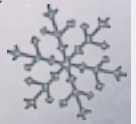




The Community of Hope International



# Connections

Winter 2016

## A letter from the president and founder of Community of Hope:

Since the first Community of Hope class in 1994 one of my greatest blessings is to continue to co-facilitate classes, presently at the church where I serve as assistant priest. Last week at the end of our 14th class as I looked at the 14 men and women, soon to become lay chaplains, one word came to mind: full.

I am full of wonder and joy as the bond of trust and friendship is birthed among us and as I see how full of expectation the class is as they await our retreat and commissioning. They are full of hope as they choose their ministry, their ministry partner and becoming active in Circle of Care.

We share being full of faith as we become a community whose roots inch deeper into the soil of our Oneness in Christ. And we pray that the fullness of our souls be nourished and renewed by daily reading and study of the Rule of St. Benedict.

As we begin our 22nd year I see the fullness of the Holy Spirit, among all of our communities across the land, growing the gifts of humility, hospitality and generosity. My prayer is that the roots of each community will stretch out and strengthen each other through prayer, through coming together at regional gatherings and at the annual Camp Allen conference so that our ministries will abound in God's fullness and grace in ways we are not able to ask or imagine.

*Helen*

The Rev. Dr. Helen Appelberg

## 2015 Community of Hope Challenge Campaign

We did it! We are so delighted to report that we didn't just meet the goal of the 2015 Community of Hope Challenge Campaign! We exceeded it! As of December 31, COHI friends contributed \$15,660 in gifts, which triggers the full \$15,000 match for a total yield of \$30,660.

There are so many to thank, especially our wonderful benefactor. But our most profound gratitude goes to the Community itself and every single donor who answered the challenge with so many equally beautiful and appreciated gifts, from \$10 to \$1000. In all, 96 individuals made gifts from every region.

And every single one of those gifts supports our work of *Ora et Labora*: individual spiritual formation, community building, and sharing with those in need the greatest gifts of all: presence and loving kindness.

Carla Cooper  
COHI Executive Board  
Development Advisor

We welcome these new centers with love and joy!

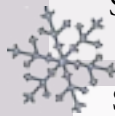


Church of the Incarnation *and* Tombigbee  
Convocation of the Diocese of Mississippi  
West Point, MS



St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Wilmington, NC

St. George's Episcopal Church  
Clifton Park, NY



St. Francis Episcopal Church  
Victoria, TX

Nancy Cook, Regional Director of  
Spiritual Care of Christus Health,  
Southeast Texas, and  
CHRISTUS ST. ELIZABETH HOSPITAL  
Beaumont, Texas  
nancy.cook@christushealth.org



# Community and Love.



Corinthians 13:4-8, NRSV [adapted]



*Love*  
 is patient  
 kind  
 not arrogant  
 not rude  
 does not insist on its own way  
 is not irritable or resentful  
 does not rejoice in wrongdoing  
 rejoices in the truth  
 bears all things  
 believes all things  
 hopes all things  
 endures all things  
 never ends.

Colossians 3:12-17 NRSV [adapted]

as a closing prayer to a COHI Board meeting by Carla Cooper.

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, we shall put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave us, so we also must do. *But above all these things we must put on love, which is the bond of perfection.* And let the peace of God rule in our hearts, to which also we were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. And whatever we do in word or deed, we shall all do in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

## ***Paw Prints on My Soul, A (Puppy) Love Story***

Mike and Deb Gerace had just begun training their two new rescue adoptees for therapy dog work when Deb began looking into interfaith chaplaincy programs in their area. The program that she found was the diocesan-wide COHI training in the Diocese of Atlanta. Deb and Mike were commissioned as COHI lay chaplains in May 2014. They had found a way “to use their therapy dogs in a much deeper capacity.” The dogs made pastoral visits with Deb and Mike. Deb says the “mere presence (of the dogs) encouraged chats, enabling folks who hadn’t opened up in a long time to begin to invest in life again, at least while stroking the dog in their lap and talking to a chaplain trained in ‘listening with the ear of your heart.’”

Deb, a published author, has written a book about pastoral care with the therapy dogs. It is titled “Paw Prints on My Soul, A (Puppy) Love Story”. The book was published through Yawn’s Books & More in Fall, 2015. One of Deb’s previous books, a timely Lenten story for kids entitled “What the Children Saw,” portrays the Crucifixion through the eyes of two adolescents who secretly witnessed it, despite their parents’ knowledge. It has been recommended by The Anglican Digest.

Harmony Kiser, Regional Representative for the Georgia Region of COHI, says, “Deb and Mike and their ministry are just amazing! They are so inspiring and reach so many people. Deb also sings and plays the guitar, and she will be leading the music for our Taizé service, as well as leading our singing of “Here I Am, Lord” at the beginning of the First Annual Georgia Region COHI Conference.



Deb and Mike at their COHI Commissioning



Visiting Jo Hatley on her 103rd birthday.



Visiting Buff Bowen, a Navy veteran.



SEEKING GOD

IN THE RHYTHMS OF LIFE

2016

COHI ANNUAL CONFERENCE

June 6-8 | Camp Allen  
Navasota, TX

Featuring

Michael Casey, OSCO  
and  
Carol Perry, SU

REGISTER NOW  
at campallen.org

## Registration Information!

Online: [www.campallen.org](http://www.campallen.org)  
(Visa/MasterCard)

By Mail:

Camp Allen Conference Center  
18800 FM 362  
Navasota, TX 77668

Rates: (Includes 2 Nights, 7 Meals)

### **Early Bird:**

Double Occupancy - \$250 per person  
Single Occupancy - \$300

### **After May 20th:**

Double Occupancy - \$270 per person  
Single Occupancy - \$320

If flying into IAH, Camp Allen has a shuttle available. Call Heather Lundy at 936.823.7175, ext. 4023 or email [heatherl@campallen.org](mailto:heatherl@campallen.org)



Michael Casey is a Cistercian monk of Tarrawarra Abbey in Australia. He is a well-known retreat master and lecturer on monastic spirituality. Casey is the author of many books, including *Toward God: The Ancient Wisdom of Western Prayer*; *A Guide to Living in the Truth: Saint Benedict's Teaching on Humility*; and *Fully Human, Fully Divine: An Interactive Christology*.

*Divine: An Interactive Christology.*



Affectionately known by most at Marble as Sister Carol, she is a gifted teacher and resident Bible scholar at Marble Collegiate Church. Sister Carol uses her extensive scholarship and imaginative storytelling skills to offer a fresh and innovative approach to exploring the Scriptures, bring people and stories of the Bible to life. Her talks at the 2015

COHI Conference were enthusiastically received and she has graciously agreed to speak to us again this year.

## *A Visit with Sr. Carol*

By popular demand, Sister Carol Perry is returning to Camp Allen this June to speak at our 2016 COHI Annual Conference. Sr. Carol remembers that as a young Roman Catholic girl she had "not much access to the Bible." It was not until she was a young adult and reading the Bible on her own that she was "taken with the fact that those were real people, not plastic robots, living in real life circumstances."

In her role as resident Bible scholar at Marble Collegiate Church, Sr. Carol has taken 7 groups to tour the Holy Land. She learned years ago that to "walk the land" in the Holy Land is to get in touch with those real people of the Bible. Sr. Carol's life's joy and work has been to learn about the real people of the Bible (their hopes and dreams, successes and failures, and even their everyday lives) and to share her insights with so many people who come to her Bible studies. Last year at our Conference she shared, through Bible study, wonderful insights on community in Biblical times.

"Among Women" is Sr. Carol's latest book. It has been completed and will hopefully be available by June. The book studies "Biblical women challenged by circumstances – some say yes, some say no, and some say we need to make some changes."



# News from the Regions



## HERITAGE REGION

BEVERLY DAVIS

PAT BEACHY



Jane Paulus (BMC), Angie Pocchia (EHRMC), Santa (Mike Ditta) (EHRMC), Dolly Ondrias (EHRMC), Deborah Scotka (BMC), Miriam Ried (EHRMC)

### East Houston Regional Medical Center

Lay chaplains at East Houston Regional Medical Center teamed up with lay chaplains from Bayshore Medical Center and Santa, Mike Ditta, on December 8 at EHRMC for our annual Christmas Dinner Celebration. Instead of our usual games and conversation, we opted to go visit and pray with patients and their families. Don't know who was more surprised and excited when Santa walked in: patients, kids or staff; but I do know this was the best Christmas Celebration Dinner I've ever attended. What an honor to serve in this ministry!

submitted by Dolly Ondrias, leader of COH at East Houston Regional Med Center (which includes Bayshore Med Center),



### St. Cuthbert's Episcopal Church, Houston

The Community of Hope of St. Cuthbert Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas, kicked off the fall with a joint training class in partnership with Covenant Lutheran Church's COH. Twelve participants, including one from Christ Church Cathedral, attended the training to prepare for serving their respective congregations as lay chaplains. All are now in their internship phase and will be commissioned in April. We are blessed to welcome these new members to our Circle of Care! (See photo)

During Advent, two service projects were undertaken. For the first time, the giving of St. Cuthbert church's congregation was to the Boys and Girls Country. This caring and worthwhile organization, located west of Houston in Hockley, was the recipient of over 45 gift items to furnish the cottages where the families live. Also, over \$400 was raised in donations or gift cards. The Community of Hope of St. Cuthbert was the organizing influence in this drive, under the leadership of Deacon Warren Miedke. A second service project was also carried out. This entailed assembling and delivering Christmas room decorations to patients visited by lay chaplains at several area nursing homes. In the past, these decorations were kept and treasured for years by the residents who are the recipients.

Throughout 2015, COH members served the parish and community behind the scenes by visiting and calling individuals in hospitals, care facilities, a shelter for women and children, and parishioners' homes. The Community of Hope at St. Cuthbert looks forward to serving God in our parish and the community in 2016 as we 'listen with the ear of our heart'.

Submitted by Diane Holmes, COH Coordinator



Front row: Gloria Simmons, Erin Hawkins, Diane Holmes (training facilitator)  
Middle row: Kimberly Williams, Rosemarie Martin (training facilitator), Theresa Costa, Januah Wilmot, Fridah Mariki, Marian

Shelton (training facilitator), Gale Zeiler  
Back row: John McLean, Angie Sparrow (training facilitator), Jerry Ann Cunningham, Victor Holmes, Hugh Walker, Toni Fleming



Assembling Christmas room decorations for nursing home care receivers.



# More Region News



## HERITAGE REGION (continued)

Welcome! Harvest United Methodist Church, Missouri City, Texas

The first class commissioned at Harvest Methodist Church, Spring 2015.

Our apologies for not getting this announcement into the newsletter sooner!

We are delighted to have Harvest UMC as part of the COHI family!



Front Row: Larry Blake, Brett Schimanski, Katherine Grabar, Judy Flowers, Sally Hrebenar, Debbie Wilkins  
Back Row: Doug Shultz, Lisa Torry, Verianese Richard, Joseph Richard, Pastor Jeff McDowell, Lewis Entricht, Pastor Cary Wilkins.  
Katherine Grabar is the leader of COHI at Harvest United Methodist Church.



The Georgia Region has planned their first Annual Georgia Regional Conference! and here is what they have planned...

St. Aidan's became the first COHI Center in Georgia in May 2011 and has trained and commissioned two groups. We believe that CoHI is so much more than a Pastoral Care Ministry, but it is about our own Spiritual Formation as well as Outreach. There are now nine CoHI Centers in Georgia!

Harmony Kiser

## GEORGIA REGION

THE COMMUNITY OF HOPE INTERNATIONAL invites you to



THE FIRST ANNUAL GEORGIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE presenting

**Becoming Benedictine: A Radical Call Toward Spiritual Community**

Keynote Speaker:  
The Rev. Stuart Higginbotham

**February 27, 2016@9:15am**

ST. AIDAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
13560 Cogburn Road  
Milton, GA 30004



## HARMONY KISER

### The Rev. Stuart Higginbotham

Fr. Stuart is rector of Grace Episcopal Church, Gainesville, GA, which recently commissioned 18 people into CoHI. He has worked and studied for years with the Shalem Institute of Spiritual Formation, Washington, DC. He has a great love for contemplative studies and practices.

The program includes:

#### Keynote Speaker:

The Rev. Stuart Higginbotham

**Building Community:** each of the nine CoHI Centers in GA an opportunity to introduce their group and tell us about the wonderful ministries and their Circles of Care.

**Starting a CoHI Center:** Learn the process for training and starting a CoHI Center in your church. Led by Kathy Bump.

TAIZÉ WORSHIP and

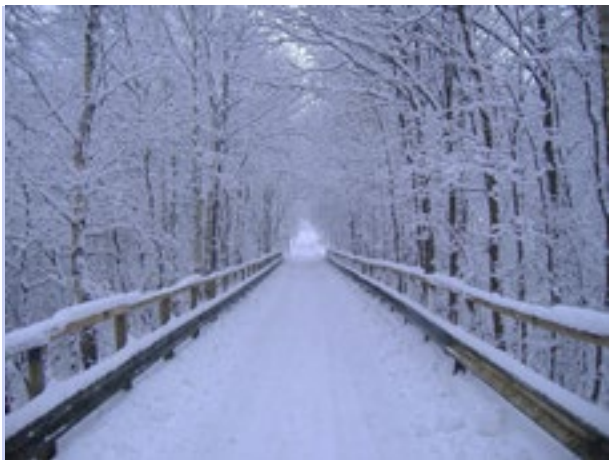
ANNOINTING OF HANDS

by The Rev. Robert Wood,  
Rector, St. Aidan's



For more information, contact:

Harmony Kiser (770)667-7494  
harmony.kiser@comcast.net



# A Final Word

[www.cohinternational.org](http://www.cohinternational.org)

## Book Recommendations

### *Atchison Blue: A Search for Silence, a Spiritual Home, and a Living Faith*

by Judith Valente.

This book was recommended by Joan Chittister's website, Monasteries of the Heart. Richard Rohr commented on this book: "Seldom is 'spiritual' reading so readable as it is here! Judith Valente makes her own liminal experience in a monastery attractive, real, and profound for all of us. There will be very few who would not find Valente's journey helpful to their own." Valente writes, "I still think it's easier to enter that reality (of the wisdom of the Spirit) if you reside within the manastery's walls, but I now believe in something else, too. 'The real cloister or enclosure is the heart,' the Cistercian Abbess Gail Fitzpatrick has written. I believe in a monastery of the heart. That is what I hope I have been building."

Harmony Kiser

### *Paw Prints on My Soul, A (Puppy) Love Story*

by Deb Gerace

This book will be coming out soon and is discussed on page 2 of this newsletter.

### *Among Women*

by Carol Perry, SU

This book will be coming out in the next 4 months and is discussed on page 3 of this newsletter.

Joy is hidden in compassion. The word compassion literally means "to suffer with." It seems quite unlikely that suffering with another person would bring joy. Yet being with a person in pain, offering simple presence to someone in despair, sharing with a friend times of confusion and uncertainty ... such experiences can bring us deep joy. Not happiness, not excitement, not great satisfaction, but the quiet joy of being there for someone else and living in deep solidarity with our brothers and sisters in this human family. Often this is a solidarity in weakness, in brokenness, in woundedness, but it leads us to the center of joy, which is sharing our humanity with others.

Henri Nouwen



Keep  
watching...  
Spring is coming!

2016 Spring  
Newsletter:  
Deadline for  
submissions,  
April 1  
(No foolin')

Send news and/or pictures of your centers  
to your Regional Representative.