



ROCHESTER COLLEGE Church Connections

A Forum for the Churches of Christ in the Great Lakes region

Vol. 2, No. 2 Winter 2005

mission: Church Connections

engage the Churches of Christ in the Great Lakes region and offer a link for them to engage one another

educate the people of the Church of Christ in the Great Lakes region for lives of study and service

empower the Churches of Christ in the Great Lakes region to complete their redemptive mission

mission: ROCHESTER COLLEGE

Rochester College exists to engage students in a vigorous liberal arts education within a Christian community for a life of study and service.

Church Connections is published in the spring, fall and winter by the Rochester College public relations office, 800 West Avon Road, Rochester Hills, Mich., 48307. Rochester College is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, 30 North LaSalle, Suite 2400, Chicago, Illinois, 60602. Phone: (312) 263-0456. Rochester College does not discriminate on the basis of ethnic or national origin, religion, or skin color. The College does not discriminate on the basis of gender except for specific necessary religious principles held by the College and its governing body.

VP for Public Relations: Birgie Niemann
Editor: Amanda M. Wolfe
Graphic Designer: Jeff Bennett

800.521.6010, ext. 4

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JC Thomas—leading the way in diversity relations



Martin Luther King, Jr., shared his dream of equality for all mankind on August 28, 1963. It was a dream rooted in the desegregation of a society that had drawn seemingly permanent racial lines. These lines began to fade as American homes and churches began to realize King's vision. With this speech, his hope for a diverse culture began to weave itself into American hearts—both black and white.

That year a young man in Pontiac, MI, heard King's dream and made it his own. JC Thomas, Jr., inspired by this call to action, joined the Civil Rights Movement, thereby beginning a life-long pursuit of racial harmony.

In high school, Thomas fought for black history month. In the military, Thomas became the specialist hired to develop procedures for race relations now used by the United States Army. In the 33 years following his military services, Thomas devoted his life to preaching in Churches of Christ throughout the nation, eventually becoming the coordinator of the West Coast Forum for Churches of Christ.

New director of diversity relations

Now, Rochester College welcomes Thomas as the director of diversity relations. Thomas believes Christ intended a diverse church from the very beginning.

"The reality is that Jesus Christ wasn't just for one people. He was for *all* people, for *all* times," says Thomas. Thomas' uncanny ability to convey Christ's message of diversity makes him the ideal choice for this position.

In speaking with Thomas, his uncontainable passion for drawing all of God's people together in one brotherhood is evident. Like King, who dreamt of a society that sat side by side, Thomas dreams of a day when all congregations, black and white, will join together in worshipping the one same Lord.

Remaining relevant through diversity

"This is a diverse world we live in. Often our neighborhoods are more diverse than our churches. For the church to remain relevant, we must address this issue," explains Thomas.

Thomas sees himself as a catalyst for dialogue amongst churches. He says that historically Churches of Christ tend towards a more segregated congregation. The church overlooked the issue, not out of hostility, but out of contentment with the status quo. Yet, today, it is an issue that churches no longer neglect, but readily confront.

(continued on page 2)

Serving the church

*A note from Dr. David Fleeer,
vice president for church relations*

An active fall schedule of preaching characterized my inaugural season as vice president of church relations. Eleven different congregations in four states gave me opportunity to preach, teach and listen to their needs. High expectations reside as Rochester College serves specific needs within the Christian community.

On January 29, Rochester College hosts **Elderlink**, an exceptional program designed to nurture church leaders and their spouses. Randy Lowry, mediation expert from Pepperdine's law school and Rochester College's talented Greg Stevenson are among the presenters.



Sermon Seminar, to be held May 23-25, will focus on the Gospel of Mark. The seminar, the gold standard for preaching enhancement programs in Churches of Christ and in the larger Christian academic community, draws attendees from more than 35 states. Fred Craddock, the featured speaker, is known as the person who "revolutionized preaching" in the 20th century.

(continued on page 2)

Church Connections

Rochester College Speakers Bureau: a service to Christian communities



SPEAKERS BUREAU

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; *if it is teaching, let him teach...*" Romans 12: 6-7, NIV (italics added for emphasis)

As a member of the Speakers Bureau, Dr. Greg Stevenson, professor of Religion and Greek, recognizes the importance of serving the community with his gifts of teaching.

"Since college, I've had a deeply embedded sense of ministry. God gave me the ability to teach. I feel called to use this gift in every venue presented to me. Teaching is my ministry," comments Stevenson.

The Speakers Bureau was created to provide RC's faculty the opportunity to share their gifts, as well as allow the community to benefit from their expertise. Available classes cover topics in Bible study, Bible history, relationships and faith and culture.

Stevenson feels especially passionate about the class on Revelation. A challenging book to understand, Revelation is often neglected Stevenson says. Yet, it is the book that most fascinates him and he wants to share this insight

with others. This same passion exudes from the other members of the Bureau in their areas of expertise.

The Speakers Bureau is foremost a service to the Christian community. To schedule a speaker, contact Karen Hart at 248.218.2094 or Dr. Fleer at dfleer@rc.edu.

Vinewood Church of Christ reaches into the Spanish-speaking community

Now, the Vinewood Church of Christ in Detroit, MI, expands its ministries to reach out to the Spanish-speaking community in the Metro area. According to a representative of the church, over 200,000 Hispanic people reside in neighborhoods surrounding Detroit.

Every Sunday, Vinewood holds a Spanish-speaking as well as an English-speaking service. Then, once a month, a bilingual service is held where the brothers and sisters of both languages come together to worship as one. Also, as a service to the community, Vinewood offers classes in English as a second language. Javier Cuarezma is the Spanish minister for these services. This new program is the only Church of Christ ministry in Wayne County especially for those whose native language is Spanish. Currently 15 people attend the Spanish services. Two baptisms have already taken place as a result of this Hispanic outreach.

Previously, Cuezrma lived in Waterloo, ONT, for 11 years where he learned to speak English. To contact Cuezrma, please call 313-554-3698, or email him at fjisacua@gbcglobal.net.

JC Thomas, from page 1

And with this new chapter in his life, Thomas continues his pursuit of the dream that became his back in 1963. The vision King spoke of when he said, "I have a dream that one day...little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers."

In the spirit of this dream, Thomas says, "I am excited about the future. I believe the church will become a leader in aggressively dealing with the problem. We are ripe for a change."

Thomas and his wife, Glenda, have been married for 30 years. They have three children, Linnita, Marie and JC, III.

Fleer, from page 1

This is an extraordinary time as the College proactively nurtures connections in the Great Lakes region with Churches of Christ, including African American congregations. For the past 18 months, the Rochester College diversity committee that includes **Jimmy Hurd** from the Oakland congregation and **Zach Pope** from the Northwest congregation, key faculty, and students created a diversity vision based on a biblical imperative. God orchestrated bringing **JC Thomas** to campus as director of diversity relations.

With passionate resolve, I am committed to using the best academic and spiritual resources from within and outside the college community to maintain and enhance our service to the church.

events:

JANUARY

28-29 ElderLink
Rochester College
Rochester Hills, MI
(248) 218-2013
www.acu.edu

FEBRUARY

6-8 Prayer Seminar
with Dr. Albert Lemmons
Rochester Church of Christ
Rochester Hills, MI
(248) 651-1933
www.Rochestercoc.org

MARCH

14-18 Metro Lectures
"Unity and the Body of Christ"
Rochester Church of Christ
Rochester Hills, MI
contact Jerry Tallman
(248) 651-1933
www.Rochestercoc.org

APRIL

1 Pistons Game
(19th Annual
Church of Christ
Night)
Palace of Auburn Hills
Auburn Hills, MI
contact Dan Isenberg
(248) 377-8708
disenberg@PalaceNet.com

Submit events for this listing to Dr. David Fleer, vice president for church relations at Rochester College at dfleer@rc.edu.

fyi:

34

states and provinces represented at the 2004 Sermon Seminar

181

number of attendees at the 2004 Sermon Seminar

Notable Quotes

Sermon Seminar

"After attending last year's Sermon Seminar, my life entirely changed. I had been pursuing a major in English, but the incredible worship time and speakers lit a spark in me to pursue a more active ministry for the Lord. I heard the words of God come alive during the seminar and I felt an excitement and enthusiasm for ministry I had not felt for a long time. I am now majoring in both English and Religious Studies at York College. Needless to say, I plan to attend Sermon Seminar again this year."

Mark Houston, Senior, York College, York, NE

Elderlink

"Having attended two ElderLinks, one in the South and one in the Northeast, I was able to see how this program is well-suited to help elders regardless of the circumstances they face in their regions. It is a great opportunity to gain insight from men who have been serving in ministry for many years. Our entire eldership plans to attend Elder Link 2005 at Rochester College."

-Bro. Edward J. Cribbs, Russell Woods Church of Christ

RC's Pied Pipers follow Christ to neighboring communities

The Rochester College improvisational children's theatre troupe, the Pied Pipers, performs several times throughout the school year. The Pied Pipers primary audience is preschoolers through 6th graders at churches, private and public elementary schools and community organizations.

The troupe's director, Andrew Kronenwetter, explains their shows as "new, fresh and exciting for both the audience and the troupe." The major reason for this group's originality lies within its improvisational roots. Every story performed is almost never scripted nor is there a set dialogue. Additionally, to add to the excitement, the actors themselves do not know what the combination of stories to perform will be. Kronenwetter communicates the order on the spot.

Contemporary stories, Bible stories, folk tales, and fairy tales encompass most of the Pipers topics. Church groups often take



advantage of the troupe's expertise for outreach. "We use these skills to minister to people, whether through overtly spiritual content or just plain moral themes," says Kronenwetter.

The Pipers plan to take the show on the road starting spring semester. If interested in having the Pied Pipers perform for your church, contact Andrew Kronenwetter at 248.218.2118 or akronenwetter@rc.edu.

faith of our fathers by Dr. Vernon Boyd



The Plum Street Church of Christ in downtown Detroit first used this homemade tray for their communion services. With the influenza breakouts of World War I, which killed thousands of Americans, people realized how easily germs were spread. Previously, churches customarily used only one, possibly two, communion cups from which the entire congregation would partake in celebration of the Lord's Supper. With this newfound danger, churches introduced individual cups for communion.

Claud F. Witty, who once worked for the Plum Street Church, took ownership of the tray after its use was discontinued. Rochester College acquired this remarkable tray after Witty passed it on to Steve Hudson. In turn, Hudson donated it to the College.

If you have any historic photos of the early church or of Rochester College and would like to donate them to the College, please contact Dr. Vernon Boyd at (248) 358-4139.

resources:



A message from the president

As I travel, I describe Rochester College as an academic community characterized by the fellowship-creating reality of Christ's presence in the world. I talk about this because I am passionate about our mission.

While we are no longer a small college where "everyone knows each other's name," we are serious about our task to model Christian community to our students and to serve the brotherhood. The possibilities are great as I see the spirit of Christ being kindled in the hearts of students each day on campus. I hear their excitement about mission trips, working in the inner city of Detroit and Pontiac, planting churches after graduation, and being a resource to our church family.

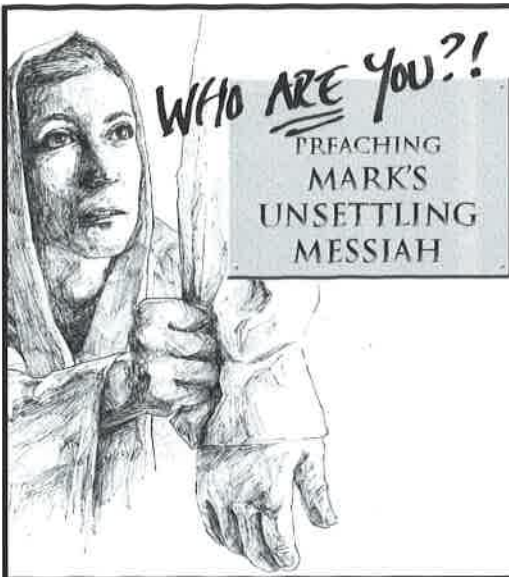
God wants brethren to love and serve each other, and to dwell in unity. My ultimate joy is to see Rochester College used as a resource to serve our congregations.

Michael W. Westerfield
President

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FRED CRADDOCK

Bandy Distinguished Professor of Preaching and New Testament, Emeritus
Candler School of Theology, Emory University

contact: Dr. David Fleer 248.218.2144

www.acu.edu/ministry/elderlink/



January 28-29, 2005
in the new Richardson Center,
@ Rochester College,
a conference for church elders

ElderLink
Rochester College & ACU Present

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