

We are 'called to be partners' with Nicaraguan churches

"God is calling us to be in partnership with the Iglesia Mision Cristiana (IMC) in Nicaragua," said David Long-Higgins to his colleagues at the CSEOA Fall Meeting.

David, co-pastor with his wife Beth of **David's UCC in Canal Winchester**, chairs a task force whose purpose is to nurture a partner relationship between churches in the Central Southeast Ohio Association (CSEOA) and the Nicaraguan churches. David spoke and showed photos from a recent trip to Nicaragua to encourage other churches in the Association to join the partnership covenant.

The IMC is the denominational structure of Protestant, Pentecostal churches in Nicaragua that addresses, in both rural and urban areas, the religious, social and cultural needs of its people. The



Assembling the rebar which will be used to provide strength and connection for the walls of the parsonage at LaPaz, Carazo.

IMC strives to create and execute programs to bring sustainable development; address emergencies; and promote unity, equality and justice while seeking to improve the economic level of people and communities.

The connection between David's UCC and the IMC began when a group of 17 youth and five adults from the congregation traveled to Nicaragua in June 2006 on a mission trip arranged through the Global Ministries' People to People partnership program. The UCC/Disciples of Christ Global Ministries Board has had an ecumenical partnership with the IMC for several years. During the 2006 trip, IMC leaders broached the idea of a more local partnership between two organized groups of churches such as CSEOA and the IMC.

"Our group traveled to Nicaragua expecting that our hands would be needed," explained Dave Long-Higgins, "but after we arrived we found that they wanted our hearts. And they have them."

The mission group was prepared to spend the week working on building a parsonage. Instead, they spent most of their time visiting churches and meeting people from the congregations. "We participated in nine worship services in seven days," added Dave. The group returned to Canal Winchester filled with enthusiasm for a continuing, mutually beneficial partnership between the IMC and as many CSEOA churches as possible.

A five-year initial partnership is being considered. The general spirit of the covenant includes such things as mutual prayer, listening, learning, support, celebration and the development of lasting friendships. The hope is that groups of Americans and Nicara-



David's members sort Spanish language children's books which they brought to give to the schools run by Iglesia Mision Cristiana congregations.

guans will exchange visits to participate in mission opportunities and to build relationships with local churches.

"Although financial support may be the first thing that comes to mind about our relationship with the church in Nicaragua," said Dave, "we truly hope that our financial support would be directed by needs expressed by the IMC leadership in conversation with us. We want our relationship with IMC as it relates to money to be as free of paternalism as possible."

The next step in the process of "officially" forming the relationship will be completion of the covenant. The language will be worked out via email by the Nicaragua Taskforce and the IMC leadership. Association representatives hope to attend the IMC General Assembly next March, where the covenant can be considered and, it is hoped, affirmed. Likewise, it is hoped that IMC representatives will attend our Association meeting in May for the same purpose.

In addition to Dave Long-Higgins, the coordinating team includes Rev. Forrest Hoppe (Association Minister), Rev. Bob Molsberry (Ohio Conference Minister), Mark Burns and Christi Harkins (David's UCC) and Rev. Jenny Steindam (Westerville Community UCC). Members from other churches are welcome. If you are interested, contact the Association office at 800-282-0740, Ext. 1-218, or forresth@ocucc.org.

Equipping the Saints scheduled for March 1

Put Saturday, March 1 on your calendar now for the Equipping the Saints 2008 leadership training event, to be held at **First Congregational Church**, 444 E. Broad Street in Columbus. This annual event is jointly sponsored by the Metropolitan Commission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Central Southeast Ohio Association (CSEOA) of the United Church of Christ.

Two by Two: Partners in Ministry is a day long leadership training event for clergy and laity in both denominations. Whether we think of the partnership of our two denominations or of clergy and laity serving together or of two disciples of Jesus working side by side, Luke 10 shows that Jesus saw wisdom in sending disciples out not alone but two by two.

Rev. Bill Edwards, Regional Minister for the Christian Church in Ohio, will be the keynote speaker. Participants will be able to choose one of six morning workshops and one of six afternoon workshops.

Registration materials will be mailed early in January. The \$15 registration fee includes lunch. Register through the CSEOA office by Friday, February 22.

Central Southeast News

Central Southeast Ohio Association

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Comments and suggestions are welcome. Please send copy to the Association office by the first of the month for publication the following month.

Fall Gathering provides tools for the journey

Over 100 people participated in the CSEOA Fall Gathering at North Congregational United Church of Christ on October 27. It was a day of worshipful work with excellent workshops and eclectic music.

The Rev. Bob Molsberry, our Ohio Conference Minister, keyed the event by bringing a full toolbox that contained "tools for the journey."

Musical groups brought energy and enthusiasm to the day. The Bride of Christ Singers, a trio of southern

gospel singers from the First Congregational UCC, Huntington; Sunday Morning in the Key of G, worship music team from David's UCC, Canal Winchester; and drummers led by B. Wahru Cleveland from the Columbus Women's Drumming Circle provided a variety of sounds and rhythms.

Over \$860 was received for Hurricane Felix relief in Nicaragua. This money will be channeled through the Iglesia Mision Cristiana, our potential partners in Nicaragua.



Drummers from the Columbus Women's Drumming Circle, led by B. Wahru Cleveland (center), played during worship and led a workshop.



Some of the musicians of Sunday Morning in the Key of G from David's UCC in Canal Winchester.