

Spring 2006

The Downtowners

An Ecumenical Ministry Serving
the Downtown Campuses

Serving Others Enriches Students' Lives

Mission Statement

... a caring presence to the students and faculty downtown through services and programs that enhance the quality of life and answer to the call of the Gospel to make life sacred for all people.

Founded in 1973 through the leadership of Trinity Lutheran Church in conjunction with the Downtown Clergy

SERVING

- Capital University Law and Graduate Center
- The Columbus College of Art and Design
- Columbus State Community College
- DeVry University
- Franklin University
- Mount Carmel College of Nursing

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr. Ellen O'Shaughnessy
Campus Minister

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Laura Penczak tends to a child at the homeless shelter.

Nikki Mesnard wrote in her journal about one young teenager she tutored and mentored. "I hope so much that she will grow up to let her soul shine. I hope she won't let the hardships she faces now change the bright, personable young lady she can become...I am reminded of James 3 and the Book of Proverbs that tell us that life and death are in the power of the tongue...I hope my words this week

Students form community both with each other and with those they serve as they reach out to those in need in our city. As they become disciples in the city living out the Gospel call to serve the poor, they form friendships. Last winter volunteers from the Ohio State University and Capital University Law school served homeless mothers and children at the Homeless Shelter at 400 West Broad through the Downtowners Campus Ministry. In the journals the students kept, they reflected on the impact on their own lives of the experience of service to the homeless families.

I hope my words this week will encourage these children to use their words in ways that give hope and life to others ...

Students spent time tutoring, doing art projects, helping with homework, reading books to the younger children, playing soccer, basketball, and volleyball with the middle school students, and just being with mothers and children as mentors.

will encourage these children to use their words in ways that give hope and life to others..." and to themselves.

Law student G.W. Wharton wrote: "Today (April 19) was the last day of volunteering with the kids. I think we had the most kids today, (more) than we have had in the past. Some other people brought balls and books and coloring stuff, so they were all pretty busy. One little boy that I hadn't seen before just kept taking my hand and leading me around all over the place. Then he and

another little girl who had befriended me last week made me read them the same book about 20 times.

It was fun though, it was a picture book about animals so I kept having them name the animal and make the appropriate sound...I didn't tell any of the kids that was our last day. I thought it

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News Items:



Capital Law Students serve the children.

Ice Cream for the Spookout

The Downtowners Campus Ministry, through individual personal donations, provided ice cream for a hundred or so students at a Halloween Spookout designed and hosted by 20 Capital University Law students. The law students served the ice cream, led art projects, and designed a "haunted house" for the youth of the Salesian Boys and Girls Club. The ice cream served by the law students and the howling of the haunted house provided a great afternoon. Tiffany Hostetler who works with the Downtowners in serving at the Salesian Center organized the event.

Continued from page 1

might make them sad, and I think I was right...I don't know if anyone else told them or if they just had a feeling, but I had a couple of kids cry and keep yelling my name as I was leaving. That made me sad, but it was also kind of sweet. At the very least it made me feel like I had brought some happiness to their lives."

Aleta, a nursing student wrote: "Today was a good day. I had the opportunity to work with 3 Somali teenage girls. Their homework consisted of learning how our gov-

Tiffany Hostetler, Capital Law student, active in peer ministry with the Downtowners, graduates with the degree of Juris Doctor Cum Laude this spring. Tiffany has been an extraordinary communicator with Dr. O and students in connecting students with our retreat and ministry to the city's needs.

Bob Kutschbach, former Board President of the Downtowners and member of the Board for ten years, was featured on the cover of *Broker Agent Magazine* for February 2006. Bob graduated from Franklin University and is an executive with Carleton Realty. Bob is active in First Congregational Church and with the judicatory of the United Church of Christ.

Dr. Ellen O'Shaughnessy is honored to be serving as the Chaplain for the Church Women United in Columbus. This community of women is noted for serving the poor and being advocates for social justice.

Several students who have been helped by the Downtowners with assistance of books, supplies, etc. have gotten jobs, moved from homeless shelters and now are living in housing projects or apartments. Congratulations and blessed are you!



Dean Bring has lunch with Richard at the Community Kitchen on South Ohio as part of the Downtowners' Student in the City Program. Richard repairs cars to afford to eat, but when he doesn't have a job, he turns to the Kitchen. He and Dean talked about sports and had a great time. Dean is going into Sports Law which he remarked later is not only something he loves, but is a great way to connect with others.

ernment system works, and the cabinet members and the office of the President of the United States. These girls were very eager to learn this despite their language barrier.

This experience gave me a sense of giving back to a place that once gave to me. (Aleta was once homeless.) Thank you, Dr. O, for giving me this opportunity."

Chinwe Duru wrote: "I was so touched and moved when a couple of the children gave me their art works because they wanted me to have them.

I thought the gesture was very sweet... Today went by very quickly because there were so many children and it kept me very busy. I can't wait to go again next week to play with the children and help them with their homework..."

Though never having known each other before their serving at the shelter, some of these students have remained friends and participated in planning and being part of the Downtowners' fall retreat. Forming a community in friendship is a bonus in giving to others!

Bishop Sprague — A Life of Justice

Business student Robert Roe of Franklin University and Political Science student Vijay Shema of The Ohio State University accompanied Dr. O’Shaughnessy on a very-early-in-the-morning trip on a Saturday to Akron, Ohio, to hear Bishop Joseph Sprague speak at a meeting of the East Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. A special bonus was watching the sunrise!

The Bishop called upon the assembly of several hundred people to listen to the Gospel of Jesus in living a life of justice. The conference centered around issues involving problems of health care for the poor, rehabilitation and help for those who re-enter society after incarceration, just wages for the now working poor, and compassion in dealing with gender issues. Both Rob and Vijay participated in the small groups and led the reporting of their respective groups. Vijay served as a Eucharistic minister in the communion service.

As Rob Roe wrote in an email to Dr. O: “Not knowing what to expect, I was a little apprehensive as to what I might glean out of a trip to listen to a Methodist Bishop speak. All I can say is that I am surprised by how much I learned...I found another person who shares similar theological views...” Vijay remarked that if any other such opportunities were offered like this one, to be sure to invite him. Participants from mostly Methodist Churches raved about the leadership and insight of these young students.



Vijay Shema serves communion at East Ohio United Methodist Convergence



Aleta Churchill examines creature from the woods.

Living Faith Award

Downtowners student **Aleta Churchill** has been honored by the Columbus Metropolitan Area Church Council. A member of the Rhema Christian Church, she received the Living Faith Award in May for her inspiring life as a woman of faith through her homelessness, single parenting a teenager, and determination to get a college education ...

At the Downtowners’ fall retreat Aleta left behind the comfort zone of her urban environment to explore the creepy crawly creatures of the Northern Ohio woods and pray among the beauties of God’s creation.

Students Meet with Downtown Pastors

Trinity Episcopal Rector Rev. Richard A. Burnett and Associate Rector Reverend Abeoseh M. Flemister (“Rev. Abby”) met with two students from the Downtowners for lunch in “The Place to Be” in the undercroft of Trinity Episcopal Church. Rev. Burnett and his staff offer radical hospitality to Open Shelter for the homeless. The students, Robert Roe of Franklin University and William Edwards of Columbus State, listened to the pastors’ reflections on the challenge and Gospel call to serve the needs of the homeless. Robert, who has experienced homelessness himself, wants to contribute in a positive

way to make changes in our society. William, who has known sadness in the violent death of his mother but has received inspiration from the faith of his Baptist grandmother, wants to help others who are suffering.

Rev. Burnett introduced Rob and William to Rev. Kent Beittel and Mr. Solomon of the Open Shelter.

Both Kent and Solomon help Dr. O’Shaughnessy keep in contact with students who are homeless. The ministry of the Downtowners’ outreach to urban students is blessed with companions in the city like Revs. Burnett, Abby, Kent, and Mr. Solomon!

Retreat—Spiritual Renewal



Rutu Dalal leads an ice breaker at the fall retreat.

“My biggest fear, once I finally decided to attend the Downtowners’ Campus Ministry retreat, was that I wouldn’t have a chance to voice my opinions in the midst of so many other pious and devoted Christians. As a non-Christian growing up in a Christian town I had been asked, and even begged, to convert from being Hindu to Christianity in order to ‘save’ myself from the demon pits of hell. I was prepared for the worst on this retreat, but I wanted to try it. What I wasn’t prepared for was how much fun I ended up having and how much profound thought was shared and the overwhelming self-realization I felt

Most of all, it was nice to be able to talk freely and have people listen to what you were saying.

when I was on the retreat. It was so unexpected for me to have conversations about religion that were not just based on strict religious observance and ceremonies, but on the aspects of religion that assist us in our individual searches for the purpose of our lives. It was refreshing to talk about the universal human qualities of faith, understanding and service. Most of all, it was nice to be able to talk freely and have people listen to what you were saying without feeling any pressure to live up to their standards or

when I was on the retreat. It was so unexpected for me to have conversations about religion that were not just based on strict religious observance and ceremonies, but on

their ideas of who you should be in a retreat secure in the knowledge that I was expressing my opinions in an intelligent manner, that I was not saying anything as I had thought, and that feeling that my reflection was absolutely pointless. How do you feel about becoming a better person if I am who I am now?” — **Rutu Dalal, C**

In her statement Rutu describes the traditions that were represented by The Ohio State University and Caplan retreat was held in the beautiful, re sphere of the “Templed Hills” of N end in September. We lived in a re

We were hosted by a staff with the utmost of care in hospitality and expertise.

staff naturalist took us on a hike in the barn. We saw deer, turtles and and red fox.

The evenings were spent in ple conversations around topics that h by students who had met with Dr.



*Sharing a meal at the Downtowners’ fall retreat
Churchill and T*

In Memoria

The Downtowners has lost in death this last year three companions in its ministry to students.

Rev. Kenneth Roberts, founder of the Downtowners in 1973, was also Associate Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church when he, with downtown pastors, formed the campus ministry to urban students. In 1998 Ken joined us at Trinity Lutheran Church for the Downtowners 25th anniversary celebration.

Rev. Dr. Walter Bouman has been both a financial supporter of our ministry and a true friend to the Downtowners. Dr. Bouman served as a theological mentor to Dr. O'Shaughnessy in working on the Theological and Biblical Foundations statement for Ecumenical Campus Ministry which she prepared for Ohio Campus Ministries this last year. The work was to help connect a sound theology with the ecumenical outreach of campus ministry.

During the years he served at St. Joseph Cathedral as Rector, **Father Jim Hanley** was a true friend and advocate for the Downtowners. He helped tell the story of the ministry to the congregation of St. Joseph's and to the Downtown clergy for whom he was Chair and coordinator for several years. Father Hanley connected the Downtowners to the AARP's *Reminiscence* program out of Washington, D.C. We became a pilot program and worked with Employee Assistance students at Franklin University. It was a way to deepen one's spiritual life through the journey of Life Review. The students' evaluations reflected their love for the experience in written and verbal evaluations. Father Hanley delighted in hearing and reading about their appreciation.

The Downtowners grieves the loss of Ken, Walt and Father Hanley and offers to their families prayer and sympathy. We trust in faith that these true disciples of the Good News of Jesus are with us in a new way of companionship and support.

instead of who you are. I left the
at I had contributed to our discus-
I wasn't as clueless about every-
feeling guilty about taking time off to
how else am I to find out how to go
I don't give myself time to find out
Capital University Law Student
as the openness to diverse religious
y students from Franklin University,
pital Law. The Downtowners' Fall
relaxing, fun and prayerful atmo-
northern Ohio on a gorgeous week-
renovated barn house maintained
y the United Church of Christ.
We were hosted by a staff with the
most of care in hospitality and
expertise. On Saturday afternoon a
to the forests and hills surrounding
l snakes plus traces of black bear

enty of fun, games and serious
ad been planned for months ahead
O'Shaughnessy for dinner in the



From left Rob Roe, Dr. O'Shaughnessy, Aleta
Ciffany Hostetler

evenings after classes. The topics included: "What gives meaning to our lives; our faith in God; the way we worship; prayer; our families; what we want from our education and its connection with the rest of our lives; the relationship between spirituality and religious practice."

Saturday night we gathered outside under a star-lit sky around a barbecued dinner of hot dogs and chicken followed by a dessert of roasted marshmallows. Student evaluations of the retreat illustrate the depths of their experience. "I've never prayed like I have here... my prayer has always been so rehearsed. I feel so relaxed and loved by God." "It's good to hear how different people pray. It makes me appreciate others more, even though they think differently than I do. I feel essentially we pray the same way." "First, it was great to get away from the hustle and bustle of the city, busy schedules, and the demands of everyday life. Secondly, I was able to connect with fellow peers, people in college who have to struggle just as I do, and find common ground as I do...I learned that as a student, there are common feelings and experiences, such as loneliness and feelings of isolation...I also felt a rekindling of desire to help other less fortunate people...I have rediscovered that through helping other people, I can find a camaraderie and togetherness that I have been lacking."

The retreat was made possible by a grant from the Presbyterian Synod of Maumee, Ohio and personal donations.

The Board Corner

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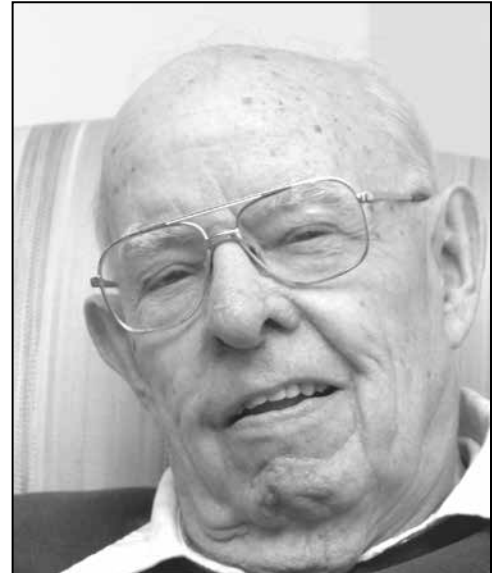
Roman Catholic Diocese

United Church of Christ

United Methodist Church
—West Ohio Conference

John Sullivan, Professor Emeritus of Capital Law School, joined the Downtowners' board in 1983. Because of his intense concern for the moral and ethical lives of his students, John first initiated ethics seminars through the Downtowners to provide a foundation to help students come to know how to do what is right. He and his wife Mary Jane opened their home to students and brought in practicing lawyers, judges and government officials to discuss ethical challenges they faced in their daily lives. He established these ethics seminars to provide a firm foundation and forewarn students about potential ethical dilemmas, thus, he hoped, preventing future Watergates.

As a Roman Catholic, John lives his faith through his service and commitment to social justice. He continues with his board membership because he wants to let these young hard-working adult students know there is someone who cares for them. He said he's seen the benefits. John and his wife Mary Jane have a daughter Mary Anne who is a staff attorney with the Ohio Sixth District Court of Appeals in Toledo.



Ruth Voldrich, 62-year member of Broad Street Presbyterian Church, joined the Downtowners' board not only as a service to her church but also because she remembers her own college days and how disconnected she was from her own church. She is committed to providing spiritual grounding for young people today as they navigate their life transitions. She relishes her service to students through her board membership of the Downtowners' campus ministry.

Mentored by her mother, Ruth carved out a professional life for herself as a social worker and dedicated herself to service. Ruth married Constantine and raised three children. She said, "I hope I can interest those just graduating from high school and beyond to continue with their religious traditions and to incorporate their learning and faith into their lives." Through the Downtowners, Ruth seeks to reassure young people and bring out the very best in them.



Dear Students and Companions of the Downtowners,

It is not often that students have the time to think together about their ways of believing in God. It is not often that students, in a true sense, have the opportunity and the luxury of time to do this theology together. A highlight of our retreat during an extended meal-time prepared around a bonfire provided just this opportunity for reflection on the meaning of relationship with God.

Students of differing religious traditions reflected upon their religious experience that has come to them from their communities of family and worship. Students talked together about how they grew up Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Hindu, Baptist, and non-denominational, respectively, and became the people of faith that they are now. Rituals and laws were important, but the presence of God in their lives and their struggle to believe in God in their lives made for truly authentic belief for them.

One way this energy of God pours out into service of God's people is through the ministry to the poor of the city. The Downtowners provides a vehicle for this to happen and students talked about how meaningful this is to them in their relationship to God and to their faith.

Doing theology together in community is critical to maintaining a balance in religious faith and practice. This experience avoids the pitfalls of fundamentalism, arrogance, false piety and thinking one has all the answers on the journey of faith in God. Humility is central to the search for truth. Listening to one another's path of searching for God is to listen to the sacredness of a person's life. I am moved to my soul by being with students whose academic lives have faith as the center of their motivation and who are open to talking about their struggles around their uncertainties, their fears, their trust that God cares for them and is with them as they choose their respective paths either



Dr. Ellen O'Shaughnessy

alone or with their families. A nursing student who is the mother of a fifteen-year-old son has experienced homelessness herself. Now she serves as an intern in the emergency room, serves the homeless through the Downtowners, worships weekly, and has God as the center of her life. She is someone to listen to and learn theology from! This is no ivory tower theologian!

The Downtowners'

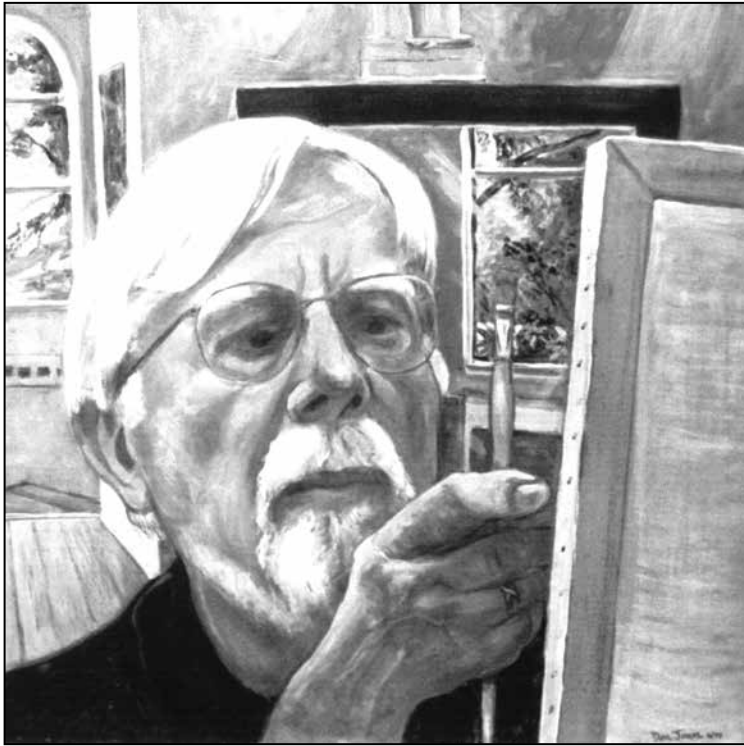
Campus Ministry was founded thirty-three years ago through the leadership of Trinity Lutheran Church. Rev. Ken Roberts of Trinity then called upon the Downtown clergy to join him in serving students whose campus was the city. These downtown churches have reached out over the years to students through the Downtowners to offer places of worship and sound theological reflection through programs, prayer and service.

Ellen O'Shaughnessy

Gratitude to our Companions in the Ministry Who Donate Financial Support

Ralph and Jean Bieber
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Trinity Lutheran Church
The West Ohio Annual Conference
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Ruth W. Voldrich
Women of Trinity Lutheran Church

The Sacred in Art



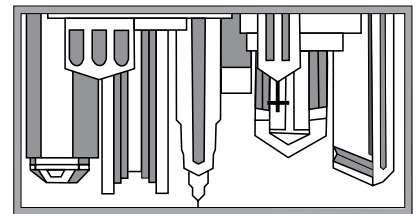
Don L. Jones, *Self Portrait*

Don L. Jones, the Father of Art Therapy, shared his paintings and his reflections on *The Sacred in Art* on a November evening sponsored by the Downtowners for Columbus College of Art and Design students. In his presentation, Don mentioned his service through art to the mentally ill as a conscientious objector in World War II. This provoked one of the CCAD students to remark that his services reminded her of the work of Mother Teresa.

She commented, "Did you ever think that what you have done is related to the work for the poor of Mother Teresa?" Don answered that

Concern for the poor is central to the journey of the sacred

he did not purport to have done anything of the magnitude of the work of Mother Teresa, but he did believe that service to the poor was central to the message of Jesus. Concern for the poor is central to the journey of the sacred and the work of peace in this world. He says art helps us in our work for peace and our move through our struggle for peace and our service of the poor. Art expresses sacredness in a unique way and cooperates with God in creating the beauty, harmony and reconciliation in this world. Don Jones suggests we are all artists as we see the sacramental in the ordinary times and places in our lives.



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