

PAGE TURNERS AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

RAUSCHENBUSCH METRO MINISTRIES METRO BAPTIST CHURCH¹

Walking west on 40th Street in mid-town Manhattan, the sidewalks and roadways are crowded with pedestrians and vehicles -- cars, taxis, buses, small and large delivery vehicles and trucks -- all impatient to move. Nearby are access points to the Lincoln Tunnel, linking New York City to Weehawken, New Jersey, as well as the huge Port Authority Bus Terminal, with its watchword "Helping 200,000 people a day get where they need to go"²

In this area of Manhattan known as Hell's Kitchen³ -- at 410 West 40th Street, just west of Ninth Avenue -- stands the Metro Baptist Church (MBC), home of Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries (RMM).

In the mid-1800s, shantytowns and tenements dotted the area, home to those who worked in the many slaughterhouses, lumberyards, warehouses, and other factories that served the Hudson River piers. These early workers, of poor Irish, African-American, Scottish, and German stock, were joined in the late 1800s by newcomers, including Greeks and Eastern Europeans. Conflict was common as immigrant groups moved simultaneously to assert and protect themselves, and by the early 1900s, many had joined in gangs to stake claims in the area. A few years later, during Prohibition (1920-1933), illegal breweries gained a foothold, joined eventually by organized crime elements. The 1940s brought still another wave of in-migration, this time including Puerto Ricans and Italians.

An oft-repeated story has it that the name Hell's Kitchen came about one night when a rookie police officer, observing a melee in the area, said to his senior partner, "This place is hell itself." His partner retorted, "Hell's a mild climate. This is hell's kitchen."⁴ The name has stuck even as, by the late 1950s, some neighborhood residents, businesses, real estate developers, and others, hoping to transform the area's image, pressed to dub it "Clinton" or "Midtown West."

In fact, the area has changed -- and continues to do so. Relatively low housing costs and the area's proximity to the theatre district and Midtown have attracted newcomers, an ongoing shift that is

¹ Hirota, J., Schwabacher, S. (2014). *The Legacy of the Robert Bowne Foundation*. New York: The Robert Bowne Foundation

² See the Port Authority Bus Terminal website at:

<http://www.panynj.gov/bus-terminals/port-authority-bus-terminal.html>

³ Defined by Wikipedia as "a neighborhood of Manhattan in New York City between 34th Street and 59th Street, from 8th Avenue to the Hudson River." See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hell%27s_Kitchen,_Manhattan

⁴Quoted from a sign posted in Hell's Kitchen Park by City of New York Parks & Recreation. Hell's Kitchen Park is located on 10th Avenue between West 47th Street and West 48th Street.

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pushing up food prices and rents in the neighborhood, pushing out mom-and-pop stores, and sparking apprehensions of an expanding gentrification.⁵

At the same time, Rauschenbusch Metro Ministry staff note the rising number of residents seeking assistance through RMM's food pantry, clothes closet, and English Language classes. Ronnie Adams, a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Urban Minister working in partnership with MBC and, through several other service agencies, with the HIV/AIDS community, says:

As the community changes, we have to ask what we need to do to meet community needs. And the community *is* changing -- there's greater diversity; poverty right next to luxury with high-rises coming in -- which means stores with higher prices. Constantly there are the economic issues, how a family of five lives with the changes in housing, restaurants, Mom and Pop stores.⁶

METRO BAPTIST CHURCH (MBC)

Metro Baptist Church had its beginnings in 1974 when a small study group began meeting at the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association building in Manhattan and then, in 1982, formally constituted as the Metro Baptist Church (MBC) of Manhattan. Two short years later, in 1984, several MBC members came across a former Polish Catholic Church in Hell's Kitchen, then in use as a drug rehabilitation center, and felt this was the space for their church.⁷ MBC purchased the spacious building, with many original features still intact, to be both its place of worship and of work in community ministries. By 1986, the Church had started its community food pantry and clothes closet.

Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries (RMM)

⁵ See, for example, *Hell's Kitchen South: Developing Strategies*, A project of the Design Trust for Public Space with the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association, by Michael Conard and David Smiley of Design + Urbanism, Copyright 2002 by the Design Trust for Public Space, Inc. Based on research, public discussion, engagement of a range of professionals, including academics, architects, community activists and researchers, and others during the late 1990s, the authors find, for example: "Even though the residential population in Hell's Kitchen has risen from 4,400 to 6,000 people in the last two decades, rising real estate values threaten the diversity of residents and housing. These economically prosperous times have priced low and moderate-income families out of Manhattan's housing market. In 1990, the average Hell's Kitchen South resident earned \$23,352 per year, which was significantly below the citywide average of \$32,262. In addition, the housing stock is aged: three-quarters of all buildings were constructed before 1945 and many are in need of substantive improvements. There is enormous development interest in constructing market rate housing units in the area. In its 1999 *Statement of District Needs*, Community Board 4 recognized the 'utmost importance' of affordable housing." p119
See: http://www.designtrust.org/pubs/02_Hells_Kitchen_South.pdf

⁶ Ronnie Adams Interview, October 18, 2011.

⁷The Catholic Polish National church. originally housed at 552 West 50th Street, moved to 40th off 9th Avenue in 1909; later it was renamed St. Clemens Mary. See:
<http://www.nyc-architecture.com/MID/MID-HellsKitchen.htm>
http://storage.cloversites.com/metrobaptistchurch1/documents/Metro%20History_2.pdf
<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nynewyo2/RCchurchregisters.htm>

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In August 1995, David Waugh, the third pastor of Metro Baptist Church, oversaw the creation of Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries (RMM) as the church's community development ministry.⁸ The name "Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries" suggests both the spur and purpose of its creation.

"Rauschenbusch" both to honor and draw inspiration from the work of Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), an important intellectual leader of the Social Gospel movement and a Baptist minister who himself worked in Hell's Kitchen from his church, the Second German Baptist Church (now Westside Theatre) a scant three-blocks from MBC.⁹ "Metro Ministries" to refer to the work of the Church in assisting and contributing to its neighborhood community.

In reflecting back on this period, Executive Director Henkel further explains:

In 1995 . . . [a]s the needs were shifting in the community and the church had the desire to meet those needs, there was the realization that the congregation couldn't do that on its own. If we wanted to be able to seek funding that a church couldn't get or to attract volunteers that wouldn't always want to be part of a church, we needed a non-profit. . . [The church and non-profit] share the same mission. . . The church desired that the non-profit could reach into nooks and crevices that the church couldn't.¹⁰

To play this role, RMM was incorporated as a tax-exempt nonprofit [501(c)(3)], thereby enabling it both to act independently of MBC -- even as it represents its social, non-proselytizing extension -- and to partner with nonsectarian organizations.

Forging Links with Local Communities

Soon, community development plans supported existing links and fostered new ones between RMM and local communities. Under Waugh's leadership, and building on the efforts of his predecessor Rev. Gene Bolan as well as those of associate minister Rev. Dean Kaufman, the work of Metro Baptist Church and Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries began expanding to include the following:

- MBC had for years housed a food pantry and clothes closet for community use, both now part of RMM.
- Bankstreet College of Education's Head Start West, a tenant on the Church's third floor since 1985, was providing the community with two free full-day programs, one for 3-year olds and the other for 4-year olds and their families for eleven (11) months each year.¹¹

⁸David Waugh was pastor of Metro Baptist Church for 14 years, from 1993-2007; he founded and then directed Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries from 1995-2007.

⁹ See: <http://rmmnyc.org/about/background/> and <http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/2012/02/1889-2nd-german-baptist-church-407-west.html>

¹⁰ Tiffany Henkel Interview, December 6, 2011.

¹¹ Telephone interview with Lourdes Calderon, Site Director, Bankstreet College Head Start West, July 13, 2012. In summer 2012, the program was searching for a new sponsor in order to keep its doors open to the Hell's Kitchen children and families it had been serving for the past 25 years. Repeated calls in late fall 2012, revealed the site's phone was no longer in operation.

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- The Church opened dormitory-like space on its fourth floor to Women In Need, an organization offering safe, clean housing and supports to homeless women and their families. Similarly, the Church supplied space to Sanctuary for Families, which offers emergency housing and crisis intervention for victims of domestic violence.¹²
- An initial impetus for creating RMM was impending work with Clinton Housing Development Corporation [CHDC], which then operated across the street from the Church. A CHDC aim has been to ". . . build upon the existing sense of community by preserving, improving, and creating affordable housing. The empowerment of local residents is [its] primary strategy."¹³ In the past, MBC had operated as a social service partner to CHDC. But in the late 1990s, a larger project was at hand. Clinton Housing planned to open new apartments for Section 8 tenants.¹⁴ RMM would provide a tenant-rights advocate to work with the resident families, children, and teens. The two non-profits envisioned a single-level development with a community room where the advocate would work. In 1997, when funding and other issues hindered plans for the new apartments, the "community room" moved into the Metro Baptist Church facility.
- About the same time, a housing project for HIV adults was under discussion, and, in late 1995, Ronnie Adams, an Urban Minister of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, arrived from Texas to work both with the HIV/AIDS community in Hell's Kitchen and with MBC as Program Consultant to RMM. He was drawn in large part by Waugh's "vision of a church ↔ community link that . . . fit [his] own vision of the interaction."¹⁵
- When a documentary filmmaker needed space to complete his MA project -- a film on garment worker solidarity -- he begins working at MBC. The film focuses primarily on Latino workers who, although in the main legal, were not allowed to join the union and had no place to meet. The Church opened its doors to them and also to their families.¹⁶

All of these activities brought a wide range of community residents -- parents, workers, single adults, children, teens, and program staffs -- in and out of the Church building. Soon, David Waugh says, people found themselves very comfortable in the building and with the staff -- and many of those who had initially come into the church for a particular purpose began utilizing ongoing RMM services. As it happens, the connection also works in the other direction, as those who use existing services articulate

¹² See: <www.women-in-need.org> and <www.sanctuaryforfamilies.org>

¹³ See: <http://www.idealists.org/view/org/J6jMbSpZ5M3p/>

¹⁴ "Section 8 of the Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. § 1437f), often known simply as Section 8, as repeatedly amended, authorizes the payment of rental housing assistance to private landlords on behalf of approximately 3.1 million low-income households. . . . The US Department of Housing and Urban Development manages the Section 8 programs." See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Section_8_\(housing\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Section_8_(housing))

¹⁵ Interview with Ronnie Adams, October 18, 2011.

¹⁶ Telephone interview with David Waugh, June 22, 2012.

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further needs to RMM. Tiffany Triplett Henkel, the current Executive Director of RMM and Co-Pastor of Metro Baptist Church, describes this dynamic:

On the third floor, there is a Headstart program that's run by BankStreet. They rent the space, but that Headstart program has been on the third floor since we've been in the building. . . . it is one of the primary, initial connections we made to the community. . . . A lot of the ways RMM has grown into what it is now is related to that connection . . . because of the connection to Headstart, families would say they needed support for afterschool, and then, when their children became teenagers, they needed a teen center.¹⁷

From the start, David Waugh held to a basic tenet for the ministries: to practice a "nimbleness," providing the space and supports to meet real community needs -- and closing programs when they were no longer needed. Nimbleness at RMM meant, and continues to mean: not carrying a heavy budget; not duplicating services of other organizations; not becoming staffed up, which could mean "getting caught in the foundation box," but instead using volunteers; not creating a big bureaucracy with multiple service arms, but instead helping to link participants to services in other organizations. Waugh points out that RMM's nimbleness allowed the Church to provide support to organizations when and as needed, and then to stop such support as organizations grew and moved out on their own. Such was the case with both Women In Need and Sanctuary for Families, each of which, since their time using MBC space, have developed into well-established organizations, with multiple programs and service sites.

In the mid-1990s, based largely on interactions with people coming in and out of the Church, RMM identified two unmet community needs and set to work developing appropriate responses. This resulted in two new programs, both free to participants and both continuing today: adult English classes for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and, in 1996, a children's afterschool program, the only *free* afterschool in the neighborhood, then and now.¹⁸

RAUSCHENBUSCH METRO MINISTRIES and the ROBERT BOWNE FOUNDATION

In order to build Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries as envisioned, David Waugh knew that he had to develop funding streams, an effort he had never before undertaken. After talking with a staff person

¹⁷ Tiffany Henkel Interview, June 13, 2012.

¹⁸ The afterschool program began in a small space in Clinton Housing, then across the street from RMM; in 1996, the afterschool program moved to RMM when Clinton Housing moved.

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from another foundation about how to begin, he developed a proposal using what is known as the "common application form" and sent it off to Bowne as well as to the initial foundation. However, the form's questions -- focusing largely on financial matters and assuming already established programmatic aims, strategies, and staffing patterns -- fit neither the then-status of RMM afterschool program nor the Bowne way of doing business. It would have been an easy matter to turn the proposal away.

Instead, Lena Townsend contacted David Waugh directly to hear what he had in mind -- and began a process of questioning and listening that, over time, helped him more clearly articulate and promote his ideas for any funding he might receive. Essentially, she helped him translate initially deeply-felt but somewhat vague ideas about ways to meet neighborhood needs into plans for an effective afterschool program proposal. In 2001, Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries began receiving assistance -- monetary, programmatic, and organizational -- from the Robert Bowne Foundation.²⁰

"When [the Bowne Foundation] funds you, they're willing to invest their *time* in you -- and they support capacity building at the organization . . . I'd say that capacity building is the greatest need within any organization. It has institutional impact -- it's staff training, library support. They don't just give you money and say, 'Go build a library' -- but they give you training so your staff can develop the skills to use the library and integrate it into the program."

Christie Ko, Executive Director
Fiver Children's Foundation¹⁹

It shortly became clear that Waugh's plans to develop RMM as the church's social programs arm required organizational underpinnings not yet in place. In June 2002, Anne Lawrence wrote David Waugh and Marti Williams, then-RMM Program Director and MBC Associate Pastor, outlining suggestions made during an in-person meeting. The suggestions are specific, practical, realistic, tailored to RMM needs, and organized into areas where Bowne could provide support, including:

- Strategic Planning:
 - Attendance at the executive-level seminar of the Institute for Not-For-Profit Management
 - Development of financial systems with the support of Community Resource Exchange, paid for by Bowne
 - Consultation with Kim Sabo-Flores, Ph.D., the Bowne consultant on planning and evaluation
- Summer Planning Grant:
 - Send Bowne a planning grant proposal, including how the funds will be used ("staff development workshops, planning retreats, resources., etc."), along with suggestions to include Sabo-Flores in the planning, and, as an example, a copy of a successful planning grant proposal to fund an

¹⁹ Christie Ko Telephone Interview, October 19, 2011.

²⁰ David Waugh recently recalled the continuing support of Lena Townsend and the Foundation:

One of my wonderful memories is the phone call which I received from Lena as she was reviewing applications for the coming year. We had received funding for two years and as I had understood that there was a two year limit for funding of programs, I had not submitted for a third year. Lena graciously affirmed my attention to that detail but informed me that Bowne, like RMM, was not bound to such parameters of support and urged me to get a funding request in immediately and to continue to do so until SHE told me enough. Gotta love that woman." Written Communication David Waugh to Janice Hirota, November 17, 2012.

It should be noted that RMM received Bowne support continuously from 2001 through 2011.

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afterschool program within a community-based religious organization, "once I have their permission" [to send it to you]

- Library Development:
 - Visit some afterschool program libraries for ideas, including names and phone numbers
 - Call Pam Little, RBF library development consultant, to work on a library development plan, an undertaking supported through the Bowne Foundation's Library Development Initiative.

The letter ends on both a note of support as well as rigor: "Your program has such potential and is certainly needed. We want to support you in developing and expanding your program. But, I want to be clear that our continued support will be dependent on your progress in developing a plan for your program." It is just such support and rigor that encouraged and has continued to buoy the transformation and development of the Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries Homework Center into the present-day Page Turners After School Program.

Julia Palmer Award for Library Development

It's a summer afternoon, Wednesday, June 1, 2011, when the research team first meets Tiffany Triplett Henkel. We are heading toward MBC separately and get explicit directions: "When you reach the church, you'll see four doors -- some double sets -- painted bright red -- go up the small set of steps that lead to the door second from the right and ring the bell. Just wait, someone will answer!" We do, and very quickly we're out of the bright sun, ushered through a short passageway, and entering the main entrance hall that opens onto the sanctuary, with its high, beautifully-painted ceiling and stained-glass windows.

This is not a hushed space, however, but one full of evidence of multi-faceted, lively activity. Clearly the entrance hall serves as a welcoming gathering spot and an information center -- the community's "bulletin board" with neatly-posted large sheets of paper providing program descriptions, events calendar, and photographic displays of outings and activities.

Tiffany Triplett Henkel greets us and suggests taking us first upstairs to see the ongoing development of an enlarged library space. A Bowne Foundation 2010 Julia Palmer Award for Library Development is providing for the transformation of two small rooms -- one totally interior, without natural light -- into a single generous space. The work is moving along -- the dividing wall is gone and new flooring is in; soon the budding library space will be furnished with matching bookcases, rugs, a computer for children's use, and tables and chairs. A sink and counter space will be installed to help support art projects. Books and materials that are now in storage will be returned to the room and shelved in a useful and inviting way.

But much beyond the material improvements to the library, the Bowne grant has allowed RMM to re-think its previous one-room library for children, supported by the Foundation's Library Development Initiative through work with Pam Little and Lori Ragsdale. Now the space has been re-created as one to serve multiple populations. The library will be a constantly-used resource that, throughout the day and week, draws different groups: Page Turners' elementary school children (1st through 6th grades), youth from the Teen Center (7th through 12th grades), adult participants in evening English for Speakers of Other Languages classes, and more generally, Church members as well as others from the community.

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The Library Grant comes with professional development (PD) for grantee staff. This is Bowne's way to support the most informed and imaginative use of its grant funds. And, as with all Bowne PD, the training is also used as a meaningful way to bring together staff members from different organizations. In this instance, these are program staff members with current Julia Palmer funding who are coming together to learn not only from the PD providers -- Suzanne Marten and Anne Lawrence -- but also to share challenges, practices, and discoveries with each other.

Michele Richardson, Director of RMM's Page Turners program, reflecting on both aspects, says:

I really appreciated the resource lists and websites with the wonderful book selections. Every year before the summer ends, we present the Page Turner students with a book to read over the summer. I selected many books based on these resource lists! I also liked reading and learning what other organizations were doing with their libraries. This information made me think about different ways to incorporate art work, library activities, and furniture options.

Now, in 2012, the library is a welcoming, comfortable space that has approximately 2,000 children's books, two computers, a printer, and high speed internet access, all available for library users. According to Richardson, "The renovations have made [the library] one of the nicest spaces in our building for adults and students alike."²¹

For the Page Turners, the library provides resources that participants use in completing their homework, pursuing a particular interest, or simply exploring. As they work with their volunteer tutors -- most often from New York Cares²² -- and a homework question or topic calls out for exploration or greater detail, the children often turn to the library's resources.

When homework assignments are completed and there is time before the next program segment, the children can go up to use the library. The calm and comfortable space encourages browsing the shelves for a new book, playing a board game, settling in for a good read, or sharing a cozy conversation with a friend -- an alternative to the open, lovely but echoing sanctuary space where children often engage in lively group activities and to the basement cafeteria-like space where children work with their tutors, enjoy snacks, and sometime meet in group discussions and quiet activities.

The RMM Afterschool Program and the Robert Bowne Foundation

The Robert Bowne Foundation has played a key role in supporting the development of RMM's afterschool program, from providing the first ever foundation funding for the program to supporting its development through: professional development sessions; one-on-one interactions with Anne Lawrence, Bowne's Program Officer; and interactions with other Bowne grantees. But, as is basic to the Foundation's grantmaking philosophy and practice, the transformation from Homework Center to Page Turners had roots in the organization's *own aims*, not the Foundation's.

²¹ Both Michele Richardson quotes from RMM's "Robert Bowne Foundation Julia Palmer Grant for Library Development Report 2010," pp. 2-3.

²² New York Cares: The Way to Volunteer; see: <http://www.newyorkcares.org/>

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According to Marti Williams, then-RMM Program Director and MBC Associate Pastor, it was in 2001 that:

. . . we realized that we wanted to really focus more on literacy. I was bothered by all of the random books thrown on shelves and had hoped that we could . . . form a library, and have volunteers and groups help us organize and gather good books . . . The kids needed good, nice stuff, not just somebody's trash. . . I sent out letters to groups all over asking for them to donate quality, popular books, and telling them what we *didn't* want. . . that if they wouldn't . . . want it on their own kids' bookshelf, then don't give it to the Page Turner kids. . . this time, we got lots of popular Caldecott and Pulitzer prize-winning books with great illustrations.²³

"Page Turners," the new name and theme of RMM's afterschool program, instantly spotlights literacy, language, and the allure of books. It also, as Marti Williams points out, has a double meaning: the program aims to support children as they turn pages in their own lives, acquiring new skills, knowledge, and an inquisitiveness about themselves and the worlds around them. There's still a further meaning as well: the turning of a page for RMM as its relationship develops with the Bowne Foundation -- its first ever foundation supporter.

Michele Richardson has been with the RMM afterschool program since 2007, first as Assistant Director and then as Director. During the 2011-2012 school year, she had nearly 50 children -- girls and boys from a mix of ethnic, cultural, religious, and language backgrounds -- attending the Page Turners program, which operates three afternoons a week -- on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays -- from 3:30 to 6:00 pm. Slightly more than half the children attend P.S. 51 Elias Howe, a few blocks away on West 45th Street; seven come a short walk away from Holy Cross school on West 43rd; and the rest arrive from a mix of other schools.

Fall 2011 Parent Meeting

During a mid-September 2011 parents meeting, a welcome-back after the summer break, it is clear that the children are delighted to be at Page Turners again: to get hugs from Michele Richardson and to see each other -- a giddy group of children quickly form and race through the entrance hall and sanctuary, breaking off in twos and threes, laughing and talking, catching up after the summer, sharing snacks and jokes and news. The new children sit quietly next to their parents, but their heads turn as the others run in and out of the sanctuary, where tables are set up for the meeting.

As the meeting begins, Michele welcomes the new and returning parents and explains the program structure and activities. These include: pairing each child with a volunteer helper, mainly from New York Cares, for the homework session that opens each afternoon; use of the library, with its books, board games, and Spaghetti Book Club; group activities and games in the sanctuary space; art projects; and group outings. She also covers administrative details: pick-up times, release forms, health information forms, emergency contact information, and so forth.

In addition, the school year has begun in some turmoil for the P.S. 51 students. A major, two-year construction project to build an extension onto the school building had parents concerned about students' health and safety. As a result, classes have suddenly been moved across town to Our Lady of

²³ Marti Williams became Associate Pastor of Metro Baptist Church in September 2001.

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Good Counsel Church on East 91st Street. Children used to walking to school will be bused back and forth. Michele is negotiating with the Department of Education for one school bus stop where she will meet and bring Page Turner children to the church.

At the end of the meeting, she reminds parents of RMM's school supply store, open for a few September Saturdays, where parents can, if they wish, pick up school supplies for their children. The store joins other RMM services -- the food pantry, clothing closet, toiletry shelf -- to help meet community residents needs in a respectful way.

The Page Turners After School Program

In addition to homework help, Page Turners activities run the gamut: from individual time with books and writing to group discussions and reading circles; from art projects to active games of "Duck, Duck, Goose". There are also special guests and outings.

Literacy now runs through all Page Turners activities, supported by RMM staff's enhanced understanding of the many facets of literacy and ways to engage children. Drawing on a mix of resources, including their own motivation and knowledge, Bowne Foundation's professional development sessions, and direct conversation with Anne Lawrence, RBF Program Officer, Michele Richardson now integrates literacy as the natural course of program development. Children engage in naming objects, reading aloud, talking in a nutrition segment about foods and flavors and favorite home recipes, defining what an emotion feels and looks like, calling out catch phrases in a running game, writing up what one likes -- and doesn't -- about a book.

Page Turners' Spaghetti Book Club

Now especially with the library as resource, Michele Richardson encourages Page Turners participants to write up and share their book reviews, asserting that children's recommendations to each other are great motivators. To this end, many RMM children actively participate through Page Turners in the Spaghetti Book Club,²⁴ where young readers write, illustrate, and electronically post book reviews to share with their friends, families, and other readers nationally. It was Anne Lawrence who suggested the Book Club to Michele as a way to extend children's reading activity into writing and publishing as well as discovering other readers and books through the web. Along with recommending (or not) particular reads, the reviews themselves are also a place for children to express their own preferences, explore relationships, and take a step back and make sense of their *own* social worlds. Thus:

- During the 2008-2009 Page Turners program, an 8-year-old writes in her review of Ludwig Bemelmans's *Madeline*: "I think second grade girls would love this book because the twelve little girls in the story do everything together."²⁵

²⁴ See: <http://www.spaghetlibookclub.org/>

²⁵ See: http://www.spaghetlibookclub.org/class.php?class_id=1036

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- A year later, a 7-year-old writes in part about *Max's Dragon Shirt* by Rosemary Wells: "I like Max because he is quiet and sometimes doesn't make sense. I am like Max because sometimes my mom says I need new jeans, and I want sweat pants instead because they are comfortable."²⁶
- Earlier, from the 2006-07 cohort, which dubbed itself the "Reading Rascals," a 9-year-old finds familiarity in Marianne Macdonald's *Dragon for Sale*: "I think a dragon is the worst pet to keep, because it could be dangerous! I recommend this book to my family because it has dragon situations, which are a little scary!"²⁷
- And finally, a 9-year-old from the 2004-05 Page Turners feels akin to *Anastasia Krupnik* by Lois Lowry: "Anastasia Krupnik is a very good girl. She does a lot of crazy things, like says she is stupid. She also likes boys. What she does not like is this boring old teacher. . . . She is a teacher who never understands what Anastasia is saying. But do you know what else? Anastasia's mother is having another baby. . . . I recommend this book . . . to my friend at school, Priscilla, because she got a new baby brother, and her teacher never understands what she is saying, either."²⁸

Visitors from New Victory Theater

One afternoon, two members of the New Victory Theater arrive to help prepare the first, second, and third graders for a trip that all Page Turners will be making to see the Shanghai Circus at the Theater just a few blocks away. In part, the Theater describes its work as follows:

Intrinsic to the New Victory mission is that its performance season and education programs combine to create a unique artistic and learning experience that complements student development by using the performing arts as an educational resource. New Victory presentations inspire students of all ages to explore their imaginations and the world around them; many of these students experience their first ever, live performance in The New Victory Theater.²⁹

During the visit to Page Turners, a dozen children sit in a semi-circle on the floor with Michele and watch closely as the visitors perform an acrobatic trick. As they work, the performers talk through each step and ask the children to repeat the professional vocabulary. "Catcher lock" names the way they are holding hands; "hup" signals when each is connected and ready to go. "Style" refers to the final pose; and with "Tada!" they show off the style, ending with a flourish.

Michele then selects two children -- of about the same height -- from those who indicate they want to try the trick. The performers then coach them to do the trick, talking about what circus performers have to do: "grip," "spot," "support each other." After several pairs try this trick, the performers

²⁶ See: http://www.spaghetlibookclub.org/class.php?class_id=1123

²⁷ See: http://www.spaghetlibookclub.org/class.php?class_id=882

²⁸ See: http://www.spaghetlibookclub.org/class.php?class_id=678

²⁹ For a fuller description of the New Victory Theater, see: <http://www.newvictory.org/>

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demonstrate another -- and then help other volunteers through the second trick. Throughout, the performers break down the trick, talking first themselves and then the children through each step.

Later, the performers talk about "points of contact," asking the children to watch as they freeze into a "picture." Holding the pose, the performers ask the children to count and name all the body parts touching the floor -- and quickly children begin looking under, around, and behind the pair, calling out parts to add to the inventory.

The performers leave shortly thereafter, with the children primed and ready for the theatre trip and show. Then Michele jumps into a circle game of "Duck, Duck, Goose," helping release some of the children's pent-up energy and eager anticipation!

STAFFING PAGE TURNERS AND OTHER RMM POSITIONS

Until 2008, Metro Baptist Church and Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries combined had a total of three paid positions: the two pastors/executive director and a custodian. From its founding in 1995, whenever RMM programs needed staffing, the Church building's fourth floor dormitory space provided housing in exchange for services. Henkel describes the origins and workings of the system:

We are a church and a non-profit, and we're part of a church network. So people who knew somebody who needed a place to stay while getting on their feet in New York would call us and ask, 'Do you have a room?' In exchange, they would help out with the afterschool program, food pantry, or clothes closet. They would stay for a few weeks until they found something else. That's how it started -- and then it began to evolve. Over the past few years, we realized that . . . for a lot of people, living in this area and working in this place is good for their resumes -- and that we have valuable space.

We've more recently . . . [become] more intentional about the spaces We send out notices to our networks and post the jobs on *Idealist* and other websites. So . . . we put up the posting for [the Afterschool] Assistant Director, Resident Staff. The true job description is that the compensation is housing in midtown Manhattan, and give the afterschool program hours on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Then we interview people who respond with those conditions. . . .

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Sometimes it's hard to find the right person, but more people respond than you might think. We maximize the resources we have in unique ways.³⁰

In 2008, with the growth of RMM services, funds were found for the first time to help hire a Volunteer Coordinator, albeit for one year only, with compensation partially in cash and partially with housing. By the end of the year, however, recognizing the pivotal nature of the position, RMM was able to stretch the arrangement for a second year. Now the position is permanently established, and compensation currently includes health insurance as well.

In 2009-2010, with Robert Bowne Foundation's support, RMM was able to pay a monetary salary to its afterschool director for the first time. Recognizing the importance of salaries, Henkel notes, "We're growing. We'd like to build consistency, and know that we can't unless we can provide the option of cash payment for work."

THE HELL'S KITCHEN FARM PROJECT (HKFP)

In 2011, a new project started growing at Metro Baptist Church and Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries -- one that Henkel says "is a totally different realm," engaging both MBC and RMM as partners along with two other community-based organization. Although not funded by the Bowne Foundation, HKFP intersects with Page Turners in creative and productive ways. Moreover, it points to a new stage in the growth of RMM and its relationship to its neighborhood community.

History of HKFP

In 2011, Alan Sherouse, Metro Baptist Church Pastor, and Tiffany Triplett Henkel had only recently begun participating in the Chelsea-West Side Neighborhood Network, a group of emergency food programs that includes both faith-based and non-faith community groups. As Henkel explains:

[Because of the gentrification in Hell's Kitchen] . . . within a few blocks of us, we were seeing the affordable food options threatened. The Big Apple Meat Market and fresh vegetable stand both look threatened by new development. This is very much on our minds. . . we're looking for different ways to meet these challenges. . . Even if that threat wasn't happening locally, food challenges worldwide are at an all-time high.³¹

Early on in their participation in the Network meetings, someone from Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) attended with a particular interest in rooftop gardening. As it happened, however, the roof at MCC was not structurally sound enough to support a garden. A light went on and, as Henkel says, "We thought, RMM has the space!" One thousand square feet of rooftop space, as it happens.

Soon, staff from three faith-based entities -- Metro Baptist Church, Metropolitan Community Church of New York, and Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries -- embarked on a joint grant-writing process to access funding for the project. Quickly realizing that they needed additional expertise, they met with the horticulturalist working at Clinton Housing Development Corporation, an early partner of MBC. The

³⁰ All Tiffany Henkel quotes on page: Interview, December 6, 2011.

³¹ Tiffany Henkel Interview, December 6, 2011.

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horticulturalist turned out to be a farmer as well and a great match for the project. So now four groups, including Clinton Housing, developed a proposal that gained funding from United Way of New York City's Seed Grant Fund.³² As of now, MBC is the main fiscal sponsor of the effort because the Hell's Kitchen Farm Project is not yet its own non-profit, although plans are in the making.

Work on the roof garden became a priority as the collective aimed to plant for the 2011 growing season. The members completed the plans, recruited volunteers for a bucket brigade to haul -- bucket by bucket -- seven metric tons of soil up to the MBC roof, transferred the soil to 50 kiddie wading pools to create planting beds, and planted, meeting their deadline.³³ When the produce was harvested, it went to two food pantries in Hell's Kitchen -- one at RMM and the other at Metropolitan Community Church.³⁴ The project has also "fed" RMM. When asked whether this was the first time RMM has engaged in such locally-based collaborative work, Henkel responds:

Yes, this is a big shift in the past few years. Our work is much more collaborative. We've always done well here, realizing the value of partnering. New York Cares [for volunteer Page Turner tutors] , now Hell's Kitchen Farm Project. . . . Program-wise, we aren't doing anything different, but [through collaboration] the programs are able to meet more needs in different ways.

This collaboration is a major step for us. Besides the farm on our roof, we have connected people to a CSA [Community Supported Agriculture]. We've done a CSA in connection with a farm in Goshen, New York. That gives another option to provide fresh vegetables to people in this neighborhood. It has been a good year with challenges. (laughing) Ravenous pigeons can be a challenge for rooftop gardens -- but the weather has been unseasonably warm this year, which has allowed us to harvest for longer.³⁵

Moreover, the garden has blossomed into another collaborative working to enrich the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood. The RMM Composting Program looks to take organic waste from RMM and "partner organizations," including Bank Street Head Start West (housed at MBC), MBC, and the Hell's Kitchen

³² "For 2010-2011, Seed Grant funds are targeted at urban farming initiatives in New York City. Funding can be used to transform unused or 'under-used' land to vital, food-producing spaces or to expand an existing urban farm. In either case, the urban farming initiative fit within the applicant's general scope of community services and assist in the expansion of community outreach services related to nutrition education and wellness." See: <http://www.cityfarmer.info/2010/11/18/united-way-of-new-york-city%E2%80%99s-seed-grants-for-urban-farming-for-2010-2011/>

³³See: <http://www.hellskitchenfarmproject.org/> Also see: *New York Daily News*, April 18, 2011 at: <http://www.hellskitchenfarmproject.org/images/news/hkfpdailynews4-18-12.pdf>

³⁴ In an interview on February 13, 2012, when asked how many are fed through the RMM Food Pantry, Henkel replies: "We have a lot more these days, unfortunately. . . . Prior to late 2008-09, we were averaging . . . providing food for 300 people [per month]. We've steadily moved toward an average of 500 people per month. For two months in 2011, we hit over 800. It's a bittersweet situation. We're grateful we are able to provide food for so many people, but nobody wants to be providing food for so many people through subsidized food programs."

³⁵ Tiffany Henkel Interview, December 6, 2011.

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Farm Project, and convert it into compost for its rooftop garden.³⁶ To this end, the Program garnered a 2012 *New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods* grant from the Citizens Committee for New York City.³⁷ Moreover, RMM, with its neighborhood community in mind, has a bigger vision: "Our dreams for the future are to grow our composting capabilities to serve as a site where community members can bring their organic waste to compost."³⁸

Page Turners and the Hell's Kitchen Farm Project

In addition to the community-based working collaborative and RMM's outreach for new models and venues for serving its community, the Farm Project also provides resources for RMM's other efforts.

Michele Richardson has been quick both to see the Farm Project as a resource and to develop creative and productive intersections with Page Turners. Page Turners participants are tasting and learning the names of new foods, talking with each other and writing about favorite home dishes, and dreaming up and creating fantasy menus. "We have grown all kinds of things [in the roof garden]," says Alan Sherouse, MBC Pastor, "with particular success with kale, green beans, carrots, eggplants, tomatoes, hot peppers, lettuce, and herbs."³⁹ In addition, a volunteer coordinator with the rooftop garden conducts nutrition workshops for Page Turners, engaging participants in discussions about eating habits and healthy diets as well as art projects around nutritional information, such as creating posters.

The rooftop garden itself holds still other discoveries for the Page Turners. United Way has funded child-safety railing for the roof, so, perhaps as early as Fall 2012, Page Turner children will be able to go up to see the garden and help with the harvesting of produce. And next gardening season, they will participate in the planting and tending as well.

As it is, Teen Center participants are already involved in the garden and hearing about new topics as well, such as sustainability and food justice.⁴⁰ "You can just see the energy," Tiffany Henkel [says]. "They're excited about growing and learning. Just putting their hands in dirt is a new experience."⁴¹

METRO BAPTIST CHURCH'S STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

³⁶ See: <http://www.opengreenmap.org/greenmap/nyc-compost-green-map/rauschenbusch-metro-ministries-22376>

³⁷ See: <http://www.citizensnyc.org/programs/grants/nybn.attachment/2012-nybn-7577/2012%20NYBN%20Grantees.pdf>

³⁸ See: <http://www.opengreenmap.org/greenmap/nyc-compost-green-map/rauschenbusch-metro-ministries-22376>

³⁹ The Christian Post, "Church & Ministries," June 29, 2012 <http://www.christianpost.com/news/new-york-city-church-grows-food-on-rooftop-73740/>

⁴⁰ <http://www.abpnews.com/ministry/congregations/item/7213-rooftop-farm-an-urban-oasis-in-nyc#>

⁴¹ <http://www.abpnews.com/ministry/congregations/item/7213-rooftop-farm-an-urban-oasis-in-nyc#.T-4SevWqY1I>

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In mid-February, 2012, the pastors put up a large poster in the main entrance to Metro Baptist Church. The large headline asks: 'Where would you like to see your church five years from now?' There are post-it notes so congregants and others who come into the Church can write and append their responses.⁴²

* * * * *

We've gone through a lot of growth in a short amount of time -- clients, staff, congregation, across the board growth. On top of that, the volatile economic climate and what that means for what people are asking of us. We can go in a lot of different directions, but what's the most effective way to live out our mission? I'm really excited about these next few months. There's a lot of energy, and when there's a lot of energy there's also the possibility of frustration, so it is an important time.⁴³

In 2011, Henkel and others at MBC began preparing for the next developmental phase of Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries: a "strategic visioning and planning" process as a way for the congregation to think together about the work of RMM -- and even more, to consider the role and practices of the Church and of RMM, two legally-separate but very intertwined entities. Henkel comments about the development of each entity:

That is another piece of this process, which is evaluating how we understand ourselves as both a church and a non-profit. This has been a weighty question for us. We had a 15th anniversary of our non-profit [on October 9, 2010] . . . but then, as we moved into the 16th year, we had a lot of questions about the link between the two -- the church and the non-profit.⁴⁴

In addition to clarity of direction, the effort aimed for "broad ownership" -- "starting with the congregation because the congregation is the base of the non-profit" -- of whatever developed regarding RMM's direction and work.⁴⁵

By January 2012, the Church had engaged John Hewitt, a professional consultant and former pastor with experience working with church congregations and non-profits; he will help lead the strategic planning process. In addition, upon learning of the plan, Anne Lawrence, Bowne Program Officer, offered the assistance of Community Resource Exchange (CRE), a nonprofit management consulting firm that works with nonprofit organizations in New York City. As a result, MBC, John Hewitt, and Louisa Hackett of CRE worked together to devise and support the strategic planning process.

Overall, the process included a range of tasks and phases that built on each other, such as:

⁴² Research Fieldnotes, February 13, 2012.

⁴³ Tiffany Henkel Interview, December 6, 2011.

⁴⁴ Tiffany Henkel Interview, February 13, 2012.

⁴⁵ Both quotes from Tiffany Henkel Interview, February 13, 2012.

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- Developing a 10-person Steering Committee to meet over an initial weekend with the pastors and the consultant to take "a wider view of things"
- Collecting survey data over two months to gain insight into the perspectives of the staff, volunteers, board members, clients of the different programs, and the congregation
- CRE collecting data about organizations that: have structural similarities to MBC/RMM (church/non-profit combinations); or offer similar services -- in part, to help think about possible expansion of services as well as collaboration possibilities
- Holding a visioning day with the congregation
- Amassing and analyzing all findings to craft a practical plan for going forward.

On May 27, 2012, Metro Baptist Church released a list of "Strategic Initiatives," the product of the strategic planning process. The list is divided into six (6) categories, including: "Ministries & Worship," "Membership & Growth," "Metro/RMM," "Personnel," "Building," and "Financial". The category "Metro/RMM" reads:

Metro/RMM

- Clarify and effectively communicate the functions, roles and vision inherent in the Metro/RMM relationship.
- Strengthen the functional Metro/RMM relationship through systems of communication, evaluation, education and engagement with the Metro congregation, staff, RMM board and wider communities.
- Maximize the potential for growth, engagement and development within the separate entities of Metro and RMM through the common relationship.⁴⁶

As a result of the extensive and intensive strategic planning process, MBC and RMM find they have *not* a list of answers to their questions, but, instead, something better: a broad road map that recognizes, articulates, and sanctions the work of exploring the questions and defining responses. It is a shared road map for continuing the efforts of the congregation, pastors, and staff together.

METRO BAPTIST CHURCH, RAUSCHENBUSCH METRO MINISTRIES and the ROBERT BOWNE FOUNDATION

The Robert Bowne Foundation has been a continuous funder of Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries since its first grant in August 2001 to support the After School Homework Center. The Foundation has helped support the transformation of the Center into the Page Turners After School Program, with its focus on literacy in its many varied forms. Over time, Bowne has also helped: transform the library, develop organizational leadership, establish the directorship of the afterschool program as a paid position, and support the strategic planning process. Tiffany Triplett Henkel comments on this arc of developmental aid:

*[B]efore Bowne, we never had a granter that said 'we believe in this vision you have and the desire you have to meet needs in your community, and we're going to invest in you.'
. . . . For Bowne to come in and believe in what we were doing was crucial. It gave us a sense of identity . . . and we saw that we do do a lot with a little, and can keep pushing ourselves to do*

⁴⁶ "Metro Baptist Church, Strategic Initiatives: Metro/RMM," May 27, 2012.

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more.

We were sort of like a teenager who needed a mentor. Bowne came in and mentored us in a way -- they gave us money but provided us with way more than the financial support. They helped us clarify what we see, made connections, helped us network. In truth, it took us awhile to take the bait in the right way. In the beginning, we just wanted the money. . . . They have connected us to people and organizations who have helped in all kinds of ways, expanded what we do. I was part of a Leadership Development group with CRE [Community Resource Exchange]. Our Development Director has done the same thing with CRE. We've developed our library in different ways because of what Bowne has connected us to. It is hard to imagine what we would be if Bowne hadn't invested in us 10 years ago. They saw the potential that others didn't see.

Because of that, as Bowne phases out, we hate to lose them, but I don't know how we would have been able to do it if they had only given us the money. They've empowered us to go on beyond them. It's been invaluable. A lot of organizations and foundations, when they're gone you're back to square one -- and that is not where we find ourselves now.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Tiffany Henkel Interview, December 6, 2011.