

## CHRISTIAN OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The role of the Christian Outreach Committee is to find ways to utilize the resources of MLCC to assist our neighbors in need both locally and globally. So far 2008 has been an exciting year for the

### Completed:

**Crop Walk** – Neighbors walking together to take a stand against hunger in our world and raise awareness and funds for international relief and development, as well as local hunger-fighting. MLCC hosts the Miami Lakes Crop Walk annually in February.

**One Great Hour of Sharing Collection (OGHS)** - The \$1,158.00 donated by MLCC is combined with donations from throughout the UCC and becomes the relief, refugee and development fund of the United Church of Christ.

**Strengthening the Church Collection** – Through your generosity MLCC collected \$529.00 in this year's campaign. This money will be used to start new churches and provide needed financial assistance to struggling churches.

**Health Kits** - MLCC has put together over 50 health kits that have been delivered to Church World Service for distribution to needy migrants and new immigrants.

**Honduras Project** – Early in 2008 the school building project in the Town of San Luis was completed. The fundraising effort was led by Heinrich Friedemann. Together with Pastor Frantz, Mariliz Pulka, Maggie Schneider, and Outreach Chairperson Marie-Luise Friedemann, he attended a grand opening ribbon cutting ceremony in February. All were warmly welcomed by Mayor Francisco Cruz and people of the village.

**Pill Bottle Recycling** - Thank you for your support of this project. Unfortunately, though very successful we have had to cancel this program as we no longer have a place to send the pill bottles.

**The Regeneration Singers** – The Regeneration Singers are a group of talented, formerly homeless men from the Miami Rescue Mission. They performed for us on June 29, 2008 and were a big hit. We hope to bring them back to MLCC at least once a year. A Love Offering of \$739.00 was collected after the performance. This money will go to help the Miami Rescue Mission continue its work.

### On-Going:

**Child Sponsorship** – MLCC is currently sponsoring the following five children through Global Ministries.

Eglise de Dieu de Justice, Haiti  
Rawadat El-Zuhur school, Jerusalem  
Kalauman Development Center, Dumaguete City, Philippines  
Mt. Selinda orphanage, Zimbabwe  
Sermey Thoesam School for Tibetan Refugees, Bylakuppe, India

Global Ministries encourages sponsors to correspond with the children. We have received pictures of all the children and the first letter from most of them. The congregants have volunteered to correspond regularly with the children we have sponsored. We are actively soliciting families and individuals to correspond with these children. To date the following congregants have volunteered to regularly write to our children: Bill Rego and Kristen; Angie Sigler and Vivian Soto; Christina Friedmann and Thomas; Susie Larsh and children; and the Scott Egleston Family. If you are interested check out the bulletin board in fellowship hall for information on each child then please let Marie-Luise or Betty know which child you have chosen. They will make sure you get all the information needed to get started. Thank you very much!

#### Honduras Project II

During the February visit to Honduras our group was taken to an outlying area, the Village of Calpules, where a great need exists for a class room of their own. Our Goal is to raise \$4000 to build one classroom. Buoyed by the success of the first Honduras Mission the UCC Women have donated \$650.00 to start a new campaign for another class room. Dr. Gail Ballweg has generously agreed to host a fund raising dinner at her home on **September 6, 2008**. Please join us!

### Upcoming:

**The Neighbors in Need Collection** will be taken in October. Neighbors in Need is a special mission offering of the UCC that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects.

The Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM) is the voice for American Indian people in the UCC. CAIM provides Christian ministry and witness to American Indians and to the wider church. Justice issues that affect American Indian life are communicated to the whole UCC by CAIM. Two-thirds of Neighbors in Need supports program initiatives and direct grants offered by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries. Small but essential grants are made throughout the year to congregations and organizations engaged in community organizing, public policy advocacy, and direct service. Although grants are made to address a wide range of justice priorities, a significant portion of these grants address issues of hunger and poverty.

**Health Care Kits** - We will once again begin collecting items and preparing health care kits in October. Watch for more information in the bulletin.

**Thanksgiving Baskets** - The Thanksgiving baskets are assembled by the Growing Place (Maggie Schneider) for needy families of the Growing Place. The congregation contributes generously to ensure everyone will be able to enjoy a Thanksgiving meal.

**Angel Tree** – This program provides Christmas gifts for children residing in the Catholic Charities New Life Family Center. Each Christmas Season an Angel Tree is set up in the Fellowship Hall with gift requests attached as ornaments. Members of the congregation generously select one or more gift requests and become the angel for that child. Gifts are collected and delivered to the shelter in time for Christmas.



# Pastor's Reflections

By Dr. Jeffrey E. Frantz

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)*



### Going for it.

In this reading from Romans 12, Paul talks about *discerning what is the will of God* and, in the process, not concerning ourselves too much about what *the world* thinks about things.

In other words, *don't sell out or conform* too much to the world around us. All the time, the unfolding inertia of the world is towards mediocrity. When you try too hard or put forth too much effort, those around you feel diminished or pressured to keep up. Over time, they may even resent that you are *going for it* with such zeal and heart.

The will of God does not nudge us towards mediocrity.

One of the things I liked about the Olympic games, which just concluded in Beijing, China over a week ago, was the spirit of the athletes— from over 190 countries around the world. Think about it! Whether they succeeded or failed, they were *going for it*.

After years of training and preparation, they were determined to lay it all out there and simply hope for the best. And sometimes, it was good enough for a medal, even a win, and most of the time, it was not. The majority of Olympic athletes do *not* go home with a medal. But, hopefully,

they do return home with a sense of pride in their experience—both in the process of preparation and in the actual competition as well.

### We have to be willing to take

**risks.** No risk, no gain, the hackneyed saying goes. But it's true. It we never risk failure, we'll never know success. Ultimately, our lives are mostly about the *process* of our living. Winning and succeeding, of course, give us joy and a sense of accomplishment. But our lives are more about the *process* of trying to win and succeed.

What God wills for our lives is that we be as fully alive as we can. Human beings fully alive, alive to the purposes to which God calls us in Christ; this is God's ultimate joy for all of creation.

But this doesn't happen if we remain forever on the sidelines of life. At some point, we have to get off the couch, out of our comfort zone, and put ourselves out there—with whatever talent it is that God has given us and with all the zeal, effort and dedication that we can muster.

One of the fruits of taking risks is the knowledge that we'll never know what our best is if we don't *go for it*. How can we?

Again, one of the wonderful things about the Olympic Games is that, from all over the planet,

there are thousands of people *going for it*. First, in the Olympic trials in their home country; and, later, at the actual games themselves.

By *going for it*—which means putting forth our best and seeing where it takes us—we discover who we are; and along the way, God is glorified.

### Going for it with peace initiatives.

There is also, of course, a place for risk-taking in the relations between nations. With flare ups (Russia and Georgia, come to mind) and possible flare ups (Iran and whomever) always in the air or on the horizon, we're reminded, again, of the ongoing need to risk new relationships and understandings with all nations.

Part of the risk-taking is initiating open dialogue about our common concerns and anxieties. All nations need to risk the humility that comes from identifying common needs.

In the face of a world tilted strongly toward negotiating through absolute military might and power, the world is desperate for new leadership that dares to aim *higher* and risk peace-making. Peace initiatives come through relationship ... where there is a *transformation and renewal of the mind* so that, together, nations can *discern what is the will of God* (see Romans, above).

All the time, we are called to *risk* peace-making in the name of our One Creator God.