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BY THE REV. CATHI GOWIN

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When I sign my letters with the word "Shalom", I am wishing you more than peace. "Shalom" is the prayer that you will receive God's abundant blessings of adequate food and shelter, good health and wholeness, harmony in relationships, love, peace, justice, hope and joy. At the heart of "Shalom" is God's command that we are responsible for making sure that all persons have equal access to, and enjoyment of, these blessings. That is what it means to live in shalom, and to seek it on behalf of others.

In April, I had the opportunity to meet with the Rev. Dr. JP Duncan from Drew University. Dr. Duncan is one of the trainers of *The Communities of Shalom* - "a grass-roots, faith-inspired, community development network in the USA and Africa, coordinated and equipped by Drew University Theological School in partnership with the General Board of Global Ministries of the UMC." Initiated in Los Angeles in 1992, *Communities of Shalom* supports and trains local congregations to partner with other culture/faith traditions, social agencies, businesses, schools and community

groups to create Shalom Zones in their neighborhoods. Current *Communities of Shalom* are working to fight poverty in Appalachia, reduce the murder rate in Baltimore, create "green zones" in Scranton and Santa Cruz, build affordable

The FASSETT FUND



Metro Ministry is launching an endowment fund to honor the Rev. Ronald M. Fassett who died in Grand Rapids on All Saints Day, November 1, 2008. Ron became Executive Director of Metro Ministry in 1983 and served until his retirement in 1994. During his time with Metro, Ron helped develop three ethnic congregations: Hispanic, Vietnamese and Native American. Ron organized GRUMP United Methodist softball teams (now the ecumenical *Fellowship Softball League* based at Wyoming Park UMC) and GRASP, Grand Rapids Area Service Project, now located in Olivet UMC and directed by Mike Marshall. The Fund will be held at the West Michigan Conference Treasurer's Office and administered by the Trustees of Metro Ministry to benefit West Michigan Conference racial/ethnic ministries and service projects, in accordance with Mary Lou Fassett's wishes.

housing in Richmond, provide legal services to undocumented persons in Dallas, run mobile health clinics in Houston and Ghana, reduce gang violence in Newark, and support Native Persons on reservations in the Dakotas – just to name a few!

How do they do it? They started with a dream, an openness to God’s Spirit, and a longing to address one key area of need in their community. They participated in the free Communities of *Shalom* training and were equipped to:

- Identify and use available resources
- Collaborate with other churches, businesses, groups and agencies
- Obtain grant monies and other funding
- Organize for systemic change
- Build on the strengths and assets already present in their community
- Receive the on-going support and expertise of the *Communities of Shalom*

Metro Ministry has stepped forward to serve as the coordinating body for local UM congregations interested in this amazing opportunity. We hope to have at least 3 clusters of congregations ready for an Initial Consultation in early September, with the Training to begin in the late fall or early winter 2009-2010. There will be a national Shalom Summit in South Carolina in late October 2009. For more information, go to www.communitiesofshalom.org.

2ND ANNUAL GRAND RAPIDS METRO WORSHIP SERVICE



What a joy! This year’s 2nd Annual Grand Rapids Metro Worship Service was held at Wyoming Park UMC on Sunday, May 17, 2009. Our preacher, the Rev. Benton Heisler, Director of W. MI Connectional Ministries, preached on “Helping or Hoarding?” The Wyoming Park Praise Band and the Cherub Choir (see photo above) of First UMC provided special worship music.

The fellowship meal (see photo below) following the service was abundant and tasty. Sally Smith (standing, with green sweater) from Wyoming Park UMC planned the meal. Thank you, Rev. Jennie Browne (seated, with white jacket) for coordinating our worship service again this year!

