

From the Hands of the Weavers

Looms were purchased with church grant money and are now used to sell handicrafts to buy food.

by Joan Beuttler
Community contributor

It all began with a vision. A plan followed and grants were received from the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church to begin what is now known as “Hand-to-Mouth Weavers.”

In 2008, Rev. Tom Theilemann, then pastor at the Red Hook United Methodist Church, had a vision. He wondered if the church could obtain grants to help enlarge the capabilities at the emergency church’s food pantry. He applied for and received a grant in 2009 that allowed the church to purchase deep freezers and refrigerators; thus enabling the pantry to offer non-perishable food items and fresh foods as well to those in need who reside in the Red Hook School District.

In addition, and in accordance with Pastor Tom’s vision, a couple of weaving looms were also purchased and placed in a small corner room in the church’s education wing basement. He reached out to the Elmendorf Hand Spinners Guild for assistance in setting up the weaving program. They enlisted the help of Alice Seeger to teach the new weavers the fundamentals of the craft. Volunteers from the congregation were instructed in the fine art of weaving – some have even learned to warp the looms, a step that

needs to occur before any weaving can proceed. Additional looms have arrived over the past several months, and there are presently five looms tucked into the weaving room.

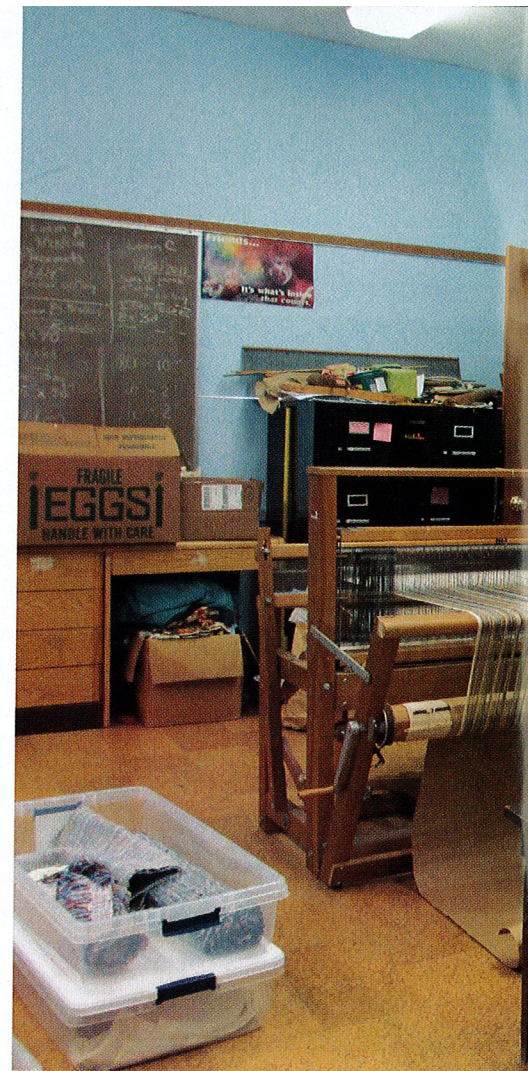
Pastor Tom came up with the name “Hand-to-Mouth Weavers,” because the hands of the weavers make it possible to purchase the food that feeds the mouths of those in need.

One of the new weavers, Betty A’Brial, discovered Bruce and Zelma Barrett, both knowledgeable weavers, while visiting the Dutchess County Fairgrounds. The Barretts were demonstrating on antique looms. Betty mentioned the Hand-to-Mouth-Weavers to the Barretts and, though they are members of another congregation, they became two very important members of the weaving group. On most Wednesday evenings, dedicated weavers are found working on the looms. Each member of the group has special gifts and talents they bring to the group. Conversation and laughter are

enjoyed while designing and weaving beautiful products to sell in support of the emergency food pantry.

Some items produced by the weavers include: rugs, tote bags, table runners, place mats, mug rugs, and more. All items are made from recycled materials donated by folks throughout the community. All fabrics need to be cut to specified widths and lengths for weaving, and several non-weavers from the church family have helped in this process.

The weavers display their finished products at venues such as: farmers



1785

Many looms have been invented. Edmund Cartwright built a power loom in 1785. Jacques Vaucanson made the silk loom in 1745.

According to internet sources, the word loom is derived from the Old English and meant utensil or tool of any kind. In 1404, it was used to mean a machine to enable weaving thread into cloth. By 1838, it became a machine for interlacing thread. There are many different types of looms, including a back strap loom, which is two sticks or bars where one bar is attached to an object and the other bar is attached to the back of the weaver around the back. A warp-weighted loom is a vertical loom that originated in the Neolithic period and uses hanging weights. A drawloom is a handloom for weaving figured cloth. A flying shuttle was used when a weaver wanted to weave longer than the distance of their armspan. A haute-lisse and basse-lisse looms are used for weaving traditional tapestry.

—**Samantha Brinkley**



Burce Barrett working on a Leclerc floor loom in the church basement.

Photo courtesy of Janice Williams

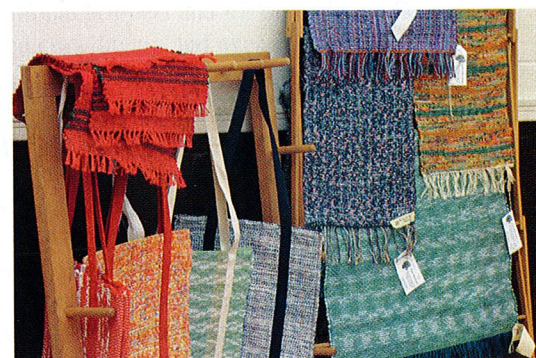
markets, Hardscrabble Day, Apple Blossom Day, and the Clermont Sheep & Wool Festival. To date, the Hand-to-Mouth Weavers have raised over \$5000 toward keeping the shelves in the food pantry stocked. Additional contributions of both food and money are required as well, and the weavers are grateful for contributions from Panera, Hannaford, Stewarts, and individuals in and around the Red Hook area.

The weavers and the entire congregation of the Red Hook United Methodist Church are proud of the accomplishments made in a short span of years. They plan to – and have faith they will be able to – continue this important mission project into the future.

For more information, call the Red Hook UMC at 758-6283, or contact Betty A'Brial at 758-6900, or Janice Williams at 758-6765 or 750-3057 cell.

TURNING RAGS INTO CLOTH

RECYCLING FABRIC



Some of the products that the Hand to Mouth Weavers have created.

Photo courtesy of Janice Williams



The products are sold and the money is used to buy food for the hungry.

Photo courtesy of Janice Williams

Weaving is a method of fabric production in which two distinct sets of yarns or threads are interlaced at right angles to form a fabric or cloth. The longitudinal threads are called the warp and the lateral threads are the weft or filling.

Cloth is usually woven on a loom, a device that holds the warp threads in place while filling threads are woven through them.

"We do traditional rag weaving," says Janice Williams of Hand to Mouth Weavers. "All of our floor looms are four-shaft looms set up as a plain weave. We use a cotton rug warp to prepare our looms for weaving. Donated fabrics are cut into 1-inch strips to use as the weft — what gets passed back and forth on the warp to make our products. We use all different kinds of fabric, from bed sheets to blue jeans, upholstery ends, and linens."

—**Lisa Iannucci**



Photo courtesy of Janice Williams