

# MCC New Yorkers March to Stop the H8 by Mel Bryant

MCC New Yorkers joined hundreds of LGBTQ activists to march against the California Supreme Court's decision to let Prop 8 stand and to say to New York State that now is the time for marriage equality in New York on Tuesday, May 26, 2009. The march stepped off from Sheridan Square and ended up in Union Square where speaker after speaker spoke out against the decision in California and called on New York State to make marriage equality a reality for same-sex couples in New York.

Bradley Curry and Mel Bryant spoke on behalf of MCC New York. In their remarks, they said:

*As we raced through our vows that day in February, someone from the clerk's office remarked "Rev. Pat. She's determined, that one."*

*Let us now be that determined.*

*Determined to say to the California Supreme Court SHAME ON YOU. Shame on you for writing discrimination and now segregation into your constitution.*

*Shame on you for saying some of us are full human beings and some of us are not.*

*Let us now be that determined.*

*Determined to say to the State of New York. NOW IS THE TIME. Now is the time to recognize all of us as human beings. Full and dignified human beings whose loves and lives matter. Whose relationships, like Bradley's and mine, 11 years this year, matter.*

*Let us now be that determined.*

*Determined to not give up the fight that the Reverend Troy Perry, founder of Metropolitan Community Churches, began back in 1970 when he filed the first lawsuit for marriage equality in California.*

*Let us now be that determined.*

*Determined to not give up. To not give up until the day when we not only have marriage equality but human equality and dignity.*



## Join with your family of faith on Pride Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup>

9 a.m. Traditional Pride Liturgy

11 a.m. Celebration Pride Liturgy

*\*followed by special to-go bags for "Coffee Hour" so that we can all make it to the march site by 12pm (52<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Ave.)*

12 p.m. Communion in the Streets *(at the march site)*

7 p.m. Praise and Worship Pride Service – *No better way to end the day!*

Metropolitan Community Church of New York  
446 West 36th Street  
New York, NY 10018



## MCCNY Celebrates Pentecost Sunday

*When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a noise came from heaven. It sounded like a strong wind blowing. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.*  
— Acts 2: 1-2,4

The mighty wind was certainly blowing that last Sunday in May when MCC New York celebrated Pentecost Sunday with special guests and special celebrations, special music and special blessings.

The celebration began when we were blessed to have The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Moderator of the worldwide movement of faith that is Metropolitan Community Churches, preach at the 9 a.m. Traditional Liturgy.

The celebration continued at the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy when MCCNY was honored to welcome Bishop Yvette Flunder to the pulpit. Of Bishop Flunder, The Rev. Edgard Francisco Danielson-Morales wrote;

*Rev. Dr. Yvette Flunder serves as Senior Pastor of City of Refuge United Church of Christ in San Francisco; a radically inclusive church she founded in 1991 in order to unite a gospel ministry with a social ministry.*

*In June 2003, Bishop Flunder was consecrated as Presiding Bishop of The Fellowship, a trans-denominational fellowship of 60+ primarily African-American Christian clergy and laity representing churches and faith-based organizations from all parts of the country and as far away as Africa.*

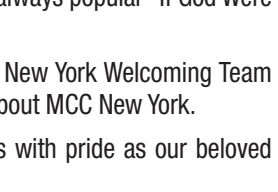
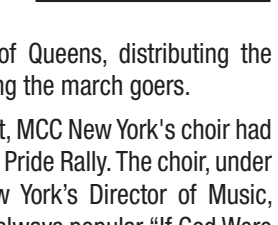
On May 24, 2009, Bishop Flunder received credentials from Metropolitan Community Churches at a ceremony at MCCDC.

Following Bishop Flunder's sermon, The Rev. Steve Parelli, Executive Director of Other Sheep was ordained into the ministry of Metropolitan Community Churches by The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson as part of the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy. On its website, Other Sheep says it "is a multi-cultural ecumenical Christian Ministry that works worldwide for the full inclusion of LGBT people people of faith within their respective faith traditions."

Special music for the celebration was offered by Lynn Loosier and Bishop Joseph Tolton's choir from Rehoboth Temple Christ Consciousness Church. MCC New York's own choir, under the direction of John Fischer, Director of Music, also performed, bringing the congregation to their feet. Thank you to John and all of our musicians for their contribution to the celebration.

As is our tradition on Pentecost Sunday, the benediction was offered in a variety of languages. Six year old Alexandre Moreira Dumaine, an active member of our Sunday School, offered the final blessing in Portuguese, one of many languages he speaks.

Christians of African Descent and the staff of the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry prepared and served an abundant feast for those in attendance.



Photos by Mortel Cherry & Yolanda Holmes

## Reverend Pat Co-Grand Marshall at Queens Pride



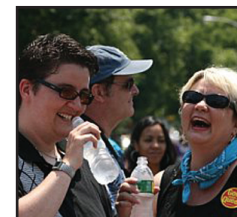
WELCOME REV. PAT BUMGARDNER MCCNY — This message greeted the Reverend Pat Bumgardner, Senior Pastor, MCC New York as she was honored by Queens Pride for her work for social justice when she served as co-grand marshall of the Queens Pride March on Sunday, June 7, 2009.

Following a Pride breakfast hosted by Danny Drumm, Queens Pride stepped off where Rev. Pat and members of her congregation marched through the streets of Queens, distributing the iconic "God Made Me \_\_\_" stickers and greeting the march goers.

As part of the celebration and to honor Rev. Pat, MCC New York's choir had been invited to perform at the afternoon's Pride Rally. The choir, under the direction of John Fischer, MCC New York's Director of Music, offered "Come and Go With Me" and the always popular "If God Were a D.J."

Casey and Mike Easterling and the MCC New York Welcoming Team staffed a table to distribute information about MCC New York.

For those of us in attendance, it filled us with pride as our beloved Pastor was honored on that glorious day.



## The Query Quarterly/Summer 2009

446 West 36th Street | New York, NY 10018 | Phone: (212) 629-7440 | info@mccny.org | www.mccny.org

MCCNY is a member of Metropolitan Community Churches, a global movement of faith with congregations in 28 nations. The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Moderator



# A Pride Message from Rev. Pat Bumgardner:

Jesus said, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." —Mark 7

Dear Friends:

As we approach Pride Sunday this year, we do so under two banners: Heritage of Pride's theme for the city is "Paint the Town Ruby!", while the global Pride theme is "Our Rights, Your Rights, Human Rights." And both, in their own way, pay tribute to the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion.

Most of us know the story, or at least some version of what happened late on the night of June 27<sup>th</sup>, early on the morning of June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1969. It has become the legend we live by — how people, once no people, as the hymn says, became God's people; how those who had long gone silently to the slaughter, suddenly stood up for themselves, and in so doing laid a foundation for Queer people around the world to do the same.

Most of us know, it was nine months after the founding of Metropolitan Community Churches — perhaps a time line significant for what would follow: the birth of a Queer rights movement — that people gathering at a small bar in the West Village with names like Jim Fourratt and Portuguese Fisherwoman, Jean DeVente and Spanola Jerry, Sylvia Rivera, Young Timmy, Joey Day and Marsha "Pay-it-no-Mind" Johnson, people in chinos and button down shirts, and people daintily clad in 13dd heels, would finally "come out" for the human rights of Queer people. Perhaps the diversity of that unplanned gathering was a picture of what was to come, as people from all over the globe, from every walk of life, identifying under varying names and orientations would converge to form a movement.

Much like that early band seeking freedom — the people Moses led for 40 years — on the surface, our differences were many. But underneath, whether we see everything exactly the same or agree on political priorities, one thing has always held us together — the same thing that held together all those people fleeing Egypt and seeking their promise in a new land: the firm conviction that we are all of us the beloved Children of God, human beings created in God's image.

That is really the heart of every healing story, every story of liberation in the Bible — the fact that all of us are human beings, created in God's image, and therefore absolutely deserve to be treated with equal dignity and have equal access to all the wholeness and healing life can offer.

"Be opened," is both the call and the promise of the Gospel. It's Jesus' word to people everywhere who want to live in a world where borders are places of welcome cross-over not division and separation; where resources are the things we share and hold in common, not hoard or fight over. "Be opened" — those are the words that invite us into a future where my rights are your rights, because we are human beings.

They are the words marchers are carrying into the streets of Beirut, crying out for the repeal of Article 534, a law that not only criminalizes our love, but renders that love "unnatural/inhuman."

"Be opened" are the words "Rainbow Flashmobs" released into the skies over 40 Russian cities where Queer people face persecution and intolerance — the words proclaimed by "Rainbow in Motion" bicyclers peddling to seven campuses in Beijing calling for a more "harmonious society."

Who knew, that simply by being open to who we are, nations and governments around the globe could and would be moved to sign a statement saying our rights are human rights? We've seen a life time of miracles in 40 short years, and I believe with all my heart we are just on the edge of more and greater transformations. To me, that's the real significance of this 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary — we've looked over into the promised land; we know what is possible; now, it's just about being open to all that future can hold for all of us.

May Jesus' words become both our blessing and our commission: "Be open!"

With love,

Rev. Pat

## The QUERY

Editor ..... Mel Bryant  
 Graphic Design and Layout Editor ..... Les LaRue  
 Staff Photographer ..... Montel Cherry  
 Contributors ..... Mary & Monica Cole,  
 Rev. Edgard Francisco Danielsén-Morales,  
 Casey Easterling, Yolanda Holmes,  
 William Morán-Berberena, Chris Stadmeyer,  
 Ted Walner, Frances Wood

Metropolitan Community Church of New York  
 446 W. 36th St., New York, NY 10018  
 (212) 629-7440 • www.mccny.org

Sunday Worship Services at 9am (traditional)  
 11am (celebration), and 7pm (praise & worship)

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 1:30pm,  
 Time Warner channel 57, RCN channel 85

## Letter from the Editor:

Dear Friends and Family,

After a few false starts, we were on our way to the Trans Health Conference in Philadelphia. With Daniel at the wheel and William as the co-pilot, I took a moment to think about those of us in that van and the conference's theme Different Paths...One Journey.

The path that led Daisy and Daisy and Abby and Ryan and Nathalia and Tonia to MCC New York where they have created community.

The path that led Nina and Daniel and Frances to Finishing School where they share their time and talents so freely.

The path that led Chris to the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry where he implemented a program to give our clients choices.

The path that led Miss Veronica Vera to Finishing School where she has become a source of inspiration.

The path that led Christopher to Homeless Youth Services to serve as drop-in coordinator six evenings a week.

The path that led Casey and Mike to form the Brooklyn Small Group to give us yet another opportunity for fellowship.

As we celebrate our Pride this month, let us remember that while our paths may be different, we are all on this one journey called life. Together.

Happy Pride.

Enjoy the issue.

Mel Bryant, Editor

# News From The Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry by Chris Stadmeyer, Director

The Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry is now officially a Client Choice Pantry. After more than 20 years of handing out prepackaged groceries to needy members of the community, clients of the pantry are now able to choose their groceries in a grocery store style setting. The first official Client Choice distribution was ceremoniously opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony on April 23, 2009. Rev Pat was present to cut the ribbon and bless the transformed space. The response in these first few weeks has been overwhelmingly positive. Initially we were concerned that the Client Choice style would take significantly longer than the old system, but it turns out that our Thursday morning distribution time has not increased and clients do not have to wait any longer than usual and are grateful for the opportunity to choose their groceries.

In addition to changing our distribution model, we've also been able to offer much more fresh produce to our clients. The increased fruits and vegetables have come from two different programs. The first is a program through the Food Bank for NYC. Instead of ordering from Food Bank's warehouse, we are given a line of credit and allowed to order from a private wholesaler, as long as we spend more than 15% of the money on fresh produce. As we near the end of the current contract year, we've been able to spend over 25% of the money on produce, putting hundreds of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables into the homes of food insecure New Yorkers.

Our second source of produce is the Chelsea CSA (Community



(Photos by Mel Bryant)

Supported Agriculture) program. We are very happy to be working with the CSA for a second season. The Chelsea CSA operates out of the Hudson Guild Community Center on 26<sup>th</sup> Street and brings organic vegetables from Stoneledge Farm in the Hudson Valley every Tuesday. At the end of each CSA distribution, our pantry staff comes in and takes all the leftover vegetables back to MCCNY where it is distributed on Thursday mornings.

On a sadder note, this will be my last article for *The Query* as I'm resigning my position as Director. It's been an awesome three years here at MCCNY and I am extremely grateful for the opportunities I have had. I am very proud of the work we do here and all the positive changes that have been taking place within MCCNY/Charities. It has been a great privilege to work with so many people who are so committed to social justice. Best of luck to MCCNY and all your future projects. I will miss you all very much.

# Miss Veronica Vera Visits Rev. Pat's Finishing School by Mel Bryant



*Late Night With Conan O'Brian* and *The View*.

Miss Vera took questions from the girls, many of whom knew her work. One young woman, in particular, was excited to meet Miss Vera because the first book she purchased as she began her journey was *Miss Vera's Finishing School for Boys Who Want To Be Girls*.

Miss Vera spent time sharing her experiences with the girls and taking questions. She ended the evening with a group photo with the girls that she will use for her column in *Transgender Tapestry* magazine.

## Rev. Pat's Finishing School To Receive Gift

Thanks to Miss Veronica Vera, Rev. Pat's Finishing School will be receiving a cash gift from Feminists for Freedom of Expression. This gift marks the first cash gift and the largest gift to date for Finishing School.

The gift will be used to purchase Metrocards for participants of Finishing School beginning with the next cycle that kicks off in September, 2009 and to help offset the costs for participants to attend the Trans Health Conference in Philadelphia, PA.

Everyone from Rev. Pat's Finishing School is extremely grateful to Feminists for Freedom of Expression and particularly to Miss Veronica Vera for this generous donation.

## News from MCCNY/Homeless Youth Services by Frances Wood

### New Client IDs Help Keep Sylvia's Place Youth Safe

Sylvia's Place has improved safety and support for runaway and homeless LGBTQ youth through the implementation of a new comprehensive ID system in April. The ID process puts new Sylvia's Place youth in contact with the MCCNY Homeless Youth Services' social worker and psychiatric nurse practitioner directly upon entering the shelter space. Following these meetings and the approval of the Homeless Youth Services director, youth receive an HYS ID to be worn during shelter hours. Beyond improving communication between youth and HYS staff, the ID process has also had an immediate impact on HYS safety. Staff report fewer incidences within the shelter space, making it easier for youth to feel secure when accessing services and continuing their critical work towards self-sufficiency. Over 100 youth have completed the ID process to date.



Scout Evans and Lucky Michaels with new IDs.

### HYS Welcomes New Drop-In Coordinator

Homeless Youth Services drop-in hours draw over 50 youth each night who access over 20 workshops and scheduled services per week. Harmonizing these programs and ensuring that youth receive the services they need requires careful oversight and dedication to the mission of Homeless Youth Services. MCCNY Charities is pleased to welcome Christopher Collazo (above), the new Drop-In Coordinator



for MCCNY Homeless Youth Services. Christopher brings a wealth of experience to this position, having served as an HIV/AIDS Case Manager at Heritage Community of Care Project prior to joining the MCCNY Charities staff. Congratulations to Christopher, and welcome to the newest member of the MCCNY staff.

## MCCNY Charities Builds Community at Trans Health Conference by Frances Wood

For three days in June, downtown Philadelphia became a site of education, affirmation and community for representatives of MCCNY Charities. A total of seven delegates from Homeless Youth Services and Rev. Pat's Finishing School joined with MCCNY Charities staff to attend the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference, a national event that brings together people of trans experience, their families, allies and service providers to acknowledge the needs and successes of transgender individuals and communities.

Representatives of MCCNY spent the day attending discussions, film screenings and workshops from "Trans Embodiments as Spiritual Practice" to "Hormone Options for Trans Men" and spent evenings sharing what they had learned with other members of the MCCNY group.

"It was my first conference and I loved it," said Daisy La'Telle, youth representative from Sylvia's Place. "I got to express myself, make new friends, and get good information about my health as a trans woman."

Finishing School Director Mel Bryant was invited to sit on a panel for "Counseling Transgender Folks in Religious/Spiritual Communities:" part of a new programmatic emphasis on spirituality introduced at this year's conference.

"The Trans Health Conference was a great opportunity to connect with some fantastic people," said Mel Bryant. "The representatives of MCCNY also used this time to bond with one another and get to know each other better. I am really grateful to everyone who made this weekend such a success."

(photos by William Moran-Berberena)



## News from Binghamton

The Rev. Miller Hoffman, Staff Pastor for MCC New York's Binghamton congregation was invited to speak at the raising of the Pride flag in Binghamton New York. During the ceremony, Rev. Miller said:

*On behalf of the Binghamton Pride Coalition, thanks to everyone who is here today. For the Pride shown both by our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities and the Pride of our allies. This is a day for Pride and a day for support. A day to witness one another's acts of friendship and resistance. It's a day to recognize our need for each other.*

*We need you.*

*We need each other. We need you, and you need us. Dr. King said that none of us are free until we are all free, and as the world becomes safer for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and trans and queer folk, the world becomes safer for everyone to live outside the code of imposed and compulsory gender and sexuality: safer for straight "sensitive" men and strong, vocal women, safer for masculinity and femininity and love to melt all over the spectrum of humanity.*

*Peace.*

## MCC New York Walks To Fight AIDS by Casey Easterling

On Sunday, May 17, 2009, a group of 25 individuals from Metropolitan Community Church of New York gathered in Central Park for the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual AIDS Walk New York. Team members met under the balloon-covered MCCNY banner for juice and donuts provided by the MCCNY Welcoming Team before setting off on the 5K walk in and around the park. Many MCCNY walkers donned "God Made Me Queer" shirts to show their MCCNY and LGBTQ pride. The Welcoming Team also provided the walkers with red ribbons to show their solidarity with people living with HIV/AIDS as well as rainbow-colored necklaces to add to the festive atmosphere.



Thirty-five MCCNYers, family and friends joined the MCCNY team, surpassing our initial goal of 25 people. Each registered participant asked family members, friends and acquaintances to sponsor them for the Walk with all money raised benefitting the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), the world's oldest HIV/AIDS organization. GMHC is dedicated to ending the AIDS epidemic and uplifting the lives of all those who are affected in New York City.

Thanks to the remarkable efforts and care, individuals on the MCCNY team raised \$3,255, qualifying the team to be named a Fundraising Excellence Team by AIDS Walk New York and beating its own goal of \$1000. This award recognizes the 601 teams that raised \$1,000 or more during this year's Walk. MCCNY is currently in 208<sup>th</sup> place for fundraising out of 2,885 registered team.

Thank you to all of the walkers and financial supporters for the success of this year's AIDS Walk.



(photos by Casey Easterling)

## The Brooklyn Small Group by Casey Easterling

The Welcoming Team members at the Metropolitan Community Church of New York, Casey Easterling, Mike Easterling, Tressie Carter and Angel Martinez, share a vision of helping to make MCCNY, a large church with almost 500 members, feel like a small church by creating and deepening relationships among the members, regular attendees and visitors at MCCNY.

Author and theologian, J.I. Packer stated, "The church will flourish only when there is fellowship." One way the Welcoming Team is working to accomplish this important goal is through the launch of the Brooklyn Small Group, the newest of the MCCNY affinity groups. Small Groups provide valuable opportunities for fellowship and relationship building within the church because the small group environment encourages individuals to talk more freely than they might in a larger setting. Participants are also able to develop friendships by connecting with those with similar interests.

The first Brooklyn Small Group, so named because the group meets monthly in various locations around Brooklyn, met at Rev. Boon Lin Ngeo's home in November, 2008 for a multicultural pot luck dinner. Since then, we have had a bowling night, a Christmas cookie social and many opportunities just to share a meal, the most recent being May, 2009, when 12 MCCNYers gathered at Mike and Casey Easterling's home for a Vegetarian Cookout. The afternoon featured delicious food and enriching conversation on a balcony overlooking the beautiful Manhattan skyline.

On Saturday, June 27, 2009 at 2 p.m., the Brooklyn Small Group will be hosting a Pot Luck at Prospect Park near the Picnic House and everyone is invited to attend. Please bring a covered dish or a beverage to share, if you are able. On Saturday, July 26, 2009 the Brooklyn Small Group will meet at the Wonder Wheel in Coney Island at 4 p.m. for an afternoon of fun before going to watch the Brooklyn Cyclones play the Staten Island Yankees at Keyspan Park at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$8, but the

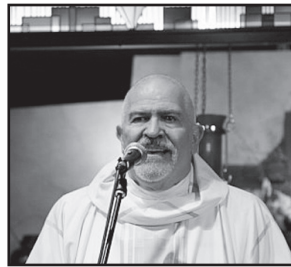
Welcoming Team is offering them for \$5 for anyone who buys tickets before July 19, 2009.

If you would like more information about the Brooklyn Small Group or the MCCNY Welcoming Team, or if you have an idea of a Small Group you would like to start, please email [welcomingteam@mccny.org](mailto:welcomingteam@mccny.org). The Brooklyn Small Group and all Welcoming Team activities are always open to everyone!

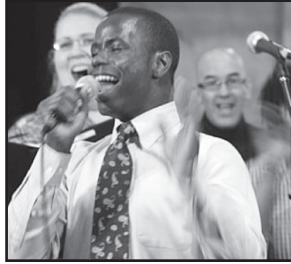
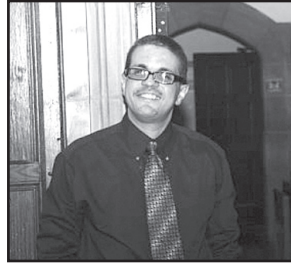
(photo courtesy of Casey Easterling)



Welcoming Team members (from left) Mike Easterling, Angel Martinez, Casey Easterling and Tressie Carter.



# Easter



## Celebrating the Ministry of David Raleigh by Ted Walner

On Sunday, June 14, 2009 the Congregation and the Clergy of MCCNY celebrated the ministry of David Raleigh, the 11 a.m. accompanist and former Director of Music during the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy.

To kick off the celebration, the choir performed a special arrangement of "In Jesus' Name," a song David had written. The arrangement, by John Fischer, MCCNY's Director of Music, featured solos by The Rev. Franc Perry, Eric James, Denise Rosner, Rick Libert, Andy Buck and Amy Smidebush as surprises for David.

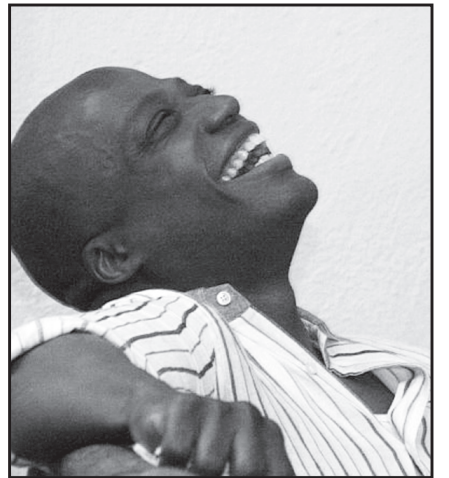
The Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Senior Pastor, MCCNY presented David with an Elsa Piretti heart from Tiffany's to thank him for his years of service to MCCNY's music ministry. The surprises kept coming after special music when John Fischer announced "We're not done yet" and Carolyn Eufrazio sang David's favorite song, "You've Got A Friend."

David became involved with the Church in 1995 after being intrigued by the MCCNY float at the Gay Pride Parade. His service began as a substitute pianist before he became the accompanist for the 7 p.m. service. He also got involved in special events such as the Easter banquet and benefit concerts and he performed at other celebrations such as weddings and funerals.

In 2001, David brought on John Fischer as a substitute accompanist. Today, John is the Director of Music.

David has truly been an inspiration to the Church and while his international touring schedule is too hectic for him to be with us every week, we look forward to those Sundays when David is back with us as a special musician.

Good luck and Godspeed David! We will see you at Church for sure and we wish you the best in your endeavors.



(photo by Montel Cherry)

## MCCNY Retreat

by Rev. Edgard Francisco Daniels-Morales

On the last weekend of April, eighteen friends and members of MCCNY gathered for a weekend of spiritual insight, fellowship, and communion with God and nature. The spiritual retreat was held at the Kirkrige Center, located in eastern Pennsylvania.

The theme of the retreat was "The Doors of Our Lives" and the program followed, in a fluid way, the movements of "knocking on the door, opening the door, standing on the threshold, closing the door, and beyond the door" and was based on the book *Open the Door* by Joyce Rupp.

We explored the different movements using a wide range of activities: from video clips to music; from walks to "body prayer"; from community meals to group discussions; from movie night to reflections on the spiritual life; from fun times to times of silence.

These are some of the comments the participants shared:

*"I left the retreat ready with a painful door closed and a wonderful new door open. Thank you MCC."*

*"Thanks for giving us such an opportunity for spiritual rest. The bonding and time for reflection is so important, and we don't seem to have enough time for it unless we go on something like this."*

*"It was a real blessing to share and to hear where others were on [their journeys]. I received a fresh perspective on 'the door.'"*

*"The social times and fun times were low-key and relaxed which I liked and appreciated."*

*"A nice group of people - I enjoyed getting to know everyone a little better in such a relaxed setting."*

*"I loved the hike and the lake as well as the small chapel. Oh and the [Labyrinth] we walked that seemed endless."*



(photo by Casey Easterling)

(Photos by Montel Cherry & Yolanda Holmes)