



# The Downtowners INC.

AN ECUMENICAL MINISTRY SERVING THE DOWNTOWN CAMPUSES

2010

## Student Disciples in the City

*Founded in 1978 through the leadership of Trinity Lutheran Church in conjunction with the Downtown Clergy.*



### Mission Statement

*The Downtowners is a caring presence to the students and faculty in downtown colleges and universities.*

*This is accomplished 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.*



### SERVING

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

**O**rganized and planned by the Downtowners, students of varying religious traditions and backgrounds are placed in outreach services throughout Columbus. Students' spiritual and prayer lives are enriched in this experience through journaling about their service to those in need. Currently, students serve at Friends of the Homeless, Faith Mission, Holy Family Soup Kitchen, Dominican Learning Center, the Lawrence Haven Food Pantry, Bethlehem on Broad Street and the Methodist Free Store at the Church for All People.

Tiffani R. says her experience at the Methodist Free Store was been nothing short of amazing. "Many clients have tons of hope and are so positive. The Free Store

is an absolutely essential part of this neighborhood because

it helps so many people, not just the men, women and families that need help, but the volunteers, too. I am forever thankful to have been given this opportunity."

Weeya B. attended the funeral of a homeless man at the Methodist Church for All People while she was serving at the Free Store. She was moved deeply by the people and staff



who gathered. "I will never forget it," she told Dr. O. "I am so grateful to be serving here."

Richard S., a student at DeVry, seeks to combine his talent for developing computer web sites with serving the homeless through the Downtowners at the Lawrence Haven Food Pantry. His mother, a teacher in religious education, taught Richard as a kindergartner. His father was a deacon for 30 years in the Baptist Church.

Richard attended the Ohio Campus Ministry meeting with Dr.

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# Student in the City Program

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*"Give and Gifts will be given to you..."*

*"Cast your bread upon the waters and  
it will come back to you..."*

*The Gospel of Luke 6:38*

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**A**s always, students receive back even more than they give in their service through the Student in the City program. As a part of the program, students meet at Capital Law with a panel of residential, street and working poor. "How awesome it is to gather at the University with such richly diverse people. Each time we discover how much we have in common as human beings," says Bob Padberg, facilitator of the conversation with students and clients from Friends of the Homeless and Holy Rosary Saint John's Community Kitchen. "Struggle is an experience we share."  
"The legal profession is one way to help others," remarked one student who wants to represent those who have fallen on hard times. The clients and staff from Friends and the Community Kitchen appreciate the occasion to have a meal together and talk about personal struggles and issues of concern for our city. Holding hands together in a circle, a member of Friends of the Homeless led the gathering in a prayer of gratitude and petition.

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## Award Winner

**C**ongratulations to Anna Lou, a first year student at Capital Law, who received the Church Women United's Young Church Woman award in May at the Grove City United Methodist Church on Friendship Day, an annual celebration of women's leadership in churches throughout the Columbus area.

Anna has participated in the Downtowners' Student Discipleship in the City program by planning and serving at Bethlehem on Broad Street. She has been serving weekly at the Lawrence Haven Food Pantry at Holy Cross Catholic Church. Anna also was a group leader for the Downtowners' retreat in Temple Hills in Bellville, Ohio in March. Before coming to law school, Anna Lou served her home Church of Grace Brethren in Norton, Ohio and went to the Dominican Republic to build an orphanage. She has attended Liberty Presbyterian in Powell where her brother works with youth.

Anna Lou participates in the work of the Christian Legal Society and is on its Community Outreach committee. She does pro bono work with the interfaith legal clinic at Broad Street Methodist Church. Anna says she gets her inspiration for serving others from her mother who gave her car to a single parent who had nothing.

The Day of Friendship with the Church Women United was a memorable celebration both for Anna and the Downtowners campus ministry.



## Bethlehem on Broad Street



**F**or several years now, the Downtowners students from Columbus State Community College, Mt. Carmel College of Nursing, Capital Law and Franklin University have worked on the planning and participated in Bethlehem on Broad Street at both First Congregational and Broad Street Methodist churches. Each year hundreds of Columbus' homeless, residential and working poor gather to celebrate Christmas. A turkey dinner feast is served on lovely china. Also, food boxes, toys for the children, supportive counsel, worship, and

Christmas caroling round out the celebration. Mt. Carmel College of Nursing student Elizabeth M. expressed joy in seeing different denominations come together. In hearing stories from past years, she said she felt energy and excitement about how many people would be helped. She knew the day of the event would be special. "More than anything, it was just truly touching to hear people's stories. So many guests and volunteers have been coming here for years, and it makes you think about the traditions these churches have upheld."

Student Manuel A. found that a lot of times "the people were looking for more than food. They were looking for someone to talk to and share their feelings with and looking for hope. Sarah M. shared that "God calls each of us to use the talents He gives us." Humbled by her experiences, Sarah said, "I felt today I was able to genuinely listen to people. One girl told me her whole life story...I could feel that she was grateful to have someone to listen to her story. This event is something that I truly felt blessed to be a part of. I thank God for this blessing."



# A Student Struggles

**S**tudent Steven H. struggled to find a home in Columbus. "The first day I arrived I didn't have any place to go." He didn't know where he was going to sleep or where he would get his next meal. But then he was introduced to the shelter by a young fellow who also was in need. "I applied for a bed and did not get one for 2 days. So I slept in my car. On that third day my whole life changed. I was given a bed on 8th avenue at Faith Mission where I did a lot of praying and attended a church and did some more praying. I walked to a lot of places looking for a job, taking odd jobs as well until one morning I got a break. This guy called me for a construction job (labor), but it only lasted for two weeks. Still I was blessed. One day I was walking past Columbus State Community College and stopped at the admissions office to apply, and I got accepted. GOD KEPT HIS HANDS ON ME. That inspired me even more to keep striving and keep my head high. One of the guys at the shelter told me to talk to J.O.I.N. (Catholic Charities). They supplied me with a couple of bus passes and other items. They made a couple of phone calls and that's how I met Dr. Ellen O'Shaughnessy who gave me the opportunity to help others and receive some help from the Downtowners for books and supplies for school. I served at the Lawrence Haven Food pantry and talked with a few of the guys com-



*That was one GLORY feeling to see people rise like I did.*

ing through the line, who, like me, were down on their luck. I told them to keep praying and keep their faith in God. The next time they came through, a couple of them had gotten jobs, but still had to wait on their first paycheck. A couple of weeks later they came back through the line, not to eat, but to thank me and the staff. That was one GLORY feeling to see people rise like I did when they kept the faith and accepted themselves. Thank you, Dr. Ellen."

**T**he Gospel of M  
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loved. Tiffany said in  
therapist and herself, a



# Student Retreat

Mark: **Jesus on the Go** was the theme of the Downtowners retreat this year. In students took to the hills of Bellville, Ohio and enjoyed time to pray, great meals and be with nature. On Friday night, students gathered around a cozy campfire, music, community building and laughter. On Saturday morning, up bright and new adventures to start, the students enjoyed a hot breakfast of eggs, that Bob had cooked. When Tim, a naturalist at the camp, arrived, he asked the students to name creatures or plants that God created. One responded, everything in creation. Tim then guided students in discussing the creatures and plants. After dinner that evening, discussion groups reflected on the retreat. "This was by far my favorite retreat." Conversation revolved around the question of a connection with nature and healing and his experience with baptism, the message of being a part of a group there was a teacher, lawyer-to-be, construction worker, massage therapist and a prospective nurse. Tiffany reflects: "Being loved by God gives us confidence to become who we are meant to be."

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*"Being loved by God gives us confidence to become who we are meant to be."*

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Brittany H. reveled in the gift of the student retreat, saying it "brought me closer to God and made me realize how I have faded away from God. It made me realize that God is really important to me and needs to be a bigger part of my life. This retreat also allowed me to come closer to my classmates more as a friend...I have never just had a weekend where I didn't have anything to do or somewhere to be. It was very worry free and relaxing...We thank Dr. O and her husband, Bob, for this great experience."

## Commencement Champions

*"Congratulations and may you be blessed—you who have known struggle and hardship, and made great sacrifices to be here today. You are the champions!"* Dr. Ellen O'Shaughnessy leading the Benediction at the Franklin University Graduation at Veterans Memorial in January of this year. The late Chief Justice Thomas J. Moyer gave the Commencement Address.

**Board  
Corner**

**Reverend Mamie Jenkins**



**F**or the Reverend Mamie Jenkins, her Mother was her hero, a woman who could do anything. At age 10, she was at her Mother's side caring for a needy neighbor woman who had just birthed her 13th child in rural North Carolina. The food, the linens, the cleaning, and the loving kindness impressed young Mamie. Then at age 18, after her Father died, Mamie came to Columbus to be with family as she entered nursing school and started on her life course of service.

Rev. Jenkins' path to United Methodist ministry circled round and round before she ended up as a pastor. She was nudged toward ministry throughout the years but received the direct call much later.

In her nursing career, Rev. Jenkins first specialized in genetic counseling of sickle cell anemia patients and families. She trained in genetic counseling at University of Cincinnati and University of Chicago. She spent some time at Mount Sinai Hospital in Cleveland and in Puerto Rico, but mostly, she worked in Columbus at Mercy Hospital and was a liaison with ECCO Family Health Center.

Rev. Jenkins developed a statewide adult support group for families with sickle cell. Always drawn to the plight of the homeless, she developed a passion for homeless women. She set up a screening clinic for homeless families at the Wesley United Methodist Church,

worked with a program for women coming out of incarceration, and opened an AIDS Clinic on East Livingston, staffed with Columbus AIDS Taskforce volunteers and Riverside physicians.

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*The murmurings of a lifetime crystallized into a direct call to ministry.*

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Always active in her church and the conference, she went far beyond Sunday School

teaching and Bible study. She served on the national Board of Directors of the Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) as well as on the BMCR boards for the North Central Jurisdiction and the West Ohio Conference.

When Bishop Judith Craig was ordaining deacons at Grove City, she raised this question. "Have you ever heard God calling you?" At that moment for Mamie Jenkins the murmurings of a lifetime crystallized into a direct call to ministry, and she stepped forward. She attended the Methodist Theological School and followed the Local Pastor Track. She was appointed to pastor the Wesley United Methodist Church, the very place she had established a screening clinic for

the homeless. Over time she was able to knit together two separate congregations into a successful church, the Wesley Church of Hope.

Though now retired, Rev. Jenkins still teaches, preaches and serves the community. She works part time at the Mohun Health Center, a Catholic health center for priests and nuns at Ohio Dominican University. As a board member, she inspires young people to serve the community and stay grounded in their faith.

Recently Rev. Jenkins preached at her childhood church in Roxboro, North Carolina. There next to the cemetery where her parents are buried, the memories swirled around her. She had come full circle, grounded in the past and steeped in the present as she steps into the future.

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O'Shaughnessy and campus ministers from around Ohio at the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church Offices in the Columbus area.

Dr. Linda Mercadante, author and theologian, spoke at the meeting. Richard shared his faith journey in conversation with the gathering of campus ministers. Richard joined Capital Law Students in the Downtowners Student in the City program. As he gives to others through his weekly service at the Lawrence Haven Food Pantry, he says he receives in abundance.



# Father Jerry Stluka

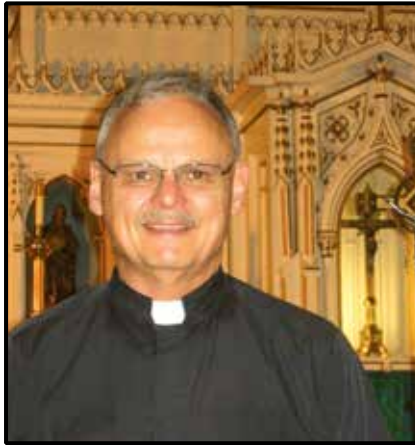
**T**en years ago when Father Jerry Stluka moved into the downtown neighborhood to serve as pastor at Holy Cross Catholic Church, Ellen O'Shaughnessy greeted him with an invitation to participate in the urban campuses as a part of the Board of the Downtowners Campus Ministry. His life of service and his commitment to enriching the lives of all people spurred him to say "yes."

At a very young age Father Jerry Stluka was drawn to hospital chaplaincy. Imagine a six-year-old child and his older sister both stricken with polio at the exact same time. Fr. Stluka was that boy, and he vividly remembers his two-week hospital stay plus the time at home recovering from a thankfully mild case of polio. This was his introduc-

tion to hospital chaplaincy. Lonely and

isolated because of the contagious polio, he could only watch as his parents stood at the door every day. Yet, they comforted him from afar until his isolation was lifted and they could enfold him with their loving arms. A couple from his parish sent a card every day. With the epidemic in full swing, the doctors, nurses and hospital staff could pay little attention to him. But the teenage candy strippers reading books taught him the healing properties of caring individuals.

The day he was released from the hospital, a nurse gave him a tour of the hospital. Etched in his memory are visions of patients trapped in iron lungs who nonetheless were able to smile. At that time many were paralyzed for life. Though he may not have realized it at the



time, Fr. Jerry Stluka was being called to the priesthood with hospital chaplaincy as his passion. By the time of his confirmation, he had set his sites on the priesthood.

Now from daily mass and 20 weddings a year plus the totality of parish ministry at Holy Cross Church and hospital chaplaincy at Grant Hospital, Father Jerry Stluka is immersed in giving spiritual guidance and comfort to parishioners and patients. "Grant Medical Center," he says, "is a wonderful place" where people are tended to with compassion and the greatest professional care.

He says he experiences "the joy of living in reaching out to those in need." Fr. Stluka's focus is on carrying out the mission of the church, not on the minutiae of what he calls "administrivia." He is a "doer"—a giver. He appreciates the Downtowners providing opportunities for college students to reach out to others through the Saint Lawrence Haven by providing food to those in need.

In support of the Catholic faith, Father Stluka teaches

R.I.C.A. (Rite of Christian Initiation) classes helping those who wish to join and others who wish to return to the faith. In the ecumenical realm, he leads Cum Cristo, an ecumenical Catholic movement with a 4 day retreat of study and prayer.

Fr. Stluka is excited by the rate of change in society and the host of opportunities available for young people. Since it sometimes can be scary, he sees the Downtowners as important in helping students sort through the confusion.

## Members of the Board

**Dr. K. Sue Foley**, Board President, North Broadway United Methodist Church

**Ann Holzapfel**, Children's Hospital Foundation

**Rev. Mamie Jenkins**, United Methodist Church, West Ohio Conference

**Patricia McCann**, Professor, Franklin University

**Pete McCleron**, Campus Minister, Mount Carmel College of Nursing

**Darren Nealy, J.D.**, Multicultural Services & Programs, Capital University Law School

**Ashley Kennedy Smith, Esq.**, Union County Court of Common Pleas

**Rev. Jerry Stluka**, Holy Cross-Catholic Church

**John Sullivan**, Prof. Emeritus, Capital University Law School

**Ruth Voldrich** (Emeritus), Broad Street Presbyterian

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*"The joy of living in reaching out to those in need."*

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## *Dear Students and Companions of the Downtowners,*

### **Companions in Our Ministry**

Broad Street  
Presbyterian Church  
Catholic Diocese of  
Columbus  
Columbus Foundation  
Dominican Sisters  
of Peace  
Episcopal Diocese of  
Southern Ohio  
First Community  
Church  
First Congregational  
Church  
Holy Cross Church  
Ohio Campus  
Ministries  
Sister Marie Pierre,  
S.N.D.  
Memorial Fund for  
Students in Need  
Presbytery of  
Scioto Valley  
St. Joseph Cathedral  
The Synod of the  
Covenant  
Presbyterian Church  
Trinity Episcopal  
Church  
Trinity Lutheran  
Church  
The West Ohio Annual  
Conference of the  
United Methodist  
Church  
Women of Trinity  
Lutheran Church

I want to express my gratitude for the companionship I experience in the leaders and mentors I meet through our campus ministry. You who care about the students in the city live out the true meaning of mentor. Going back in literature through Latin to a Greek name, the word mentor has come to mean “wise counselor” as first recorded in 1750. I could fill pages with the names of the people who have been and currently are mentors to students and to me. But for now, I will name only two such persons.

Frances Carr at Holy Family Soup Kitchen is truly such a mentor. You students who serve at Holy Family Soup Kitchen have called her “Mother Teresa.” Student journals reflect that she is kind and welcoming, but that she takes no nonsense. I have many times sat with her in the office and seen her loving, but firm, kindness in working with the clients of the Soup Kitchen. On one occasion when there was an incident that had to be dealt with, the clients gathered around her and asked how they could help to resolve the incident. She is loved and very

much lives in the legacy of Mother Teresa.

Then there is another mentor in Rev. Richard Burnett, rector at Trinity Episcopal Church located across from the State House. He keeps before the city a place of prayer, liturgy, theological reflection and justice issues that impact our city. The procession around downtown with a member of his church carrying a large wooden cross on Good Friday of 2009 lingers in my memory and imagination with gratitude. As remembrance is a way of encountering the experience again, I recall this time often as I pray

for our beloved city. I bring to mind and heart the event of that day and see the cross in the challenges of our city. Richard believes in and encourages our ministry to students. He helps tell our story.

I am grateful for the service and mentoring of these two contemporary saints, Frances and Richard who give so much to our students, to the needs of the people of our city, and to me.



*Ellen O'Shaughnessy*

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