

# K-House News

SPRING 2009 Vol. 15 Number 2

## Ministry and Mission at the K-House!



Spring Break Mission Trip from the K-House—pictured above, back row: Krystal Reed, Eric Jergensen, Wedge McKee, Ron Palmer (Cedar Rapids homeowner), Phil Mixter (masked man!), Krystal Reed, Kate Healey, Gail Stearns. Middle row: Beth Ross, Michele Coburn, Rebecca Harder, Christine Byrnes, Alissa Bertsch Johnson, Kim Rose. Front: Becca Prescott, Beth Mathison. For more photos, see p. 4-5.

Right: auctioneer Austin Booker seeks bids for basketball signed by the WSU men's team, held by Michele Byrnes. Foreground table (l to r): Alex Scranton, Stephen Johnson, Todd Scranton and Chuck Sulzbach. For more on the 2009

Dinner Auction, see p.3.

### Dr. Martin Marty

The 32nd Annual Roger Williams Symposium; Friday—Saturday, October 16—17, 2009 (see p. 6)



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## From the Director . . .

Dear Friends of The Common Ministry,

What a fun year we have had — both with students and within our community! You will see photos and information about two big Spring events in these pages: the student Mission Trip, and our Annual Dinner/Auction.

The Winter and Spring have been sobering, as well, as WSU has faced serious budget cuts, and with the unfortunate occurrence of several student accidents and deaths. We have remained involved with the University as a Common Ministry, keeping abreast of events and helping with pastoral counseling and religious conversation or ritual wherever our services are requested.

In particular this Spring, I offered Stress Reduction Workshops which many faculty and staff attended (and many emailed saying they were too stressed and busy to attend!). And I have frankly been drinking a lot of coffee, with people whose jobs are on the line or who are concerned about others whose futures are uncertain. I am glad The Common Ministry is here to be supportive in times like these.

In my ramblings later in this newsletter, I ask you a question about a historic and sacred site within the K-House, and would really like your input. We can have coffee, too, either virtually over email, or in person!

As we plan for fall, please send us information about any high school or transfer students you know who may be coming to WSU. We would be happy to meet with them this summer, and will certainly contact them to participate in K-House activities this fall!

Blessings for the summer, and as always, thank you for your continued support! Gail

### **Yoga at the K-House**

Tues/Thurs 12:00—1:00p.m.

June 2—July 2, 2009

With Karen Faunce

Five week session—\$10 drop in rate  
Call the K-House for information  
and to learn about further sessions  
later in the summer and starting in the fall!

## Fall Calendar

### **FALL STUDENT PROGRAMS:**

**Inspire! Wednesdays at 5:00 p.m.** — a joint venture with the Methodist and Episcopal student groups— open to **all** students. Come for emerging worship, free supper, discussion and fellowship. With Alissa Bertsch Johnson and Phil Mixter.

**Inquire—Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m.** — free supper, devotion, discussion on faith issues—led by Gail; open to all students

### **RETREATS, TRIPS & SERVICE**

**Student Retreat, St. Gertrude's Monastery, Oct. 23-25, 2009**

### **FOR FACULTY & COMMUNITY:**

**Meditation, Thurs. at noon**—Community Cong. UCC

**Book Study, Mondays at noon**—studying works by Martin Marty—faculty, retired, friends, students—all are welcome! Begins again mid-August, led by Gail

**Yoga**, Tuesdays-Thursdays at noon June 2—July 2, call for dates & times after July 2

**Roger Williams Symposium 2009**, October 16—17

**MOSAIC—held at Community Congregational United Church of Christ** — an exciting inclusive contemplative worship service—for the whole Palouse community!

Please check our website or call the K-House or Commu-

nity Congregational UCC (332-6411) for dates & times of services this summer and fall.

**ALSO at the K-House (call for dates & times or check our website [www.commonministry.com](http://www.commonministry.com) for those not specifically listed):**

**AA** — Alcoholics Anonymous — everyday 12:10-1pm  
**Seventh-day Adventist Student Gatherings**

**Friends (Quakers)** meetings, Thursdays at 6:30 p.m.

**Christian Science Organization**—Wednesday noons

**Hillel**, Jewish Student Group weekly meetings

**Rotaract Club** — Fridays at 4pm

**Atheist and Agnostic Student Group**

**Jewish Community of the Palouse** worship & Sunday School

**YWCA Office and Events**

**Korean Evangelical Pastor**

**Moscow Presbyterian Men**—Tuesday noon

**Interfaith Dialog**—monthly meetings

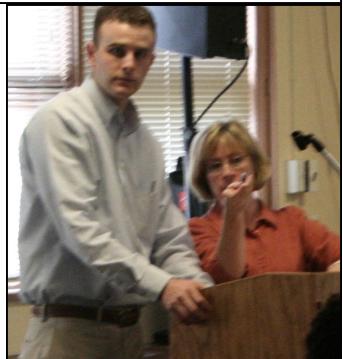
**Periodic Users:** The Bookie, African Friendship Assoc., Education Abroad, New Student Programming, Campus Involvement, College Hill Assoc., Graduate Reception, Denim Charity Events, Women's Studies, International Student Council, Buddhist Meditation Group, Graduate Women in Science, Friends and Family, St. James Episcopal Vestry Retreat, Disability Resource Center, Literary and Arts Journal, Mothers Weekend Tea, Camarada, Mecha, Intervaristy Girls Retreat, AA Potlucks and Barbecues, Various WSU Departments.

# Connecting our Community



**2009 Annual Spring Buffet Fundraiser**—above: Senior Caitlin Gordon and First-year student Beth Ross tell about Student Programming; right: Auctioneer Austin Booker and Common Ministry Director Gail Stearns confer before the auction; below: lots of smiles throughout a fun evening of lively bidding and camaraderie!

The 21st Annual Spring Dinner-Auction was held on Sunday, April 19th, with an outstanding attendance. This is The Common Ministry's major annual fund-raising event and a major fellowship event in the Pullman church community and for the wonderful supporters of the Common Ministry's work. Austin Booker (at right with Common Ministry Director



Gail Stearns), college student and professional auctioneer, presided over the auction for the sixth year in a row. As happens every year, there were some real "must have" items, including the catered dinner cooked and served by K-House staff, a stunning quilt donated by Janice Caruso, floral arrangements from Jane Stratton and Neill's Flowers, the beautiful fish dipping net by Bill Hendrix, an autographed WSU basketball, pesto by Tim Paulitz, a retreat to St. Gertrude's

Benedictine Monastery, a poultry package furnished by Eric and Sheryl Zakarison, wine tasting for two provided by the Old Post Office Wine Cellar and Gallery, and many others.

The Dinner-Auction Committee came up with some great innovations for this year's event. The changes began with the change in venue — our event was held at the Gladish Community Center in the View Room, a terrific facility for this type of event. Another change was having Council Members, Endowment Board Members and other supporters hosting tables at the catered dinner and coming up with their own guest list. This innovation created a diverse crowd who enjoyed the fun evening of camaraderie!



## Still Taking Donations!

Many auction attendees gave additional donations to The Common Ministry—here's how if you would like to:

- (1) **Through the WSU Foundation:** Include your name, address, phone number, gift amount, gift designation "The Koinonia House", credit card number and expiration date. Mail to: WSU Foundation, PO Box 641927, Pullman, WA 99164-1927
- (2) **On-line** through our website [www.commonministry.com](http://www.commonministry.com) — click on "Donations through WSU Foundation"
- (3) **Mail a check** payable to "The Common Ministry" to The Common Ministry, 720 NE Thatuna, Pullman, WA 99163.



# The K-House Kids:

**Twelve K-House students** and three leaders, Phil Mixter, Alissa Bertsch Johnson, and Gail Stearns, embarked from Pullman to Cedar Rapids, Iowa over Spring Break this year. We went to assist with flood relief after the devastating floods that hit Cedar Rapids in June, 2008. Once we arrived, UMCOR (United Methodist

Committee on Relief) assigned us one home to work on, owned by an elderly gentleman named Ron. We were hosted by the First Presbyterian Church in Marion, Iowa, Gail's home church. Students stayed in the "mission house" next to the church, and members of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches gave us food as well as welcomed us into their homes for wonderful meals in the evenings.

At Ron's house, we carried out his remaining belongings and completely gutted the



house that was once filled with 12 feet of water, and had been sitting empty since June. We left the house at the end of the week with several coats of bleach on the stripped floors, walls and ceilings in the completely cleared out basement, first and second floors. And we left Ron with a photo album of his family photos some of our students found in the rubble, and put together for him.



On Friday, between coats of bleach, we cooked food for 100 people and served lunch at "House of Hope," a mission for the homeless in Cedar Rapids, serving many persons displaced by the flood.

It was a week of hard physical work, incredible Midwest hospitality, and remarkable teamwork. Read on for some of the student participant's comments!



*This was my third Mission Trip, and I have never seen a group of people work this hard every day before!*

Wedge McKee



face masks after tearing down ceiling insulation. From top left, clockwise: Krystal Reed and Caitlin Gordon carrying out books belonging to the homeowner; Caitlin and Krystal looking on as Ron looks over the photo album Krystal made for him; Wedge McKee working to clear the cluttered basement; Michele Coburn wielding a crowbar to pull down ceiling insulation; superimposed over one of many piles of debris we carried out and the city carried away!

*The people of Cedar Rapids were wonderful! I really enjoyed listening to their stories and learning how they prevailed through the hard times after the flood.*

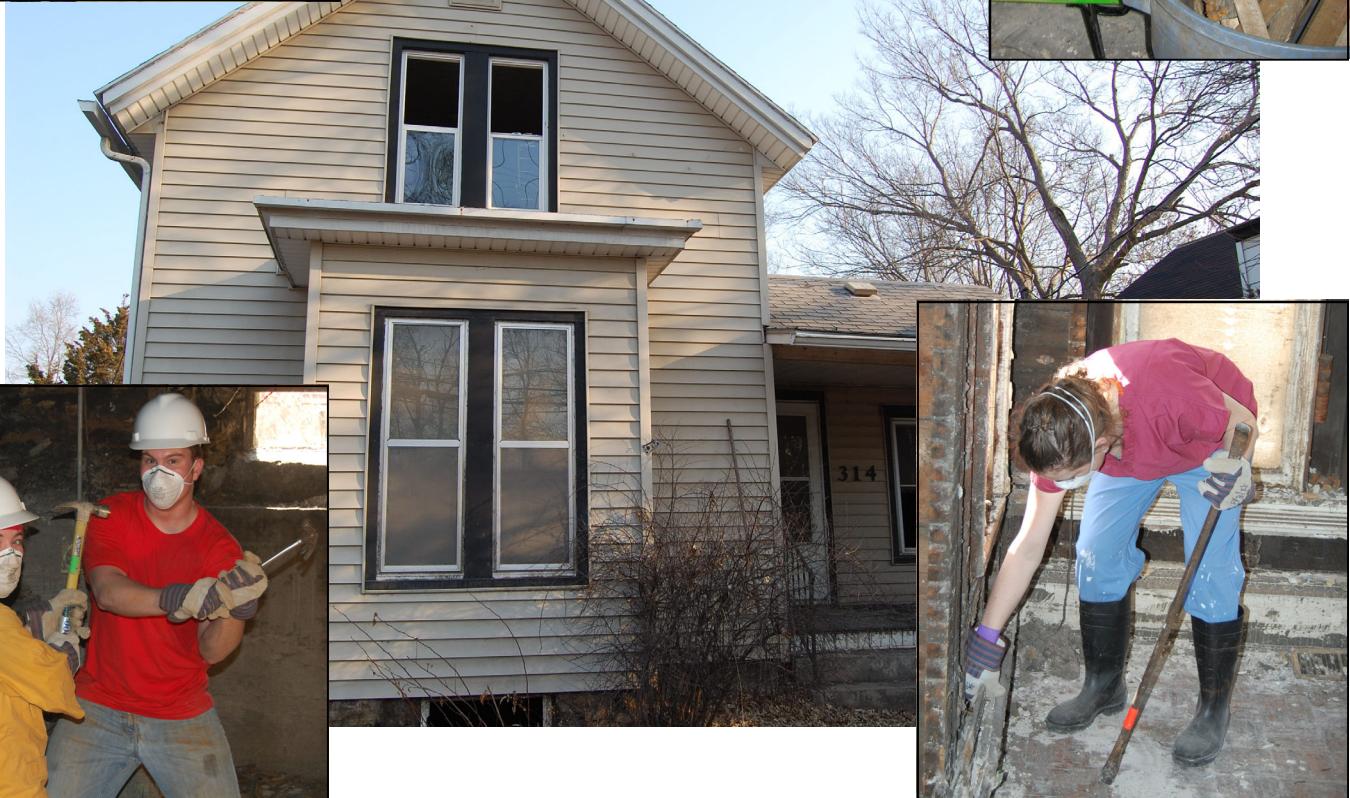


# Doing Mission & Service



*Helping with flood relief in Cedar Rapids, Iowa was an amazing experience I'll never forget. Everyone in Iowa was so gracious and welcoming and it was a joy to help make the community a better place!*

Beth Ross



*We were working to help someone we barely knew, to start a project that we will most likely never see the end result of, yet the students in our group did it with such joy and compassion.*

Becca Prescott

Pictured above, from top left, clockwise: Kim Rose wields a hammer; Christine Byrnes hauls out slats and debris; Beth Mathison clears out insulation in the wall; Eric Jergensen and Becca Prescott destroy a workbench in the basement. Ron's house is in the center, above. Below right: a boat maneuvers through the center of the city during the Cedar Rapids flood.

In June, 2008 1,300 blocks, to include most of downtown Cedar Rapids, were inundated with 3,900 homes being affected. Mays Island, which has Cedar Rapids City Hall, the Linn County Courthouse, the county jail as well as the United States Courthouse was flooded up to the second floor level. The Czech Village (near the home we worked on) was particularly hard hit. All but one of the city's wells were flooded, which Cedar Rapids residents worked furiously to sandbag and save, and water usage restrictions were imposed. Hundreds of flood relief teams have helped since June, including 60 college student teams over Spring Break, 2009.



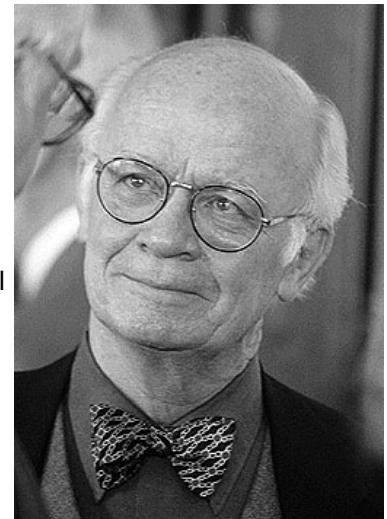
# The Common Ministry: Engaging You in Faith and Learning

## Announcing Dr. Martin Marty

### Keynote speaker for the 32nd Annual Roger Williams Symposium; Friday—Saturday, October 16—17, 2009

Martin Marty is a Lutheran pastor, ordained in 1952. He is The Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago, where he taught chiefly in the Divinity School for 35 years. You can see his work in *The Christian Century*, as well as the semimonthly *Context*, which he edits. Marty is author of more than 50 books.

Among the books Marty has written are *Righteous Empire*, for which he won the National Book Award; the three-volume *Modern American Religion*; *The One and the Many: America's Search for the Common Good*; and, with photographer Micah Marty, *Places Along the Way; Our Hope for Years to Come; The Promise of Winter*; and *When True Simplicity Is Gained*. His *Martin Luther* in the "Penguin Lives" series was published in February 2004. He has authored more than 5,000 articles. Marty was director of both the *Fundamentalism Project* of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the *Public Religion Project* at the University of Chicago. He is the recipient of numerous honors.



You can read more about Martin Marty on his website: [www.illuminos.com](http://www.illuminos.com). Registration brochures are available at the K-House by calling 332-2611 or emailing [office@commonministry.com](mailto:office@commonministry.com), or register for the event on our website: [www.commonministry.com](http://www.commonministry.com).



ZOE  
UNDERGROUND  
NOW  
OPEN  
in the K-HOUSE  
basement café!!!

Fall Welcome Back Barbeque Monday, Aug. 24,  
5:00 p.m. K-House lawn  
for Incoming Students, Re-  
turning Students, and Friends  
of the K-House!

### Meditation Group all summer!

Community members welcome  
Thursdays 12:00 noon - 1:00pm  
Community Congregational UCC  
525 NE Campus St., Pullman  
NO experience necessary!

#### **Confessions** (continued from p. 7)

are editions of "S'Blood," a paper issued by K-House students themselves, among other publications. One sees articles and photos of civil rights activism at the time, from anti-apartheid posters to peace rallies. It is a part of our activist history, and ever since has been held sacred by the Common Ministry Council, staff and students of the K-House.

Last year, a student active in the K-House invited his significant other to campus – who happened to be a Jewish man. The two went to have coffee in Zoe Underground, which now occupies the K-House basement space. Our student reported to me later his friend was quite offended by a small swastika that had been drawn and carved into the wall probably three dozen years ago.

Then very recently, I had a call from a WSU employee, who said he was having lunch in Zoe's with another col-

league who is an African American man. The latter was looking at the wall and seeing what was apparently an attempt to highlight our violent racist history—a poster from the slave trade—said (reportedly in a joking tone) something akin to, "they're selling Negroes here—we'd better leave." My caller said to me he understood why the wall was there – but suggested that maybe "it's time to get rid of it."

Get rid of the Sacred Wall? I was stopped short. Maybe it is time. Maybe what we hold sacred is now a form of prejudice that causes pain, and it is time to let go of it. Is this what the gospel requires of us? I would love to hear your thoughts and suggestions. How do we preserve history but not hold something so sacred that we offend others? Is it time to get rid of the K-House basement Sacred Wall? Email me at [gailstearns@commonministry.com](mailto:gailstearns@commonministry.com). I'll share your thoughts with The Common Ministry Council. Or better yet, if you're in town, stop by and we'll have a cup of coffee downstairs in Zoe Underground, right next to the wall.

# Confessions of a Campus Minister

By Gail Stearns

If my life were more exciting (and scandalous), you might be about to read one of those prodigal repentance testimonials given by ministers admitting some sin, acknowledging they are only human and offering to do some penance. Alas, I'm afraid what I have to say isn't really that juicy. But it may be even more heartfelt. There are some truths in life we seem to never quite learn completely – and they keep popping up.

Lately, for me, it is the realization that what I hold most sacred is, at best, not really that important or even just plain trivial, or at worst, hurtful or even truly offensive to someone else. An important lesson – after all, each generation wars are fought, and every day people experience oppression due to prejudices disguised as sacred truths. This has hit home to me several ways lately.

Sometimes what we hold sacred is not so important in the big scheme of things. I wrote a book while on sabbatical a year ago. Now, that manuscript is sacred to me. I have had it with one publisher for a number of months, Stephanie Egnotovich, from Westminster/ John Knox Press, a talented editor held in high regard by many, with whom I was very excited to work. I was beginning to get irritated that my sacred manuscript was possibly not being treated with the attention it deserved, and about to make a call to inquire (my fear that it was rejected had stopped me to this point). Then last night I opened my latest copy of *The Christian Century* to learn Stephanie Egnotovich had died, quite suddenly, after a brief illness. I'd say what I call sacred is not particularly important right now. The religious world has lost a gifted professional.

Sometimes what we think is trivial is quite sacred to someone else. I quite often hear adults in my age group and older bemoan the fact that face-to-face relationships filled with depth and sharing are a thing of the past (I confess I have joined that litany of regret). We don't really "get" the preoccupation with virtual quips and confessional blogging of young people today. Their world appears to us to be reduced to walking alone talking on a cell phone, listening solo to personal selections of music through earphones, and sitting alone, typing (never using proper grammar – another sacred violation to many of us) at a keyboard. Are young people today really more shallow?

The students at the K-House have taught me that is not at all true. In fact, they can find one another when a friend is having a tough day quicker (text: where are u now?) and get together, or if not, send words of encouragement (hang in there!). I have entered the virtual world, and find it a great tool to discover whether students are depressed, sad, or in pain – and when I send a message to inquire what's up, I inevitably find them in my office engaged in old fashioned face-to-face conversation. Maybe they have even closer relationships than they used to.

Sometimes what we hold sacred is hurtful to others. I have learned through the years that it is important to let University students be candid and even critical with me, telling me what and how they think (because, as I mentioned above with their computer use, it is often

foreign to me). But I have learned, the hard way, that not all agree, especially if they are not expecting such candidness. What is to me openness and honesty can be to another disrespect and cause pain. Pain I then feel responsible for because of what I encourage and hold, and assume others do too, to be sacred.

Perhaps one lesson we are all learning too slowly these days is how we hold sacred our lifestyle but have serious blind spots

regarding the consequences of our actions, as we commit serious violence toward the earth. From movies to t.v. documentaries to countless studies on global warming to calls for recycling, we are being called to wake up to the environmental damage we are doing every day. I felt convicted of this in a new way upon reading, with the K-House Monday noon Book Study group, *The Spell of the Sensuous* by David Abram. Abram approaches our indifference to the earth in a unique way. He suggests we have lost the ability to perceive our relationship with nature. Perception, he says, is participation. If we truly perceived the life in the birds and plants and oceans around us we would be aware that every action we take has a relational effect upon them. He writes:

*Only as we come close to our senses, and begin to trust, once again, the nuanced intelligence of our sensing bodies, do we begin to notice and respond to the subtle logos of the land.*

*There is an intimate reciprocity to the senses; as we touch the bark of a tree, we feel the tree touching us; as we lend our ears to the local sounds and ally our nose to the seasonal scents, the terrain gradually tunes us in in turn.*

This may seem far fetched. But I am aware that everything speaks to us—especially nature, which is alive, but even a wall that stands silent, displaying writing upon it. Incidentally, Abrams writes extensively about the written word and how it can either alienate us from or draw us closer to our environment.

An example of that has hit me very recently ... and ***with this one I would really like your help.*** Sometimes what we hold to be a sacred sign of our openness and support of those different from us is actually simply another form of prejudice. In the K-House basement is a wall, plastered with newspapers from the late 60's and early 70's. There (continued on previous page, p. 6)



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**Campus Pastors and Staff:**

Gail J. Stearns, Director  
Alissa Bertsch Johnson, Wesley Foundation Director  
Wilhelmina Sarai-Clark, Community Liaison  
Phil Mixter, Episcopal Campus Pastor  
Charlie Spurgeon, Office Manager

**Common Ministry Student Leadership**

**Team:**  
Marissa Caryl, Student Organization President  
Plus student volunteers on the Common Ministry Student Leadership Team

**Common Ministry  
Council Members**

Ed Bennett & Chip Laird (President), United Church of Christ  
Lenore Chambers, Emi Dickens, and Walt Miller, Presbyterian (USA)  
Phil Mixter & Sue Durrant Episcopal  
Alberta Hill, Disciples of Christ  
Nicholas Cerruti (Past President), Peggy Ray, & Marissa Caryl, United Methodist  
Terry Keller, American Baptist  
George Martin (Treasurer), Student Representative Becca Prescott



**DENOMINATIONS COOPERATING IN THE COMMON MINISTRY AT WSU:**

American Baptist (Evergreen Association), Christian Church/Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, Presbyterian (USA), Seventh-day Adventist, United Church of Christ (Congregational), United Methodist