Week* by NY1 News Channel. A two minute story about MCCNY's programs and charities ran on the station all weekend.

The recent Scholars' Conference at Emory University on the future of LGBT Theology was hosted by **Mark Jordan**. Other MCC participants were **Rev. Drs. Bob Goss, Mona West, and Penny Nixon** and **Rev. Elder Jim Mitulski**.

**MCC Auckland** (Aotearoa/New Zealand) participated in the city's Big Gay Out Day, which was opened by Helen Clark, the Prime Minister. They passed out leaflets about MCC and held a joint worship service with Auckland Community Church. **Rev. Leigh Neighbour** and **Denny** assisted with the New Zealand AIDS quilt exhibit and were interviewed on TV.

MCC has established a new group, the **People of African Descent (PAD) Advisory Council**. Their purpose is to work with local churches, as well as all committees, councils and boards of MCC, to develop and implement strategies and programs to reach, respect, and incorporate people of African descent at all levels of MCC. Serving on the PAD Council are **Rev. Delores Berry, Rev. Belva Boone, Rev. Doretha Fournoy, Rev. Elder Darlene Garner, Vickey Gibbs, Rev. Robert Griffin, Rev. Candy Holmes, Barry Hundley, Denise Junious, Rev. Tracye Ruffin, and Rev. Roland Stringfellow**. Collectively, the members have almost 200 years of MCC experience!

**Rev. Elder Ken Martin** visited with the friends and members of **MCC Sydney** (Australia) before Easter.

**Rev. Vicky Kowalski** has been nominated as a Community Grand Marshal for the San Francisco Pride Parade this year.

**FirstCoast MCC** (St. Augustine, Florida) celebrated St. Patrick's Day by welcoming **Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson**, their special guest for the weekend, and **Rev. Ruth Jensen**, their Pastor who had just returned from sabbatical. They had a Luncheon on the Grounds -- and even their pets were included in the event! **Dr. Paula Schoenwether**, Rev. Wilson's spouse, was there to take professional portraits of the "children."

**Leisl Theron** was honored by the Triangle Project for giving up her career to serve the transgender community fulltime without funding. She is a member of the Church Council at **Good Hope MCC** (Cape Town, South Africa).

**Harvest MCC** (Denton, Texas) has Lay Chaplains, under the direction of Diedre Bradford. They are assigned to both new worshippers and long-time members, and are available to discuss issues ranging from family to faith.

**Rev. Elder Don Eastman** lead a workshop at **MCC San Diego** (California) to help them achieve their church's priorities, which were established by the congregation through surveys and activities.

Congratulations! **Rev. Jide Macaulay** was named *Man of the Year* by the Black LGBT organization in London, England.

*A Leap of Faith* is the original musical being presented next month at Metropolitan Community Theater, the drama ministry of **MCC of the Coachella Valley** (Cathedral City, California). It will also be

performed at the Sober in the Sun Conference, since it portrays the drama, honesty, stories, laughter, tears, truth, and healing of an AA meeting.

**Rev. Dr. Ana R. Vargas** is the Contract Manager/SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) Liaison for the Aging & Disability Resource Center of Broward County in Southern Florida.

Years ago **MCC Hartford** (Connecticut) donated their library to the Hartford LGBT Center which had the space to house it. The collection has grown to 20,000 volumes. It will now return to MCC Hartford, since the Center is closing. **Dr. Richard Stillson** is facilitating the team transporting the books and **Rev. Julio Flores** will lead a group in cataloging the collection and establishing a lending library.

**Rev. Jane Clarke** of **MCC East London** (England) and her partner **Kate Wood** are completing a feasibility study for a new MCC in **Glasgow, Scotland**.

**Rev. Kristen Claire Foley** participated in the *Love Is Love* event at The College of New Jersey. And on the day that Civil Unions became legal there, she officiated at four services.

*Let Us Arise and Rebuild* is the building campaign theme at **SunCoast Cathedral MCC** (Venice, Florida). Their building was destroyed by black mold following Tropical Storm Gabrielle in 2002, so they converted a garage into a worship space. Now they are ready to rebuild their facility. They were joined by people from other churches and community organizations in reading the Bible in 30 minutes and sowing foundational Scripture seeds on the site.

**Rev. Nancy Horvath-Zurn** spoke recently at a Civitan meeting about the ministry of **Healing Spirit MCC** (Rochester, Minnesota) and provided them with brochures about the church.

**Rev. Brent Hawkes**, Senior Pastor of **MCC Toronto** (Ontario, Canada) was appointed to the Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donation in Ontario. His appointment was attacked by the Religious Right. The Panel conducted 35 forums and another 35 focus groups in various locations and met with world renowned experts. Their recommendations were submitted to the Government.

The sanctuary of **MCC in the Valley** (North Hollywood, California) was one of the locations used in the new film *Sinners*, in which **Gregg Robblee** plays a homophobic fundamentalist minister and was a production assistant. The movie is based on real events.

Leading Queer Theologian **Professor Marcella Althaus-Reid** preached at the concluding semester service at New College, the School of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh (Scotland). **Rev Kerri Mesner**, Pastor of **MCC Edinburgh**, presided at Communion, the first time an MCC clergyperson has participated in a worship service there. Professor Althaus-Reid attends MCC

Edinburgh and previously attended ICM in her native Argentina. She is the author of books such as *Indecent Theology* and *The Queer God*.

 **CHILDREN, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS**

A team at **Imago Dei MCC** (Glen Mills, Pennsylvania) is converting a storage room into a safe and colorful environment for infants and toddlers in the prayerful hope of reinstating a Children's Ministry.

Working with LBGT youth outside the church is an important part of the lives of several in the United Kingdom. **Dave Kinnen** of **Journey MCC** (Birmingham, England) sponsors a student group at his high school in Coventry, the only high school-based Gay/Straight Alliance in his city and perhaps in all of the UK. **Sharon Jordan-Passmore** of **MCC South London** leads Let Me Out and **Stephen Harte** of **MCC Edinburgh** is on the Board of LBGT Youth Scotland.

**MCC Knoxville** (Tennessee) has 18 children participating in activities during Sunday worship. They are planning to launch a youth ministry soon for their teenagers.

**Sunshine Cathedral MCC** (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida) hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Valuing Our Families Conference, which also had a Leadership Institute for LBGT students and their allies and another for teens with LBGT parents.

 **CREATIVE MNISTRY IDEAS**

**ICM Sao Paulo** (Brazil) has begun a weekly broadcast of the Sunday sermon via the Internet in order to reach thousands of LBGT people in Brazil who do not yet have an ICM near them. A link to this new feature is available through the mission's website at [www.icmsp.org.br](http://www.icmsp.org.br).

Great outreach! Java Joy has doubled in size and will soon exceed 100 participants. Non-churched folks are comfortable in the coffee house atmosphere and are enjoying a monthly evening of homemade soups, breads, coffee, tea, sweets, live music, and a time of meditation and discussion about life issues at **King of Peace MCC** (St. Petersburg, Florida).

**MCC Albuquerque** (New Mexico) hosted a seminar on funeral planning, the legal aspects of cremation, letting your wishes be known, and other related topics.

**Trinity MCC** (Gainesville, Florida) has established an Endowment Fund to assure the implementation of their long range goals. To date \$14,000 USD has been donated.

Let's go kite flying! **Central Texas MCC from the Heart** (Waco) had a casual dress Sunday last month. Everyone brought a sack lunch

and a kite to go enjoy the afternoon together.

Softball teams are popular in MCC for both fun and outreach. Some of the churches who field them are **Open Arms MCC** (Rochester, New York), the MCC Angels of **Christ Covenant MCC** (Decatur, Georgia), and the MCC Mets of **New Creation MCC** (Columbus, Ohio).

**MCC Manchester** (England) has 700 books in their library for congregational use. Individuals may browse the collection on [librarything.com](http://librarything.com) and reserve a book to be picked up on Sunday. The loan fee is £2.

Got a sweet tooth? **MCC Corpus Christi** (Texas) held a Dessert Auction to raise money to send their Pastor and Lay Delegate to General Conference.

Working together! **ICM Nuevos Gentiles** (Valencia, Venezuela) and **Agape MCC** (Ft. Worth, Texas) have created a ministry alliance to support one another, including **Rev. Ken Ehrke**, the MCC pastor, serving as the mentor for **Dr. Luis Andrade**, the ICM Pastoral Leader.

*Tasha's Follies* will return to **Open Door MCC** (Boyd, Maryland) April 27-28.

Dare to Tithe? That's the campaign happening at **Appalachian MCC** (Charleston, West Virginia) this year. They have seen a significant increase both in excitement about and commitment to the church, not to mention the financial boost!

The Elevation Band of **MCC Portland** (Oregon) presented an evening of *Solid Gold Hits from the 70s* as a fundraiser for the church. It was followed by an Angel Auction, services offered by various church members for such things as a dinner for 10, an art consultation, a spa therapy, and spiritual direction.

It's Prom Time! **MCC Omaha** (Nebraska) will host *Taking It to the Top* on April 21 to raise money for their Accessibility Fund.

A group from **Open Arms MCC** (Rochester, New York) is planning a white water rafting trip.

*Makeover Madness 2007: Part Deux* will be held at **MCC San Francisco** (California) April 20. In addition to some individuals receiving a makeover (a previous one was changing **Rev. Charles Tigard** into Tory Spelling!), makeover services will be auctioned by interior designers, makeup artists, attorneys, chefs, life coaches, and other professionals.

Church and Grounds Clean Up Days are popular this time of year in the northern hemisphere, just ask the folks at **Agape MCC** (Ft. Worth, Texas), **Church of the Trinity MCC** (Sarasota, Florida), **MCC Louisville** (Kentucky), **Trinity MCC** (Gainesville, Florida), **Resurrection MCC** (Houston, Texas), and many others!

Dress up in your Sunday best! That's exactly what the congregation of **MCC Newcastle** (England) did on March 11. The reason? They invited friends to come to church with them for a Celebration Service with great cake afterwards. They welcomed in new members and celebrated the history of their church and MCC.

**New Creation MCC** (Columbus, Ohio) has joined with Stonewall Columbus, Outlook Media, Equality Ohio, and Bravo Ohio to present a monthly Personal Financial Education Series for the Central Ohio LGBT Community.

Attract attention! In order to gather signatures to oppose an anti-gay marriage amendment, the folks at **King of Peace MCC** (St. Petersburg, Florida) erected a large wedding arch with a sign "LGBT Do Not Enter."

 **WANNA GO CRUISING?**

How does Cabo San Lucas and Ensenada, Mexico, sound while on Carnival's Elation December 1-6? **MCC San Diego** (California) is sponsoring the cruise with interior staterooms as little as \$379 USD per person. For more information contact **Lyn Malone** at [lyn@mccsd.org](mailto:lyn@mccsd.org).

And here's another alternative: **King of Peace MCC** (St. Petersburg, Florida) is hosting a cruise to the Panama Canal and Costa Rica, September 29 -- October 7 on Carnival's Liberty. Prices start at \$739 USD. [travel@travelbeyond.com](mailto:travel@travelbeyond.com).

 **HERE'S HOW TO "BE A GEM"**

**Rev. Judy Dahl** is leading the "Be A Gem" campaign to help MCCers individuals from around the world with the costs of attending the General Conference and World Jubilee in Scottsdale, Arizona, in July.

**Elder Larry Rodriguez** has already committed to bring in one person; **Rev. Dahl** and her partner, **Carol Wood**, are funding another; and Sunshine Cathedral MCC (Fort Lauderdale, Florida) will underwrite the costs for three people from Jamaica. But that leaves 36 more people who need assistance.

Can you or your church agree to help this endeavor? You can go to [www.MCCchurch.org](http://www.MCCchurch.org) and click on the "Be a GEM" button to make a contribution.

It is so important that we have full participation of all of our churches in our conference. You will be assisting MCCers from Australia, New

Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, Western Europe, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Moldova, Bosnia, Latvia, Nicaragua, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Mexico.

If you can't help financially, but will be at the conference, could you share your room with someone? That would help immensely to lower the \$2000 - \$3000 (USD) per person expense for these individuals.

Rev. Dr. Dusty Pruitt is working with United Airlines to attempt to secure airline miles for MCC from all the travel.

You can do it! Be a GEM!

 **CHECK OUT THESE REMINDERS!**

Nominations for the Lay Ministry Council Awards are due to Vice Chair **Bryan Parker** by May 15. If you need a form or more information, write to [BWParker@aol.com](mailto:BWParker@aol.com).

Church Accessibility Surveys are due to the Disability Forum Team by May 20. They are to be sent to **Mike Gauss** at [bot@stjohnsmcc.org](mailto:bot@stjohnsmcc.org). Churches will be recognized at General Conference based on this information. The surveys were sent to all Pastors, Interim Pastoral Leaders, and Lay Delegates.

Keeping information up to date for the Fellowship is practically a full-time job! You can assist by sending any changes (snail mail, email, phone, etc.) for churches, clergy, and Lay Delegates to Bill Hooper by one of these means: 310-861-4656, [BillHooper@MCCchurch.net](mailto:BillHooper@MCCchurch.net), fax 325-675-8977, or PO Box 1374 Abilene, Texas 79604 USA. Thanks!

 **CAN YOU HELP?**

MCC's new Moderator's Theology Team is looking for a copy of the document produced early in our MCC history by our Faith, Fellowship and Order Commission, entitled "**The Six Questions**." This was an important early theological effort within MCC, using a grassroots input process and a team of editors. Anyone who has a copy, please contact the Moderator at [RevNancyWilson@MCCchurch.net](mailto:RevNancyWilson@MCCchurch.net).

 **TRANSITIONS**

**Rev. Charles Tigard** is serving as the Interim Pastor at **MCC Key West** (Florida). The attendance has increased significantly since his arrival.

**Rev. Robyn Provis** is the new Interim Pastor at **MCC Austin** (Texas).

After nine years of service, **Connie Gilpin** resigned as the Interim Pastoral Leader of **MCC of the Living Spring** (Eureka, Arkansas). The

last few months she had shared the pastoral responsibilities with **Rev. Steve Urie**, who remains as Pastor.

The congregation of **Appalachian MCC** (Charleston, West Virginia) is about to purchase their first building. Their mortgage payments will be less than their monthly rent!

**Open Arms MCC** (Pahoa, Hawai'i) unanimously called **Rev. Elder Debbie Martin** as Pastor. She is commuting for now, being there three Sundays each month and home in California the other two weeks.

**Rev. John Middleton** was installed as Pastor of **Joy MCC** (Orlando, Florida) on April first. **Rev. Elder Lillie Brock** officiated.

**MCC Hartford** (Connecticut) has moved into their new 4000 square foot home, which includes a kitchen and a 300 space parking lot. **Rev. Elder Diane Fisher** blessed the space on a visit there last month.

**Rev. Elder Jim Mitulski** is now living in and working out of Atlanta. He sublet **Rev. Chris Glaser's** home while he is serving as the Interim Pastor at **MCC San Francisco** (California).

**Rev. Lisa Heilig** is the new Interim Pastor at **The Rock MCC** (Chattanooga, Tennessee).

**Sunshine Cathedral MCC** (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida) has begun renovation of their Chancel, including air conditioning, a new organ, and a new steeple. The old one was damaged by Hurricane Wilma. The new one houses a cell tower, which the church is leasing!

**Tessa Lee** is the new Administrative Assistant for Region 4. She is a founding member of **Brightwaves MCC** (Brighton, England).

**MCC Portsmouth** (England) closed at the end of last year. Members are now attending other MCCs in the area. **Rev. Janice Bowker** created Serenity Healing Ministry, offering healing services, training and retreats. She is also employed at a Consultant Chiropractor's Office offering healing and reaching out to the church and unchurched members of the community. She will be traveling to South Africa next month to offer her ministry there.



**Camilo Jose Travieso**, the Coordinator of Culture of **ICM Nuevos Gentiles** (Valencia, Venezuela), died of gunshot wounds suffered in an assault. This is the third loss in less than a year for this small church plant and these deaths have had a huge impact on their community. They request prayers for strength as they deal with this loss. You can express your support by contacting the Interim Pastoral Leader **Luis Andrade** at [arle35@hotmail.com](mailto:arle35@hotmail.com).

**Joseph Shore** and **Rev. Dr. Bob Goss**, Pastor of **MCC in the Valley** (North Hollywood, California), were united in Holy Union on April 13 with **Rev. Elder Troy Perry** officiating. [revbobgoss@sbcglobal.net](mailto:revbobgoss@sbcglobal.net)

**Rev. Mia Andersen** of **MCC Copenhagen** (Denmark) had surgery on her eye.

Condolences to **Rev. Gina Chapman**, Pastor of **Good Samaritan MCC** (Whittier, California), in the passing of her father.  
[GoodSamMCC@aol.com](mailto:GoodSamMCC@aol.com)

**Rev. Kermie Wohlenhaus**, partner of **Rev. Elder Glenna Shepherd**, has been diagnosed with breast cancer. She is remaining in Portland, Oregon, for medical treatment and then will move to their new home in Brighton, England. [KermieK@aol.com](mailto:KermieK@aol.com)

**Rev. Elder Jim Mitulski** lost his uncle earlier this year and **Rev. Candy Holmes** lost her nephew recently. [RevJimMitulski@MCCchurch.net](mailto:RevJimMitulski@MCCchurch.net) and [CandyNotes@aol.com](mailto:CandyNotes@aol.com)

**Rev. June Norris** thanks everyone for their prayers, calls, emails, cards, and other expressions of sympathy and support during the brief illness and death of her daughter **Dixie**. **Rev. Elder Troy Perry** officiated and **Rev. Elder John Gill** participated in her funeral in San Diego on March 25. [RevJuneRN@aol.com](mailto:RevJuneRN@aol.com)

**Rev. Alice Urbanowicz** recently had knee replacement surgery.  
[RevTex123@aol.com](mailto:RevTex123@aol.com)

**Rev. Pat Langlois** is the new Pastor at **MCC Sydney** (Australia). She and her partner Stephanie have not been able to move there yet from **MCC Los Angeles** (California) because of governmental paperwork. However, now there is a joyous delay -- Rev. Pat is pregnant. Rev. Langlois' doctor does not want her to move until the baby is delivered.  
[revpat@mccla.org](mailto:revpat@mccla.org)

**Regen Luna**, Interim Pastoral Leader for **MCC Philippines** (Makati City) had major surgery last month. [regenluna@yahoo.com](mailto:regenluna@yahoo.com)