

DEACON'S REPORT  
Robert J. Irvine  
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Duke Memorial United Methodist Church  
Durham, North Carolina

I have lived out my calling and my ordination during this past year as a leader in worship, a teacher, a counselor, and a resource person. I find myself working on both a local and a connectional level.

I very much enjoy helping to write the liturgies for our Sunday morning worship services: finding hymns, prayers, and other worship aids which are drawn from the seasonal scripture readings and special emphases of the year.

For many years I have worked as a musician to provide service music, direction for the choirs, and accompaniment for hymns and congregational responses. But recently I have begun to recognize other areas where I have been given gifts to be used for and through the church. My work here with the many dedicated people who sing and ring for our services has brought me great joy and pleasure. As we work together to refine our skills, and offer to God the very best we have to offer, we have also become a close-knit, supportive family in Christ.

For the past several years, I have taught Disciple Bible Study and have facilitated several small study and sharing groups at the church. Those have also been enjoyable and have been an additional source of Christian community for me. This year I am facilitating a study of the writings found in the Apocrypha (a two-year study group which meets monthly).

Since 1993, I have been serving as part of a team of men who answer the calls received by the Men's Center of Raleigh and Wake County. Though this is not a religious organization, my training and background have helped me in many situations to assist people in dealing with their pain and suffering. I have also served as a mentor and facilitator for several workshops dealing with childhood trauma and how we work through that history as grown men. I not only work with the Raleigh group, but also with the associated group in Orange and Durham counties, and have worked with several referrals from clergy in the Conference who have members dealing with this issue. I am currently facilitating a bi-monthly support group for male survivors of childhood sexual abuse in Raleigh.

On a connectional level, I have written Vacation Bible School curriculum for the United Methodist Publishing House for the past four years. I also served from 1997-99 on the design team to develop Nashville Jubilee, the National Convocation of the United Methodist Fellowship, which was held in July, 1999. This past fall, I attended my first Sunday School Curriculum Writer's Conference at the United Methodist Publishing House and am the writer for the new early elementary "Learning Faith" curriculum for Summer, 2001. This November, I will attend my second Writer's Conference and will again write the "Learning Faith" curriculum for early elementary children for Summer, 2002.

The process of living out my ordination has helped me to recognize and to use gifts that had been previously undiscovered in my life. I am thankful to be serving in a church which helps me utilize my gifts in bridging between the world and the church.

*Robert J. Irvine*