

"Write the vision clearly on the tablets, that one may read it on the run." – Habakkuk

THE VISION

The Newspaper
of the New York
Annual Conference
of The United
Methodist Church

July 22, 2011

Church Grapples With Divide On Homosexuality

A UMNS Report
BY HEATHER HAHN

Talk to United Methodists of differing views about the church's homosexuality debate, and they will tell you the recent clergy trial of Rev. Amy DeLong was just a prologue.

The real showdown will take place next year when General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking assembly, meets. Yet, all say the trial may offer

**Bishop's
letter on
same-sex
marriage
law / 15**

some clues to the discussions that will take place April 24-May 4, 2012, in Tampa, Fla.

"We are deeply divided, obviously," said Rev. Keith Boyette, a Virginia pastor and licensed lawyer who assisted the church's counsel in the case.

"Just as in society, what happens is we move from an attempt to dialogue to legislation, and when legislation doesn't work, we move

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Julian Ashong, in the blue shirt in back row, tries to keep his summer program charges in line with the help of fellow counselors at Summerfield UMC in Bridgeport, Conn.

Evangelism by Web, Wheels

An 18-year-old college sophomore and a lifelong biker were this year's recipients of the Denman Evangelism Award for laity presented during annual conference. Julian Ashong, a member of the Summerfield UMC in Bridgeport, Conn., was the first to receive the youth award. Paul Bernabe Jr. is a member of the Christian



Paul J. Bernabe Jr., with his wife, Elise, shares the Gospel message through his motorcycle club.

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SAVE THE DATE

Friday Closings at NYAC

July–August: During the months of July and August, the conference’s administrative offices in White Plains, N.Y., will be closed on Fridays.

Cooperative School of Mission

July 28–30: “All Things Made New,” is the focus for the conference Cooperative School of Christian Mission at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury. Housing is available at the Ethan Allen Hotel. The three studies available are: “The Journey: Forgiveness, Restorative Justice and Reconciliation,” “Haiti: Challenges and Hope,” and “Joy to the World: Mission in the Age of Global Christianity.” The school is open to clergy and laity, with special classes for children, youth and young adults. Registration info is available at <http://nyac.com/events/detail/3395>. Rev. Sonia A. Jermin serves as dean.

Pastor’s Prayer Retreat

July 29-30: A two-day retreat at the Oratory of the Little Way, “Healing the Shepherds,” is offered as a time of relaxation, spiritual renewal, fellowship, and renewed commitment. Clergy or others involved in full time ministry—including doctors and nurses—are invited to attend the retreat, which will be led by Bishop Alex McCullough, spiritual director of the Oratory. The retreat runs from 1 p.m. Friday until early afternoon on Saturday. Overnight guests are \$50 per person; commuters, \$30 per person. Call 860-354-8294 for registration information. The Oratory is located at 8 Oratory Lane, Gaylordsville, CT 06755. Web site: www.oratoryhealing.org.

Baseball Benefit for Habitat

August 4: Bridgeport Bluefish 2011 UMC Night to benefit Habitat for Humanity of Coastal Fairfield County. Game time is 7:05 p.m. at the Ballpark at Harbor Yard; tickets are \$15, with \$5 of each one sold going directly to Habitat. To reserve your tickets


by June 30, please contact Stacy Kweder via email: sltoy@sbcglobal.net, or by phone at 203-881-1588 (home) or 860-681-5793 (cell).

Biblical Story-Telling Gathering

August 8–13: The 24th Annual Festival of the Network of Biblical Storytellers will gather at the Ridgecrest Conference Center near Asheville, N.C., with the theme, “How Many Times? Stories of Forgiveness.” Keynote speaker is Dr. Kenneth E. Bailey; featured storyteller is Mei-Lin Po. For more info on this immersion experience in biblical story-telling in the Blue Ridge Mountains, go to www.nbsint.org, or call 1-800-355-6627.

Summer Day in the Woods

August 17: In the quiet, relax with other women to explore intricacies of creation and to “just be” in a safe and hallowed space. Rev. Dr. Karen Monk, pastor of the Kaaterskill Charge, and daughter of an environmental educator, will lead the 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. program at Kingswood Campsite, 1500 Hathaway Pond Rd., Hancock, NY 13783. It is sponsored by the Catskill Hudson District UMW. The cost is \$20, and includes coffee hour and hot lunch. Overnight accommodations, if desired, are available at the nearby Capra Motel, by calling 607-637-1600 for Kingswood rate. Please register before July 6 or August 10, depending on which date you choose. Contact Sharon Snider at 518-756-2334 with any questions.

 <p>The Vision</p>
<p>The News of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church</p>
<p>Bishop: Jeremiah J. Park Director of Connectional Ministries: Ann A. Pearson Editor: Joanne Utley New York Conference of The United Methodist Church 20 Soundview Avenue, White Plains, NY 10606 Phone (888) 696-6922 Fax (914) 615-2244; Website: www.nyac.com Vision e-mail: thevision@nyac.com</p>

Putting Faith in Wall Street Investments

UMNS REPORT

With local reporting

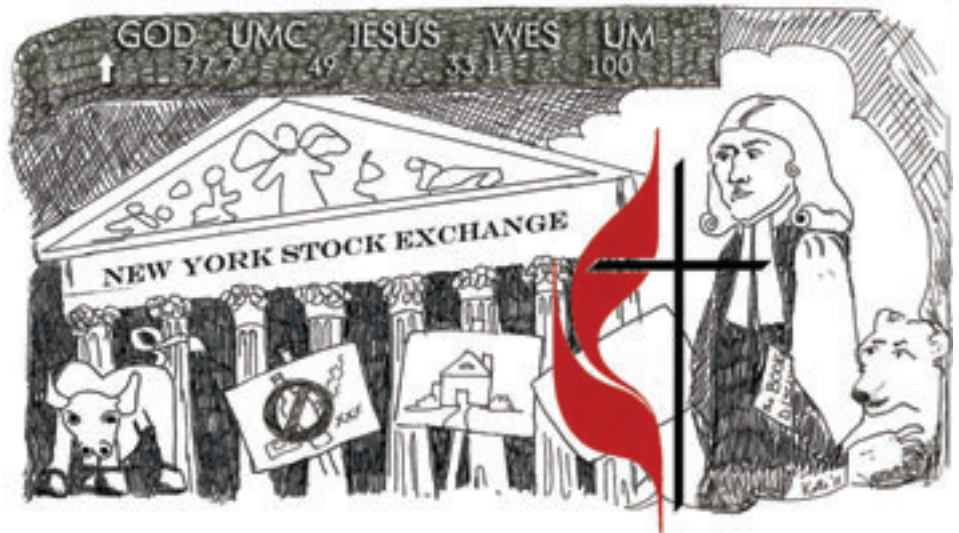
Part of the job at the denomination's pension agency is to "do good" while still making good returns.

To that end, the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits recently launched Wespath Investment Management, a new brand name for its institutional investment services, which work to apply the church's teachings to stock selections.

The investment program, named for John Wesley, helps annual conferences, conference foundations and other United Methodist-affiliated institutions with socially responsible investments. The NYAC Pension Board uses this investment program for its accounts at the General Board.

"I think this is a marvelous opportunity for any church or United Methodist-related institution to be a part of a large pool, like a mutual fund, and get excellent returns while not needing to worry about the filters of our United Methodist Social Principles," said Rev. Bill Shillady, president of the NYAC Board of Pension & Health Benefits. "Their returns have kept pace with the comparable indices to which they relate."

The United Methodist Church, like many other religious organizations, long has participated in what the financial



UMNS ILLUSTRATION BY KATHLEEN BARRY

industry calls socially responsible investing. With about \$17 billion in assets, the United Methodist pension program is the largest church pension fund in the United States and overall the country's 80th largest. The denomination has some 74,000 participants in its pension and benefits programs.

Socially responsible investing can take three forms:

- Screening out certain companies
- Engaging in shareholder advocacy with others
- Specifically investing in some financial projects such as affordable housing.

Staff members say the pension board in all its efforts keeps focus on its main goal: helping United Methodist clergy and staff members reap much more than they have sown.

"We want to work, invest and operate in alignment with church values," said Barbara Boigegrain, the pension board's top executive. "But, our primary role is to hold

our fiduciary responsibilities foremost."

The pension board is just one of many church-related groups tasked with socially responsible investing.

Various church institutions go about such investing in different ways, said Byrd L. Bonner, who chairs the denomination's Socially Responsible Investment Task Force. Bonner is also the executive director of the UMC Foundation, which manages a number of endowments for church agencies and other general church initiatives.

Bonner's task force last year conducted an online survey on the investment strategies of the church at large. The task force still is finalizing its report, but the survey did find that many church leaders do not know the church's teachings regarding socially responsible investing.

"We as a church have not taught what the General

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Putting Faith in Wall Street Investments

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Conference has decided,” Bonner said. “The challenge is not creating new materials. The challenge is: How do we get (materials) into the pews?”

How screening works

The Book of Discipline, the denomination’s law book, requires that all church agencies and institutions, including hospitals and universities, “make a conscious effort” to invest in line with United Methodist Social Principles.

The book specifically urges church institutions to “endeavor to avoid” businesses that engage in racial discrimination, violate human rights or use sweatshops or forced labor. United Methodist entities are also exhorted to avoid investments that support gambling, pornography, alcoholic beverages, tobacco or the production of nuclear armaments.

United Methodist pension board and other church-related groups as a rule will not invest in a company that receives more than 10 percent of its revenue from the objectionable products.

This means screening out companies such as casinos, adult-movie channels, beer distributors, cigarette manufacturers and defense contractors. The pension board also stays clear of restaurant chains that receive a significant portion of their revenue from alcoholic beverages, said David Zellner, the board’s

chief investment officer.

Church investment portfolios do include large retailers such as Costco, Wal-Mart and some grocery chains that receive only a small fraction of their revenue from selling alcohol or cigarettes, he said.

How shareholder advocacy works

When the pension board buys shares in a company, it often will join efforts to ensure that the company acts in an ethical manner.

Shareholder advocacy can include contacting corporate executives. It also takes the form of shareholder resolutions that can pressure a company to change its policies and practices in a certain way. An investor needs at least \$2,000 worth of shares to draw up resolutions under Security and Exchange Commission rules.

Vidette Bullock Mixon, the pension board’s corporate relations director, said the board concentrates on five areas in its advocacy work.

In keeping with the 2008 Book of Resolutions, the board encourages companies to:

- Provide public reporting and transparency about their policies and practices
- Reduce risks to the environment
- Maintain human rights and fair-labor standards in their supply chains

- Include women and people of color on their boards of directors and limit executive compensation to what is sustainable
- Safeguard product safety and other health measures.

Bullock Mixon pointed to Wal-Mart as an example of company that has been responsive over the years to such advocacy. In collaboration with other socially responsible investors, the board persuaded Wal-Mart to establish a report on its environmental impact and long-term sustainability.

The board’s advocacy isn’t just about getting corporations to behave nicely, said Zellner. It’s ultimately about protecting the bottom line for pension participants.

For more than 20 years, the pension board also has engaged in a third type of socially responsible investing—what it calls Positive Social Purpose Lending.

As part of this program, the board has financed nearly \$1.5 billion in affordable housing, community health centers and charter schools for low- and moderate-income people in the United States as well as microfinance loans for people in the developing world. These endeavors are loans, not giveaways, and they achieve the market rate of return, pension board staff says.

July 31, Sept. 30 Key Health Deadlines

BY BILL SHILLADY

Chairperson, NYAC Board of Pensions and Health Benefits

Although the Board of Pensions and Health Benefits was unable to arrange for blood screenings at annual conference this year, we strongly urge you to schedule this valuable testing before July 31 with your doctor, or through Quest Diagnostics Blueprint for Wellness.

Quest Diagnostics Blueprint for Wellness screening is offered at no out-of-pocket cost through HealthFlex. There are hundreds of Quest laboratories in the NYAC area. You can take this screening at your own convenience, although pre-registration is required; same-day registration is accepted, based on appointment availability. If you are registered in the Virgin Health Miles program you will receive \$100 for taking the test before July 31. If you have a spouse on the HealthFlex plan, they too should take the screening. Follow the steps below to arrange for the test at a local Quest office (you'll be able to find and choose the closest lab during registration:

Register by Phone

Call 1-866-908-9440; employer/group: "HealthFlex" or "United Methodist Church"

Register Online

Go to, www.gbophb.org. Log into HealthFlex/WebMD. Under

HealthFlex Vendor Links, select "Quest Diagnostics."

Follow these pre-registration steps:

1. Enter registration key: umc2011. Click "Submit."
2. Enter the nine-digit ID number on your medical insurance card, beginning with 00 (omit any letters). Spouses should add "S" after the ID. Enter your date of birth.
3. "Are you an employee?" Clergy/lay employee (working or retired): answer yes. Spouse: answer no.
4. Create a username and password.
5. Enter your phone number (required) and e-mail address (optional). Click "Continue."
6. Select a location and appointment time, and verify. Then print your confirmation page.
7. Bring your confirmation page, and driver's license or other government-issued ID to your screening appointment.

The results of the blood screening and biometrics test will help you prepare answers to the Health Quotient (HQ) online. Please take note that once again, there will be a major incentive to take the HQ online in the form of lower deductibles for 2012.

For next year, the NYAC Health Benefits plan will maintain the current co-pays for your doctor and specialists, higher urgent care and emergency co-pays, and a \$250 individual /

\$500 family deductible for any clergy participants and their spouses who take the HQ before September 30.

However, if you and your spouse (you must both take the HQ) do not take the HQ by the end of September, your deductible will be doubled in 2012—\$500 individual / \$1000 family. There is nothing that can change this. Completing the HQ by September 30 is the only way to avoid the increase. All participants and spouses covered by HealthFlex active plans are expected to complete the HQ. Last year, we had some spouses who took the HQ and pastor partner did not. We had some clergy who took the HQ and their spouse did not. Both, spouse and pastor must take the HQ to get the family discount.

Please note that your information is protected. Personal data entered through the HQ is processed by WebMD, an accredited health organization with high standards for security and confidentiality. Your information remains confidential; the data you enter is never shared with your annual conference, employer or the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

You can complete the HQ online at www.gbophb.org by clicking on the HealthFlex/WebMD option on the right side of the page. You can use any computer—home, work, church, public library or a friend's

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Health Screening, Quiz Provide for Savings

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home—with Internet access.

By now—after five years in HealthFlex—everyone should have established an account with WebMD. You can contact the General Board to receive a personal identification number if you have lost the new ones sent last fall. Please do not wait until the last minute. The system is known to get overloaded the last few days before a deadline.

If you are unable to complete the HQ, requests for accommodation should be addressed in writing to: General Board of Pension and Health

Benefits, 1201 Davis Street, Evanston, Illinois, 60201; Attn: HQ Requests. Please send a copy of such a letter to our board as well. Please understand that our conference board cannot make exceptions.

With the increased costs for health insurance, and the continuing strain on local church finances and on clergy financial participation, the only viable insurance through HealthFlex was a deductible plan. Please remember to arrange to pay for your personal premiums through a Section 125 plan and through the Medical Reimbursement

Account through the plan.

We are doing our best to keep increases minimal. With health insurance premiums rising 18 to 25 percent in the general market, we think we have done well to keep our preliminary increase for 2012 to 7.5 percent.

As active participants in HealthFlex, you can save yourself a great deal of money, and even earn enough to cover your deductibles by joining the Virgin Health Miles incentive program, taking the Blueprint for Wellness and taking the HQ online.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Roll the Video. . .

Recordings of the following events at annual conference are available on video DVD or audio CD from GNTV Media Ministry:

- **Opening Worship:** Bishop Park
- **Bible Studies:** Jerry Eyster, and Rev. Randy Nugent
- **Memorial Service:** Rev. Adrienne Brewington
- **Retirement Service**
- **Episcopal Address:** Bishop Park
- **Ordination Service:** Bishop Violet L. Fisher
- **Mission Celebration:** Bishop Violet L. Fisher

To order recordings of individual events or the complete set:

1. Go to http://www.gntv.info/online_store/store5/agora.cgi
2. In the left-hand menu under Categories, scroll down and click on “New York AC.”
3. Choose your selections and place your order.

You may also request downloadable files to listen to on your favorite MP3 player. You may choose to purchase the services separately, or as one package. Please note that most music and videos played during sessions will not be included for copyright law compliance. This resource is available in exchange for your donation to cover the costs of making the resource and providing it to you. This item will ship approximately 4–6 weeks after the conference ends.



Bishop Park commissions Jennifer Tiernan Nunno during Friday night's ministry celebration.

Change in Pastors: A Time For Chaos or Growth?

BY GEORGE OLIVE

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light,’” and there was change! For the next five days, “God said,” and there was change! Did you ever wonder why God waited until the sixth day to create people?

Could it be that God knew that as soon as Adam and Eve were around there would be resistance to the changes brought forth from the chaos that existed?

Just imagine what the people might have said if they had been present! “Why do we have to have rocks? They hurt our feet.” “Why do banana trees have to be so tall? We can’t reach them without climbing.” “Who needs mosquitoes and snakes and skunks? We were doing fine without them.” “How about a four-day work week?”

Perhaps our preference for the status quo is inherent in the gift of free will, but there is clearly something in all of us that prompts us, when faced with change, to challenge and frequently to resist. Put us in a communal environment such as a congregation, and that tendency is exacerbated. We often join a particular group, such as the church we choose to join, because it feels comfortable and becomes familiar. Change that, and the whole reason for joining is put to question—or so it seems.

In the past few months, many congregations have experienced profound change—the cabinet

has appointed a new pastor! Some people are questioning “Why?” They joined because of the pastor—the way she preaches, his wonderful manner when visiting, her vision for the future, his strong ability to teach from the Scriptures, her administrative skill, his absolute commitment to outreach ministries. You get the picture. Or do you? Are members shopping other churches to find the comfortable, familiar environment of the past?

How do congregational leaders prepare for the possibility that people will leave as a result of this “natural” tendency to resist change? Can we be proactive? Leaders must work together to communicate and to remind people that God is the One who creates wonderful gifts from what appears to be chaos. Excepting only The Creation, the most profound change to the human experience occurred in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He met resistance from every side.

Even his own disciples resisted his vision of the kingdom of God, clinging to their traditional Messianic vision. What did Christ do in response to the resistance to change? The answer is simple, though far from simplistic: communication, love, patience, and personal example. How can congregational leaders apply this example to change within the congregation?

George Olive is a UMC layperson who has served as a conference council director, national trainer, consultant and local pastor. A copy of this reflection can be found at: http://www.gbod.org/site/c.nhLRJ2PMKsG/b.6505161/k.FBB2/Committee_Resources.htm

Recent Appointments

Sheila Beckford
Woodycrest / MET

Carol Downs
Grace (Southington) / CT

Bev Furey
Flanders / LIE

Juhye Hahn
Kensington and East Berlin / CT

Dorett Johnson-Agu
Kings Park / LIE

Won Tack Lee and Roslyn Lee
District hires, Westbrookville / CH

Jennifer Pick
Armonk and Rye / MET

Carmen Denise Pickett
Trinity (White Plains) / MET

Charles Ryu
St. Paul’s (Middletown) / CH

Xavier Vargas
La Resurreccion / MET

K. Kale Yu
Bayside (Queens) / MET
1-year interim

Setting Priorities Can Help Avoid Neglect

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant on Older Adult Ministry

All I did was knock on her door and introduce myself as the Director of Spiritual Life for United Methodist Homes. She invited me in and said plaintively, with obvious confusion as to why I was breaking the pattern that she had come to accept: “No one ever comes to see me.”

That was literally the opening conversation with one of our new residents at Wicke Health Center. Although it was not the first time I heard that comment, it still startled me. It obviously was the feeling that lay heavy on her heart. So heavy in fact that it came out of her mouth without prompting or hesitation.

My first reaction was one of sadness. No one should ever feel that alone! My second reaction was to wonder what made people stay away from this woman. My third reaction (and the only one I gave voice to) was to ask if she would like me to stay awhile and visit.

What followed was a tale of loneliness—a tale of a life lived in an isolation that only increased as she grew older. When I thought she was done telling her story, I asked her about her religious background. Then I heard the most depressing part of her story; she was a United Methodist and had been all of her life.



She had served her church in various capacities, but as she aged, she did less and less, attending worship services less often, and eventually stopped going to her church at all. “I haven’t seen my pastor or anyone else from the church since I stopped going. I guess they only accepted me when I could contribute my money and time.” I came to learn that she had no family nearby, and that she used to see the church as her family.

We visited often after that! I did not want to be a part of those who ignored her. I left her room that day, angry and sad. I was angry that the church, the body of Christ, had paid so little attention to a member of the family. I was sad because I knew her pastor and her congregation. They are good people, who were not neglectful on purpose.

As a pastor, the demands of parish life are well known to me. The hours required to be present

in God’s name for others are often overwhelming. There are many excuses for such neglect. But I believe there is a question of priorities that need to be set. Surely someone had time somewhere along the way to visit this woman.

My thoughts returned me to a concept of ministry called “intentional ministry.” In a busy time, planning for, and programming for, specific ministries is the only sure way to accomplish what we know we need to do. Ministry to and with older adults is one such specific ministry. How different would my first conversation with that woman have been had her church had a committee on Older Adult Ministry? How different would that woman feel about herself had her church had a method of reaching out to shut-in members?

Every congregation I have ever known or served has the capacity to reach out to this population. Not every congregation does! Where is your congregation in this respect?





Highland Mills Dedicates Peace Pole

Despite gray skies on June 12, Highland Mills United Methodist Church took their Pentecost worship outside and used the celebration to dedicate a peace pole, left. The peace pole, standing in a meditation garden being developed on the church grounds, is part of an international project striving to plant the universal message of peace. Above, Pastor Darlene Resling gathers the children to discuss the meaning of Pentecost and the peace pole. The handcrafted pole displays the prayer, “May Peace Prevail on Earth,” in eight different languages (including sign language). Tens of thousands of peace poles have been erected in 180 countries around the world.

Be Kinder Than Necessary

We all strive to be kind, but sometimes it's easier said than done. These quotes might provide just the necessary inspiration and motivation.

- When I was young, I used to admire intelligent people; as I grow older, I admire kind people.—*Abraham Joshua Heschel*

- Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.—*Plato*

- Always be a little kinder than necessary.—*James M. Barrie*

- Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's

kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile.—*Mother Teresa*

- Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate.—*Albert Schweitzer*

- Kindness can become its own motive. We are made kind by being kind.—*Eric Hoffer*

- Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.—*Colossians 3:12*

- I have this theory that if one person can go out of their way to show compassion, then it will start a chain reaction of the same. People will never know how far a little kindness can go.—*Rachel Scott, first person killed at Columbine High School shootings in 1999*

And remember, when you catch someone in the act of being kind, be sure to let them know that you noticed. Kindness—pass it on!



Harvesting Justice One Cocoa Pod at a Time

BY ROSINA POHLMANN

Rosie Pohlmann, a member of the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew in Manhattan, traveled to the Dominican Republic on an UMCOR tour of the CONACADO cacao cooperative in May. The co-op is an association of small-farm producers who grow a portion of the cacao beans that make the Equal Exchange chocolate line. Below are excerpts from her travel blog; an article on her tour appears in the July issue of New World Outlook, the mission magazine of the United Methodist Church.

Pohlman, 23, a freelance writer and aspiring singer, has a passion for combining spirituality and social justice. She has previously traveled to Cuba and Ghana on mission trips.

This week I am blessed to join an eco-tour led by El Fuego del Sol that will take me into some of the farms where Fair Trade chocolate is produced, and allow me to learn from the farmers themselves.

I arrived on Saturday, and joined a team made up of Methodists, Catholics, representatives of Equal Exchange, and world travelers. We've been busy! Sunday began with back-to-back services at the Iglesia Episcopal de Santo Domingo, a lovely church just west of the colonial zone.

Today, we began a new adventure, visiting the headquarters of CONACADO and traveling to one of the seven "bloques" where Fair Trade chocolate is produced, called Yamasá. Several leaders of the chocolate-producers co-op, as well as a number of youth active in the community, welcomed us and led us on a tour of the fermentation facility, where we learned a bit about the painstaking process of fermenting, drying, and packaging the cacao beans. Perhaps as fascinating as the production process is the democratic structure of CONACADO, led by the organization of the cacao producers themselves.

Thursday, May 12

The past few days have been active indeed, as we try to fit what would ideally be a 10-day tour into seven days.



Rosina Pohlman traveled to the Dominican Republic to learn about fair trade chocolate for New World Outlook magazine.

Many of the families who opened their homes to us are connected to the co-op, and they shared their stories as well as their food and hospitality. It's heartening to see how much of a positive impact CONACADO has had on their lives, and how quickly the community is progressing. We saw schools and water pumps that were paid for by fair trade premiums, and we listened as co-op members told us about their children, many of whom were able to pursue higher education. Also encouraging is the co-op's new credit union, which allows members to take out loans at low rates and thus establish the community even further.

One of my favorite moments was our visit to the Asociación Mujer & Acción, a group of women who have used co-op funds to start their own small business venture. The women use cacao to make a sweet wine that they then sell. They started with a small loan, which they paid back, and then were able to take out a larger one with which they built a modest structure to house their business. To me, these women exemplify the progress that is possible within the community—the kind of positive outcome that results when we invest in people and not just things.

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Harvesting Justice One Cocoa Pod at a Time

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Monday, May 16

Our stay in San Francisco in the Dominican Republic was brief but rich. There was a somber atmosphere to the place when we arrived, due to recent violence, but thanks to the careful planning of our hosts, we were able to avoid any danger. My prayers remain with those who were affected.

It's good to know, however, that in the midst of trouble, there is positivity, too. Plants are being nurtured to grow into strong, fruitful trees; people are being given the opportunity to build better lives for themselves; and organic, fair-trade chocolate is being produced! This was apparent at the new chocolate factory that CONACADO acquired just five years ago, where many of its cacao beans are processed after they have been fermented and dried. There we breathed in the rich smell of chocolate and saw firsthand how the beans are cleaned, heated, ground, pressed, and separated into butter and powder.

I am now back home in New York City, and in addition to feeling very grateful for the chance to

see what I saw and meet the people I met, I feel reflective—especially as a consumer of chocolate. Every step of the cocoa-production process is hard, hard work, and many of those who do that work still live in conditions that, although adequate, would be unacceptable to most of us. They're improving with every school built, business financed, and roof repaired through fair-trade premiums. These improvements need to continue—which makes fair trade and the support of fair trade absolutely necessary. It's startling to learn that entire communities, thousands of families and thousands of lives, depend on something that takes just a few minutes to consume—something that, to us, is just a few moments of delight for our taste buds. With this much at stake, I can't afford to be blasé about my choices as a consumer. Not anymore.

To learn more about CONACADO and fair trade products, go to the Equal Exchange web site at: <http://www.equalexchange.coop/profile-of-conacado-in-the-dominican-republic>. To check out New World Outlook magazine, go to: <http://gbgm-umc.org/nwo/>.

GBOD Offers Committee Training Via Webinars

August 4 / 7:30 p.m.

Who: Nominations Committee

What: Basic training for church nominations committees who want to find leaders rather than “fill the lines on the form.” Your responsibility is to be the voice of God calling people into ministry!

Where: Your own internet connection or gather at the church with the committee to watch together.

August 18 and 25 / Two-part training for finance leaders

Who: Treasurer, finance committee, financial secretary

When: August 18, 7:30 p.m.

What: Fundraising and money BURNOUT!! This webinar will cover the central message of generosity, essentials of an effective program, things that work and things that do not work. Move beyond “the way

we have always done it” to lead your congregation in extravagant generosity for the ministry God has for your congregation.

August 25, 7:30 p.m.

What: Extravagant Generosity Starts Here: A boot camp for Finance Leaders. This webinar will be a “put-it-to-work” review of the newest program on the marketplace “Extravagant Generosity, the Heart of Giving.” One of the authors will describe how to make it work, how it is different, and how to get started. Learn about “heart-change” and marketing and branding concepts to inspire generosity among all age groups.

Where: Your own internet or gather with other finance leaders at the church and watch together.

Register for any of these free webinars, at www.gbod.org/committee_resources. Space is limited.

Church Grapples With Divide on Homosexuality

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to the courts,” he added. “So, because we have not been able to resolve this debate in our mutual sharing, General Conference every four years has been called to legislate on it. While we have done that, it has created only more avenues of conflict.”

Advocates of differing perspectives on homosexuality all agree that the DeLong case verdict, which was split, and the penalty, which marked a departure from previous cases, are indicative of the division.

DeLong, a clergy member for 14 years in the Wisconsin Annual Conference, was charged with violating The United Methodist Church’s ban on non-celibate, gay clergy and its prohibition against clergy officiating at same-sex unions. The trial began on June 21 and ended June 23 at Peace UMC in Kaukauna, Wis.

A jury of 13 Wisconsin United Methodist clergy acquitted her of being a “self-avowed practicing homosexual” by a vote of 12-1. The same panel unanimously found her guilty of celebrating a same-gender union on Sept. 19, 2009. During the trial’s penalty phase, DeLong declined to promise that she would never again perform such a union.

The trial court voted 9-4 to suspend DeLong from her ministerial functions for 20 days beginning July 1 and sentenced her to a more detailed process for a year after her suspension

to “restore the broken clergy covenant relationship.”

The church cannot appeal the verdict or penalty, said Rev. Thomas Lambrecht, the church’s counsel in the case.

Not a simple case

The trial court deliberated for about seven hours before returning with a penalty.

Boyette pointed out that the jury could have taken a simpler path, coming back with any number of possibilities in 10 or 15 minutes. The team of Lambrecht and Boyette, representing the church in the case, had requested that DeLong be suspended indefinitely until she vowed in writing not to officiate at any more same-sex unions or until the church law is changed.

“I believe what the trial court was trying . . . to do something that would restore every person, every part of the church with that penalty,” Boyette said. “So they were very focused on restoration while at the same time seeking to uphold the (Book of) Discipline. I think that was very clear. I believe they worked very hard at that.”

Boyette is the chair of the board of Good News, an unofficial evangelical caucus that advocates maintaining the denomination’s stand on homosexuality.

The Rev. Dan Dick, the director of connectional ministries in the Wisconsin Conference, said the verdict indicates an ongoing tension in the denomination



UMNS PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

The Rev. Amy DeLong, right, gets a hug from the Rev. Janet Wolf after DeLong’s church trial at Peace United Methodist Church in Kaukauna, Wis.

between what people discern as God’s call and how people interpret the Book of Discipline, the denomination’s law book.

He said he has not known anyone who has worked with DeLong in ministry who does not feel she has the gifts and graces of a pastor. Still, DeLong does not deny being a lesbian who has been together with her partner, Val Zellmer, for 16 years.

“Most people who have seen her in ministry say: What she does in her private life is her affair; what we experience of her as a pastoral leader is significant,” Dick said.

The Book of Discipline bans the ordination or appointment of “self-avowed practicing homosexuals.” Dick said what that actually means is unclear.

The Rev. Scott Campbell, DeLong’s counsel, argued during

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Showdown on Homosexuality Issues Expected at GC

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the trial that church authorities had not proven DeLong engaged in prohibited sexual acts.

“What does a person have to actually confess in order for us to say this is in violation?” Dick wondered. “Dealing with the differing interpretations of what the language in the Discipline means is something we have not really done well for a long time.”

Question of being and acting

One aspect in dispute is the way the denomination distinguishes between a person’s sexual orientation and sexual behavior.

“The church does a very good job of disintegrating people and pretending that there is a difference between who you are and what you do,” DeLong testified during the trial. “The word practicing would never be used for a heterosexual person. It’s just part of who they are.”

Rev. Karen Booth, the director of Transforming Congregations, disagrees. Her group, an unofficial caucus in the denomination, aims to help United Methodist churches minister to “the sexually confused, broken and sinful.”

“For me,” she said, “the most troubling aspect of all the arguments (in the case) is the other side’s either inability or unwillingness to separate behavior from the person. A couple of times throughout the trial, it’s been mentioned, ‘It’s not about what I’m doing; it’s about who I am.’”

Booth contends that people can overcome same-sex attractions and says she has seen that in her own ministry. “They’re talking in universal terms,” Booth said, “but it’s not true for everybody.”

Growing public support

The trial took place at a time that civil recognition of same-sex marriage is gaining wider acceptance in the United States.

On June 24, the day after DeLong’s trial, New York became the largest and most recent state to approve same-sex marriage, joining Massachusetts, Iowa, Vermont, Connecticut, New Hampshire and the District of Columbia.

On May 20, Gallup reported for the first time that a majority of Americans—53 percent—now support the legal recognition of same-sex marriage. That follows a series of other polls in recent months that also show majority support for such unions. At the same time, 30 states have constitutional amendments banning civil recognition of same-sex marriage.

Boyette said such polling data should not matter in determining the denomination’s policies.

“The church stands over and against culture and society when culture and society is moving in a direction or persisting in practices that the church understands to be not biblical,” he said. He noted that a number of passages in the Old and New Testaments declare

same-sex activities to be sinful.

Still, many advocates for greater inclusion of gays and lesbians see their campaign as biblical as well. Sue Laurie is a supporter of and former outreach coordinator for Reconciling Ministries Network, which advocates greater inclusion of gays and lesbians in church life. She said she often refers to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in arguing for greater inclusion.

“This is why I find Scripture so inspired and inspiring,” she said. “It’s still so relevant today when we come to whatever group is being excluded. The things Jesus was doing 2,000 years ago still apply because we still fall short, and there’s still another group that needs to be welcomed in.”

The approach of General Conference

Only General Conference can change the Book of Discipline, and members of unofficial caucuses that champion differing perspectives will be out in force.

The subject of homosexuality has sparked discussion at every session of the quadrennial General Conference since 1972. Delegates consistently have voted to keep the language identifying homosexuality as “incompatible with Christian teaching.”

The Rev. Troy Plummer, the Reconciling Ministries Network’s executive director, said his group will be working with both delegates from the United States and abroad

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Church Grapples With Divide on Homosexuality

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“to help change along.”

Lambrecht, the church’s counsel and a board member of Good News, said his group will be seeking to uphold the denomination’s current stand, but the group would like to see the Book of Discipline changed to allow the church a limited right to make appeals in cases such as DeLong’s.

Among those who attended DeLong’s trial was Jimmy Creech, a former United Methodist elder who was stripped of his ministerial credentials in 1999 after performing a same-sex union.

Since his conviction, he said, many United

Methodists in the United States have moved “toward more acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and providing them inclusion and full equal rights.”

But, the same is not true in Africa, where the denomination is growing.

For that reason, based on the 2012 General Conference delegate distribution list, he does not expect to see much change next year.

“My opinion at this time is that The United Methodist Church is still a long way from changing its policies related to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people,” he said

OBITUARIES

Esther Foster

Esther Swords Foster, the widow of Rev. William Foster, died on July 5. She was 89.

Mrs. Foster was born in Germany to Gertrude and Rev. Albert E. Swords. She came to the United States in 1942 when she was in her early 20s. She married Bill Foster shortly after his discharge from the U.S. Navy, and accompanied him to seminary at Boston University, to pastorates in the Northern Iowa and Minnesota conferences, and beginning in 1964, in the New York Conference.

Mrs. Foster was employed in office work in various places, and supported her husband’s ministry in appointments at Canaan, Bridgeport, and Waterbury, Conn., and Commack, N.Y., until his retirement in 1987. They then moved to East Chatham, N.Y., and began an association with the First UMC of Pittsfield, Mass., where Mrs. Foster was a member of the choral and bell choirs. Rev. Foster served the church as associate pastor until his death in 1993.

Mrs. Foster is survived by two brothers, the Rev. John Swords of Syracuse, N.Y., and Herbert Swords of Cincinnati; and daughter, Christa Niver of East Chatham and granddaughter, Janet Moon of Syracuse.

A service of thanksgiving was held on July 10 at First UMC of Pittsfield. Mrs. Foster’s niece and nephew, Rev. Marti Swords-Horrell and Rev. James Moore, respectively, led the service.

Condolences may be sent to Ms. Christa Niver, PO Box 39, East Chatham, NY 14338. Memorial gifts may be given to: First UMC of Pittsfield, 55 Fenn Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201; or Berkshire Concert Choir, Attn: Bob Koch, 333 East New Lenox Rd., Pittsfield, MA 01201.

Rev. Richard S. Parker

Rev. Richard S. Parker, a leader on social justice issues in the New York Annual Conference, died on July 12, at age 80. Parker served the following churches; South Meriden and Kensington, Conn.; Islip, Trinity (Poughkeepsie), Broadway Temple and Port Washington, all in New York. He also served as superintendent of the Long Island West District. After retirement in 1997, he continued to serve the conference as interim superintendent of the Connecticut/New York District, and then as pastor of Washington Square UMC and Island Park UMC. He returned to retired status in 2003.

Parker is survived by a daughter and three sons: Deborah Parker of Peekskill, N.Y.; Kenneth Parker of Gloucester, Mass.; Alan D. Parker of Sherman, Conn.; Rev. Petero (Maureen) Sabune of Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. Six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren also survive, as well as two brothers, David (Dorothy) Parker of La Jolla, Calif.; Kenneth (Nancy) Parker of Dallas; and a sister-in-law, Mary Lou Tobiaf of Brooklyn. His wife, Grace, died in 2005.

A memorial service to celebrate his life and spirit will be held Sun., July 24, at 5 p.m., Babylon UMC, 21 James Street, Babylon, NY 11702.

Expressions of concern may be sent to: The Parker Family, 6 Bayview Avenue, Babylon, NY 11702-4308. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be given to UMCOR at General Board of Global Ministries, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, or Babylon UMC, 21 James St., Babylon, NY 11702.



Some Clergy Will Perform Same-Sex Marriages

This story is based on a UMNS report, with local additions.

The topic of homosexuality surfaced at the gathering of the NYAC in June as well as a number of other annual conferences. As a result, a number of UM clergy around the United States have signed statements saying they will defy the denomination's ban on officiating at same-sex unions.

While no similar statement has yet been released in the NYAC, the local chapters of Methodists in New Directions and the Methodist Federation for Social Action have been working on a marriage initiative for more than a year and a half, according to Dorothee Benz, chairperson of MIND. The groups plan an October launch of their initiative, and at that point will do "significant outreach to LGBT communities within our geographic jurisdiction so that gays and lesbians know that they can then get married in UMC churches," Benz wrote in an email.

She added, "My hope is that the spread of the marriage initiatives nationally will serve as a wake-up call to General Conference, that they will finally realize they have been on the wrong side of history and get on the right side of it.

"But I am certain, that whether or not they do, United Methodists throughout the country will continue this march towards equality. We will stop discriminating, even if the Book of Discipline does not."

While at Hofstra University in June, members of NYAC voted to support the retired UMC bishops' statement seeking to amend the Discipline statement on the "incompatibility" of homosexuality to Christian teaching, and approved a resolution that the conference place print ads welcoming the

LGBT population and apologizing for the UMC's "prejudiced policies" against the community.

The voting body also agreed to send to General Conference five different "Marriage Equality" resolutions seeking amendments to the Book of Discipline to strike language referring to heterosexual

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Bishop Responds To NY Marriage Law

June 27, 2011

Dear United Methodists of the New York Annual Conference:

I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, Prince of shalom, Healer of our brokenness and Hope of the world!

Last Friday, Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York signed a bill that will make same-sex marriage legal in New York effective July 24th. Because same-sex marriage is already legal in the state of Connecticut, same-sex marriage will soon be legal within the boundary of the New York Annual Conference.

As you know, the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church affirms that "all persons are individuals of sacred worth," (Paragraph 161.F of The Book of Discipline) and directs us to honor the basic rights and civil liberties of all persons. Still, our Book of Discipline declares that "Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches." (Paragraph 341.6)

To be very sure, United Methodists in the New York Conference are not of one mind about homosexuality and same-sex marriages or unions. I respect people on both sides of this issue. It is clear to me that two people can study the same Bible, pray to the same God and come to different conclusions about this and many other matters. As difficult as it is for persons who feel passionately about this issue, such openness to other opinions and beliefs and respect for persons who hold them is one of the hallmarks of being a United Methodist Christian. We believe that God's church is large enough that all of us have a place and a voice and find affirmation as God's beloved as we "go on to perfection."

It is my hope and my prayer that no matter where one stands on the issue, the occasion of the legalization of same-sex marriage within both states of the New York Conference will be an opportunity for us to "embody a beloved community of hope," as the Vision Statement of our New York Annual Conference declares. May God help us to embrace the fullness of God's grace and extend God's love to all our brothers and sisters in Christ, particularly those with whom we disagree, for such a time as this.

In Christ,
Jeremiah J. Park

Clergy Vow to Bless Same-Sex Unions

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marriage and to marriage between a man and woman, and to permit clergy to perform same-sex unions. The session also proposed an amendment permitting the ordination of “self-avowed practicing homosexuals,” and two separate amendments permitting clergy to perform same-sex unions without fear of reprisals.

Actions in other conferences on similar issues have included:

Minnesota Conference

Seventy clergy signed a statement voicing their willingness to bless same-sex unions. There were about 450 clergy at the session.

Northern Illinois Conference

Clergy voted 178 to 76 to approve a resolution that recommends a maximum penalty of 24-hour suspension for clergy convicted of performing-sex unions. Since that same session, more than 200 clergy—nearly a third of the conference’s 696 clergy—signed a statement that they are willing to perform such unions. Civil unions just became legal in Illinois this month.

Virginia Conference

Conference members narrowly defeated a resolution affirming the retired bishops’ “Statement of Counsel to the Church,” which urges a change in the Book of Discipline to allow the ordination

of non-celibate gays and lesbians.

New England Conference

Some 90 active and retired clergy signed a statement during the annual meeting affirming their intention to “offer the grace of the church’s blessing to any prepared couple desiring Christian marriage,” including same-sex couples. Another 94 clergy members have signed on since June 11. The statement is identical to the one signed in the Minnesota Conference, and reads:

“We joyfully affirm that we will offer the grace of the Church’s blessing to any prepared couple desiring Christian marriage. We

are convinced by the witness of others and are compelled by Spirit and conscience to act. We thank the many United Methodists who have already called for full equality and inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the life of the Church.

We repent that it has taken us so long to act. We realize that our church’s discriminatory policies tarnish the witness of the Church to the world, and we are complicity. We value our covenant relationships and ask everyone to hold the divided community of the United Methodist Church in prayer.”

SAVE THE DATE

Evangelism Explosion

September 28–October 2: St. John’s UMC of Elmont is sponsoring this event with biblical storyteller Dennis Dewey. Activities included revival preaching at 7 p.m. on Wednesday–Friday; Dewey will preach Friday. On Saturday is a \$40 biblical story-telling workshop from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and worship again at 7 p.m. Two worship services are planned for Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. The church is at 2105 Stuart Ave., Valley Stream, NY. For more info call the church at 516-285-6003, email stjohnum@optonline.net, or check the web site: www.stjohnumce.org.

UMW 39th Annual Meeting

November 5: With the theme, “Building an Inclusive, Supportive Community of Women in Mission,” the gathering will welcome Harriett Jane Olson, deputy general secretary of the Women’s Division, as guest speaker. The New York/Connecticut District will host at Jesse Lee Memorial UMC in Ridgefield, Conn.

Evangelism Travels by Internet, Harley

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Motorcyclists Association (CMA) and Christ UMC in Beacon, N.Y. Both have found a way to combine personal passions—technology and motorcycles, respectively—with their desires to share Jesus Christ with the world.

An invitation from Pastor Marjorie Nunes to assist with a summer program brought Ashong to Summerfield UMC in 2005. His work with children's programs has continued for the past seven years and he now serves as a counselor for the Light on the Hill program. The church's six-week program runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily and provides a mixture of education and fun for about 50 children each summer.

But it was his technological skills that helped Ashong earn the first Denman youth award given by the conference. Since 2007, he's helped "save lives in a Christian fashion" as web master for the church's web site; you can see his handiwork at www.sumconthehill.com.

Ashong, who was born in Ghana, credits his mother and sister for much of his early success, and says that Nunes has nurtured him to stay on the Christian path. "She's been another wing for me to be successful," he said. Although he's studying engineering at Fairfield University, Ashong said that he also plans to be a minister

someday.

He offered this bit of advice for youth about sharing their faith: "Life will be hard, but if you believe and trust in the Lord all will go your way. The devil will use any means to get you to sin, but keep the burning faith alive."

The late arrival of their charter bus caused Ashong to miss receiving his award at Hofstra, but he said the best thing has been realizing "that if humans see that I am trying my best to deliver the word of God, then God must also see it."

Bernabe, 46, has been riding since he was five years old and now shares his witness from a 2008 Harley Davidson Superglide at area motorcycle rallies and rides. In fact, on the day that the Denman Awards were presented at annual conference, he was at the Rhinebeck Grand National Super Meet with his wife, Elise. At the meet the couple prayed for people and offered bike blessings, led an evening Bible study and Sunday morning worship.

"I got involved with the CMA because of all the powerful testimonies I kept hearing from friends that were already involved," Bernabe wrote in a recent email. Friend and fellow biker Steve Knutsen, who is pastor at Pleasant Valley and Bangall UMCs, took Bernabe to his first CMA meeting in Poughkeepsie.

The CMA chapter attends

events hosted by secular biker clubs to meet people, make new friends, and "hopefully share the life-saving, good news of Jesus Christ with them."

Bernabe says that he was surprised to hear that he had been nominated. "I thought my evangelical activities were not really all that impressive and effective, and someone out there must be doing a better job than me, LOL," he wrote.

But his evangelism isn't limited to motorcycles. Bernabe and his two sons, Paul III and Kyle, make up the praise band, Full Throttle Faith. At Christ Church, he serves as co-lay leader and chairperson of the pastor-parish relations committee, is a certified lay speaker, and a member of the evangelism committee. Bernabe is also involved in Kairos and Tres Dias, and serves as music director for the Hudson Valley Men of God.

Bernabe says he stays motivated by remembering a man he had ministered to at a Tres Dias retreat. Two years after the retreat, the man encountered Bernabe again and unexpectedly gave him "credit for leading him to Christ."

"I will always remember this and the fact that even though someone I speak to about Jesus may not come to Christ at that very moment, he/she may do so at some future time and I may never know about it," Bernabe wrote.

2012 Conference Delegates Elected

Clergy delegates elected to General Conference: William Shillady of New York, N.Y.; Adrienne Brewington of Freeport, N.Y.; Tim Riss of Hicksville, N.Y.; Constance Pak of Lake Ronkonkoma, N.Y.; and Noel Chin of New York, N.Y. Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Fred Brewington of Freeport, N.Y.; Jorge Lockward of New York, N.Y.; Carolyn Hardin Engelhardt of Hamden, Conn.; Marva Usher-Kerr of Brooklyn, N.Y.; and Rashid Warner of the Bronx, N.Y.

Clergy delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Ed Horne of Westport, Conn.; Kun Sam Cho of Fairfield, Conn.; Ken Kieffer of Hamden, Conn.; Evelyn McDonald of Newburgh, N.Y.; Luisa Martinez-Buck of New York, N.Y. Lay delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Roena Littlejohn of Bridgeport, Conn.; Kevin Nelson of New York, N.Y.; Natassia Velez of Middletown, N.Y.; Chan Gilliam of Stamford, Conn.; and Bob Hunsinger of Monroe, N.Y.

Clergy alternates are: David Henry of Freeport, N.Y.; Judith



As the first clergy and lay delegates elected, Rev. Bill Shillady, left, and Fred Brewington will head up the NYAC delegation.

Stevens of Staten Island, N.Y.; and Stephen Bauman of New York, N.Y. Lay alternates are: Maria Maine of Hauppauge, N.Y.; Richard Nicodemus of Wappingers Falls, N.Y.; and Darlene DiDomenick of White Plains, N.Y.

Delegation leaders are Rev. William Shillady and Fred Brewington. The two youngest members of the delegation are Warner and Velez, who are both 20 years old.

The 2012 General Conference, April 24–May 4, is in Tampa, and the 2012 Jurisdictional Conferences, July 18–20, in Charleston, W.Va.

General Conference Petitions Due

September 27: The final day to submit petitions to the Petitions Secretary for consideration at the UMC's 2012 General Conference in Tampa, April 24–May 4. Detailed instructions for submitting a petition are available on the General Conference website at www.gc2012.umc.org.