

"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

September 16, 2011

Irene Can't Sweep Away 'Community'

BY. DR. KAREN A. MONK
Pastor, East Jewett &
Kaaterskill UMCs

The rains arrived over the Catskills on Saturday afternoon. Picnics packed up, wedding receptions danced on, jokes were made about hurricanes and earthquakes —neither of which have struck the Catskills in anyone's memory, yet suddenly one had occurred and the other was on her way. The people of the villages, hamlets and crossroads of the upper Catskills know winter—blizzards, snowstorms that arrive in October and can never be counted out until after Memorial Day—but a hurricane was something new. How do you prepare? Is it like a blizzard? Or like a early spring thaw that abruptly melts the winter pack and swells the streams?

The Emergency Operations Center of Greene County (in the "Great Northern Catskills") circulated the local forecast: Up to 10 inches of rain by midday Sunday—possibly more—to be followed in the afternoon by sustained winds of 40 mph. Worship leaders cancelled Sunday services. Families checked their supplies of water, batteries, medicine and essentials. Generators were fueled. Emergency services were staged. In some townships, fire and rescue equipment was disbursed over the area—housed at individual farms or houses—so that no single bridge washout or flooded roadway could cut off service. Elderly neighbors were checked on. Then, as the rain began, the curious wait

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PHOTOS BY JOANNE S. UTLEY

Water-logged furniture and household items, above, pile up outside the parsonage next to the Prattsville UMC. The flooded Schoharie Creek swept this house off its foundation in Prattsville, N.Y.



Recovery Begins

Bishop Jeremiah Park made an initial assessment visit to communities in the Catskill Hudson area on September 1 with District Superintendent James Moore, Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie, NYAC Disaster Response coordinator; Rev. Dale Ashby, District Disaster Response coordinator; disaster volunteer Mike Weinlein, and Cathy Earl from UMCOR.

The initial recovery efforts will be centered in the hardest-hit areas of Prattsville, Margaretville, Fleischmanns, Roxbury and Windham. All of the sites will be working against the clock as winter can appear in the Catskills by late October or early November.

The work in Prattsville will focus on rehabbing the church and parsonage to provide a usable

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9/17: UMM Bishop's Luncheon

The 12th annual Bishops Luncheon to honor Bishop Jeremiah J. Park and the pastors of the NYAC, from 12-2:30 p.m., First UMC, Jamaica, Queens, 162-10 Highland Avenue, Jamaica, N.Y. Cost: \$30; All scouts attending in uniform will pay half price. Rev. Arturo Maine will speak on "Men Working in Partnership with God." For registration info, go to <http://nyac.com/events/detail/3555>.

9/25: Installation of Rev. Ott

Rev. Elizabeth (Betsy) Ott will be installed as the New York/Connecticut District Superintendent, 4 p.m. at Grace UMC, 468 Broadway, Newburgh, N.Y.

9/26-27: Northern Tri-District Retreat With Bishop

9/28-29: Southern Tri-District Retreat With Bishop

9/27: General Conference Petitions Due

The final day to submit petitions 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.

9/28-10/2: Evangelism Explosion

St. John's UMC of Elmont is sponsoring this event with biblical storyteller Dennis Dewey. 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 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 at 516-285-6003, or check the web site: www.stjohnumc.org.

10/2: Installation of Rev. Samuel

Rev. St. Clair Samuel will be installed as the Metropolitan District superintendent; 4 p.m. at Mamaroneck UMC, 546 East Boston Post Rd., Mamaroneck, N.Y.

10/5-8: Pastors & Leaders Empowerment

This conference & retreat is the first to be held at Springfield Gardens UMC as a Congregational Resource Center under Strengthening the Church for the 21st Century (www.sbc21.org). Workshops are designed to address real issues; speakers include: UMC Bishop James Swanson, Rev. Dr. Floyd Flake, UCC Bishop Yvette Flunder, Bishop David G. Evans, Dr. Dale

Irvin, and Rev. Kirk D. Lyons Sr. Location is the LaGuardia Plaza Hotel, 104-04 Ditmars Boulevard, East Elmhurst NY 11369. For registration and housing information, go to: <http://www.plecr2011.org/>. For additional info, contact: Alonye Henry at Springfield Gardens UMC, 718-528-7267 ext. 207, or www.sgumcny.org/.

Starting 10/6: PowerPoint for Clergy

Four workshops for clergy will be at the Learning Center in the conference offices in White Plains, N.Y. Prerequisites are a working knowledge of word processing, and a laptop with Microsoft PowerPoint already installed. Instructors are Susan Sungsil Kim and Joonki Kim. To register, go to <http://nyac.com/events/detail/3509>.

- Thursdays, 10 a.m. to noon, October 6, 13, 20, and 27

10/13: Order of Elders 2011 Clergy Day Apart

The retreat will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Memorial/Central Korean UMC, 250 Bryant Ave., White Plains, NY. See story on Page 14 for details.

10/13: Ecumenical Honor for Bishop Park

Bishop Jeremiah J. Park will be honored for his ecumenical leadership by the Council of Churches of the City of New York on October 13. The celebration dinner will be held at the ballroom of Saint Vartan Armenian Cathedral, 630 2nd Avenue (E. 34th Street), Manhattan. Please help us fill several tables with United Methodists at this event to honor our resident bishop. Rev. Nathaniel Grady and Rev. Bill Shillady will coordinate the tickets, which will be available soon. Cost per person is \$150. More details will be forthcoming in the next few weeks.

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Save Yourself From A Higher Deductible

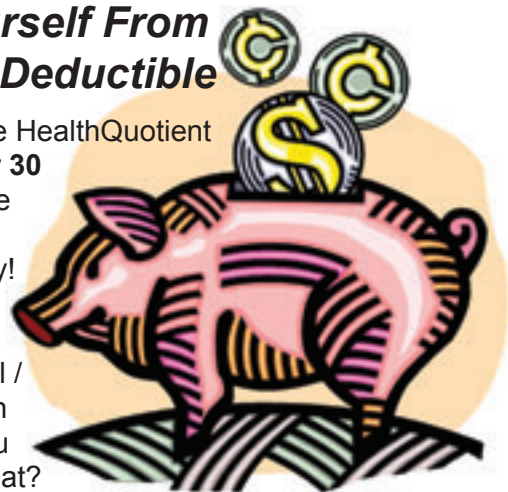
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Please make sure your spouse takes it, too.

Go to: www.gbophb.org, and click on HealthFlex/
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The **Vision**



The News of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church

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Kolitz Sent as UMC Missionary to Montana

BY REV. JOANNE S. UTLEY
Editor, *The Vision*

Like most soon-to-be college graduates, Brinna Kolitz spent many anxious days waiting to hear about a job that she really wanted. And when word finally came, the 22-year-old broke down in tears.

"I started crying when I finally got the email saying I was accepted," she said. "I was so excited." The job possibility that had her so excited was that of a US-2 missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries. Kolitz, who grew up in the New Milford (Conn.) UMC, was recently commissioned along with seven other US-2 missionaries and 17 mission interns in a service led by Bishop Hope Ward. The August 18 commissioning at the Interfaith Church Center in Manhattan came after three weeks of intensive training for the young adults.

A veteran of both international mission teams and the U.M. Army program, Kolitz will be working as a specialist with Family Support Network in Billings, Mont. The network is a private agency providing in-home parenting support, primarily among poor or marginalized families. Kolitz will assist with support services that seek to improve home environments, enhance family relationships, and reduce stress in the home.

According to the General Board of Global Ministries web site, the US-2 Program is a domestic, two-year, faith and justice-centered leadership-development and mission-service program for adults, ages 20–30, interested in partnering in solidarity with faith-based organizations. US-2 missionaries integrate faith and justice by working with communities to address systemic injustice and human suffering. The Mission Intern Program stretches the time commitment to three years, divided into a 18-month international work/study assignment and a 18-month action/education assignment in one's own country.

Pastor Paul Fleck offers high praise for Kolitz, who's been involved in just about everything at the New Milford church.

"Brinna has demonstrated outstanding Christian commitment in everything she does, ranging from working with orphans in Mozambique to singing with our contemporary Open Door worship service band," wrote New Milford Pastor Paul Fleck in an email. "We will miss her. But we know that she goes on to even greater Christian



GBGM PHOTO

Brinna Kolitz, a member of the New Milford UMC, was commissioned with 25 other young adults who will serve as UM missionaries in the United States and overseas.

service in Billings, Montana and for The United Methodist Church as a whole."

Kolitz first learned about the US-2 Program through her former pastor, Rev. Stefanie Bennett. "She came up to me on the last day of annual conference in 2010, and said, 'I've had a lightbulb moment about your life,'" Kolitz said. Bennett encouraged Kolitz to apply to serve as a US-2 missionary. Bennett knew about the program because she had previously met some

of the young adult missionaries in her Texas community.

Kolitz admits she was a little apprehensive about the two-year commitment, but decided to apply anyway. She got the good news just one week before she graduated from Southern Connecticut State University with a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Her mother, Valorie, was supportive from the start, but dad, Steve, was a little harder to win over. But in the end, it was dad who made the 2,100 cross-country trek to Montana with his daughter.

Long term, Kolitz hopes to become a grief counselor, but for now she's excited to "be getting work experience and mission experience all at once."

Helpful Links

If you'd like to provide salary support for Kolitz, go to: <http://bit.ly/qUcPRK>.

For info on young adult missionary opportunities, go to: <http://bit.ly/o4cFyD>.

To read Brinna's blog, go to: <http://kolitzb.wordpress.com/>.



PHOTO BY DAN RANDALL

Brinna Kolitz, center, shared the day with mom Valorie, from left, Avery Smyser, Stephen Smyser, dad Steve Kolitz, Desirae Smyser, and Rev. Stefanie Bennett.

Teen Sees Where 30 Hour Famine Funds Go

Robert Zagaja, 15, traveled to the African country of Burundi as part of a study tour sponsored by World Vision to see firsthand how funds raised from the 30 Hour Famine are impacting communities around the world. Zagaja, a member of the Centerport UMC on Long Island, has participated with his youth group in the 30-Hour Famine for several years.

BY ROBERT ZAGAJA

Every year, youth groups across the country participate in the 30 Hour famine. This is a fundraiser organized by World Vision to raise money for children and communities in Third World countries. During the 30 hours, kids do not eat so they can experience the full effect of what hunger feels like. Every year, World Vision also takes a handful of students from around the country, who have raised enough money in the famine, to see how their funds are being used. Through an extensive application and interview process, they chose nine students to travel to Burundi in Africa this year. I had the privilege to be one of the nine.

What I learned on this trip is that World Vision provides hope, and joy for so many families and communities. I witnessed many incredible things in Burundi.

On the first day, we saw a medical center that had been supplied with equipment, vaccines, supplies, and more hospital space through funds raised by the 30 Hour Famine. The orphanage at this medical center holds 35 kids, and is expecting more each month. They sleep two or three to a bed right now and are hoping to expand with the help of World Vision.

We stopped by a food center that distributes fortified rice to families and children. They also teach them about nutrition, childcare and hygiene. Apart from food distribution, World Vision also provides materials for the communities to build schools and houses. This is a way that World Vision teaches communities how

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Robert Zagaja holds Chadrack, a Burundi child who is sponsored by his youth group at Centerport UMC. The \$35 per month sponsorship money has provided Chadrack's family, which includes his six siblings, with a goat, clothing and fortified shelter. They will also receive medical attention when needed.



The Burundi children care for their younger siblings, allowing their parents time to farm and collect water.



Children follow the World Vision Study Tour van as it departs.

Robert's August 9 blog

After long days of travel, its unbelievable, but we are in Africa!! Being our second day of travel, the tiredness from the long flights and travel is almost gone . . . The experience so far has been amazing. From seeing the crazy city life in Bujumbura to the endless farmland and rolling hills of the country. On the ride over to Gaswore, we drove by kids playing football with an old boot. I can't imagine how happy they would have been with one of the many soccer balls we had in the van. This just makes me want to give out the gifts we brought even more.

Teen Sees Where 30 Hour Famine Funds Go

Continued from page 4

to build structures, in the hopes that they could repair anything if something were to happen. During the trip we also saw a school that was able to provide meals for 478 children each day because of World Vision. Although the water they use to cook the rice is runoff from the roof of the school, it is still better than nothing. In many cases that one meal is more food than the child would eat in their own home.

We saw a water well build by World Vision. It was extremely hopeful seeing this progress being made because resources are available. However, when we decided to help a family carry water home, reality struck. We ended up walking almost three kilometers to their home. Being exhausted after the trek, it was hard for me to imagine that these families do the round-trip walk twice a day.

Amid the hope and progress, there is still so much to be done; children are still starving and struggling to survive. We saw this in some of the villages where World Vision hadn't been. Here the houses were made of grass and sticks, the people were begging for food, and the children were starving. The fight against world hunger is an uphill battle and World Vision and 30-Hour Famine participants are fighting hard against it. There has been amazing progress, but not enough; never enough can be done.

It is crucial that people understand that World Vision is not like many other organizations. They do not hand the communities homes and schools and food, but rather teach them how to build the homes, how



Robert Zagaja, second from right, with his fellow travelers on Team Burundi.

to teach in the schools and how to farm the food. Their goal is to pull out of the communities at some point so that they may be self-sustaining.

It is important for me to use what I have learned to share the story of World Vision's work, and of the people of Burundi. It is important for me to explain how far the money raised goes; a \$75 donation buys the materials for a home, and a dollar can feed a child for a day. In a country where the average annual income is \$100, the money goes a long way. I plan on spreading the

word as much as I can, and supporting World Vision however I can.

Helpful links:

World Vision: <http://www2.worldvision.org/>

30 Hour Famine:
<http://www.30hourfamine.org/>

For information on applying for the 30-Hour Famine study tour, go to: <http://bit.ly/pmAZ60>.

Start School Year Off by Nurturing Success

With the start of another school year, comes an opportunity to help your children be successful—in school and in life. You can take some hints on helping your children (and yourself) be successful from Brian Silverthorn, business growth specialist and success coach.

- **Take responsibility:** When things go wrong take the responsibility for making things right. It's not about fault and blame; it's about correcting the problem.
- **Be on time:** This is one of the biggest areas of aggravation in life. Being late shows disrespect for those that are on time. Being on time will give you an advantage over those who aren't. Take responsibility and always be on time.
- **Do what you say you will do:** Not only do what you commit to do, do it in the



time frame you promise. Before you commit to something make sure that you intend to keep the commitment and that you have adequate time. Take responsibility.

- **Finish what you start:** Here comes that "take responsibility" thing again. Don't commit to anything that others are depending on if you don't think you can complete it. Take responsibility. Finish what you start. Everyone will love you for it.
- **Listen before you talk:** The best place to start creating an atmosphere of effective communication is by listening.

Truly listening. Paying attention to words, to tone of voice and to gestures. Listen to learn. Listen to understand.

- **Say please and thank you:** Simple stuff. And, it's powerful. Say "thank you" every opportunity you get. Mean it when you say. Then stand back and watch all the good things that happen.
- **Follow up:** When you finish a project, follow up for feedback. Follow up on everything that you're involved with. It's easy to do once you develop the habit.

At the Children's Home we believe every child deserves a safe place. For more information on the Children's Home, call us at 800-772-6904, ext. 131 or visit our web site at www.chowc.org. Please feel free to send donations directly, or use our New York Conference advance number, 60-0588.

Blessed by Meeting of World Methodists

“Jesus Christ for the Healing of the Nations” was the theme. Durban, South Africa, was the venue. More than 1,850 Methodists from about 58 countries gathered for the 20th session of the World Methodist Conference in early August. At least 13 attended from the New York Annual Conference, four of whom were delegates to the World Methodist Council, the legislative body, which met from August 1–3.

The World Methodist Council comprises Methodist, Wesleyan and related Uniting and United Churches. Member churches include the Africa Methodist Church, African Episcopal, African Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Church of the Nazarene, Evangelical Church, Evangelical Methodist Church, Methodist Church, United Methodist Church and the Protestant Methodist Church.

The Council meets every five years and seeks to:

- Encourage Methodist unity by strengthening the gospel witness and fellowship among members and by promoting Methodist theological reflection and ethical standards in different contexts globally.
- Facilitate mission in the world by encouraging evangelism in every land, assisting with persecuted and struggling Christian minorities, encouraging the church’s ministry with children and youth, and facilitating the exchange of ministers.
- Foster ecumenical and interfaith activities, by providing a means of consultation and cooperation between world Methodism and other world communions of the Christian church.

The Council adopted a revised version of the constitution and bylaws, elected new officers and received reports from the various standing committees. The newly elected general secretary is Rev. Ivan Abrahams, presiding bishop of the Methodist Church in South Africa. He succeeds Rev John Barrett. Jorge Lockward, who has led the worship team for our conference gatherings, was elected to chair Worship and Liturgy, one of the eight standing committees of the council. Headquarters for the Council is in Lake Junaluska, N.C.

The conference that followed the council meeting was open to all. There was daily worship, vibrant and soul-stirring music and singing by choirs from the Durban area, Africa University and the state of Georgia. Bible study was led by Dr. Joy Moore, associate dean for



WORLD METHODIST COUNCIL PHOTO BY KEN HOWLE

New officers, including Jorge Lockward (third from right) are elected during the World Methodist Council Meeting August 2.

Black Church Studies and Church Relations at Duke University Divinity School. She explored the topic, “Christians and Justice—What is Expected of Us.”

Seminars were offered by the eight standing committees of the council: Education, Ecumenics and Dialogues, Evangelism, Family Life, Theological Education, Social and International Affairs, Worship and Liturgy, and Youth and Young Adults.

There were fifteen workshops covering a range of topics, such as, Wesleyan and Methodist Education in Africa; Healing Jesus: Learning from the Heart of God; Becoming more Missional for Christ; Korean Theological Education—Its Vision for Global Outreach; The Church and HIV/AIDS; Passing our DNA: Education and the Wesleyan Heritage (led by Lockward); Christians in the Middle East Today; Praying for Young Adults Today; and African Drumming.

Here is a synopsis of what three of the featured speakers said:

Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala, former general secretary of the All Africa Council of Churches in his keynote address urged the church to reclaim its moral compass by not only condemning socio-economic injustices, such as racism and poverty, but to actively champion the changes they hope to see.

Rev. John Barrett, outgoing president of the World Methodist Council in his welcoming address, reminded us that being in South Africa was symbolic of the fact that as

our Methodist family grows, the entire gravity of the center of Methodism is moving south.

Archbishop Elias Chacour, who introduced himself as a Palestinian Arab Christian from Galilee, reminded us that we did not have a choice of where we were born, and that all of us were born babies, not Christians. He invited those on pilgrimages to the Holy Land to visit the Christians in Galilee.

Many young adults were present, some fresh from the International Methodist Young Leaders Seminar in Durban from July 29–31. They participated in all aspects of the council and conference. John Thomas III of the AME Church, USA, was named the Youth and Young Adult Coordinator for the council.

Rosalind Colwill, who serves as a mission partner from the British Methodist Church on assignment in Nigeria, humbly accepted the Peace Award for work with the mentally ill.

Many from the New York Annual Conference helped to prepare 100,000 food packets containing dehydrated rice, soy, vegetables, flavoring and essential vitamins and minerals under the auspices of the “Stop Hunger Now” program. The packets were distributed to local schools. Rev. Marjorie Nunes, Joy Rhodes and I, were invited, with a few others, to visit Addington Primary School where we had lunch with some of the children and sampled those packaged meals. We toured the school and learned about the harsh realities for many of its students.

Indeed, it was a blessing to be among this vast cloud of witnesses confessing Jesus Christ for the healing of the nations.



SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

Wesley Fellowship Backs Church Prohibition

September 1, 2011

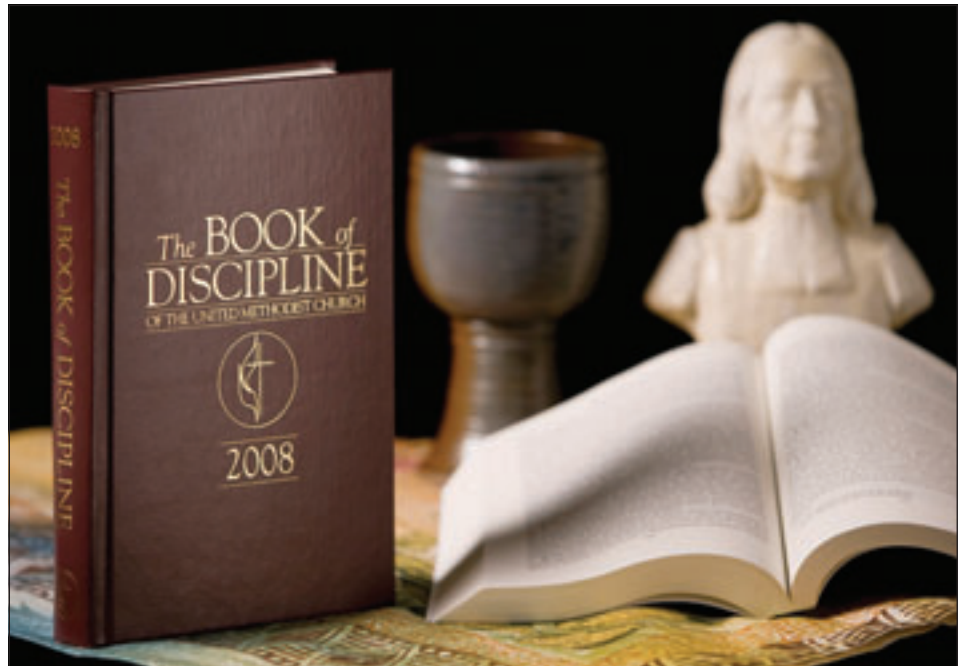
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The June 22, 2011, issue of *The Vision* reported that New York Annual Conference clergy are planning to conduct same-sex marriages in local United Methodist churches. The article stated that the New York chapters of the Methodist Federation for Social Action and the Methodists in New Directions “have been working on a marriage initiative for more than a year and a half . . . The groups plan an October launch of their initiative, and at that point will do significant outreach to LGBT communities within our geographical jurisdiction so that gays and lesbians know they can then get married in United Methodist churches” (page 10).

In response to the proposed same sex marriage initiative, the Wesley Fellowship issues the following statement:

First, as clergy who have pledged to uphold the provisions of *The Book of Discipline*, we do not support the position of MIND and MFSA and we firmly reject it as an act of ecclesiastical disobedience. Elders in full connection have an obligation to uphold the teaching of the Church. *The Book of Discipline* says that by virtue of their ordination, elders “. . . are bound in special covenant with all the ordained elders of the annual conference. In the keeping of this covenant they perform the ministerial duties and maintain the ministerial standards established by those in the covenant” (paragraph 333.1). At ordination candidates agree to support and maintain our church government and polity (paragraph 336). An example of breaking this covenant or “unauthorized conduct” is conducting ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions or conducting them in our churches (paragraph 341) which subjects the pastor to a judicial complaint.

Second, General Conference is the only body that can change the position on conducting same sex ceremonies. Since the 1970s, the General Conference has reaffirmed the Church’s teaching that homosexuality is incompatible with the Christian life. A recent example is the April 2011, decision of the Judicial Council which again upheld the Church’s current prohibition against same sex marriage. The Judicial Council said that even if same sex marriage is legal, it does not affect the Church’s policy. The Council wrote: “The Church has a



UMNS PHOTO

long tradition of maintaining its standards apart from those recognized or permitted by any civil authority. The Church’s definition of marriage as contained in the *Discipline* is clear and unequivocal and is limited to the union of one man and one woman.”

Third, based on the Church’s teaching, we will hold any clergy accountable who defies the ban to conduct same sex marriages. We will then seek that the individual(s) be charged according to paragraph 2702.1, which says, “A clergy member of an annual conference . . . may be tried when charged with . . . conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies.

Our Bishop, Jeremiah Park, in his letter to the conference of June 27, reminds us that the Book of Discipline declares that ceremonies celebrating homosexual unions shall not be

conducted in our churches.” (Paragraph 341.6)

We are saddened by the willingness of pastors within our New York Annual Conference to reject their ordination vows and the teaching of our church that goes back to Jesus and the apostles and to disobey the clear directive of our own Bishop. Although we acknowledge the passion of their conviction, we feel bound to hold to the covenant that binds us as a church.

The Leadership Council of the Wesley Fellowship of the New York Annual Conference

Supported by

*Reverends Charles Ferrara,
John Gerlach, Dr. Philip Hardt,
Kent Jackson, Roy E. Jacobsen,
Randy Paige, John Roy, David Mantz,
Sandy Mantz, and John S. Williams*

What Is Wesley Fellowship?

The Wesley Fellowship is an association of clergy and laity of the New York Annual Conference that has been in existence since the late 1970s. The fellowship is focused on church renewal, mutual support and encouragement of evangelical and orthodox pastors and churches in the Wesleyan tradition within the conference.

Bishop Offers TLC on Tour with UMCOR

Editor's note: This story was written before new rainfall prompted further flooding and evacuations in the Catskills.

BY LINDA UNGER
UMCOR staff editor/senior writer

"I don't even know where the food comes from; I turn around and it appears," said Elfrieda Benjamin of the pans full of meatloaf, bread, and other staples that are constantly refilled to feed Tropical Storm Irene survivors in Windham, N.Y.

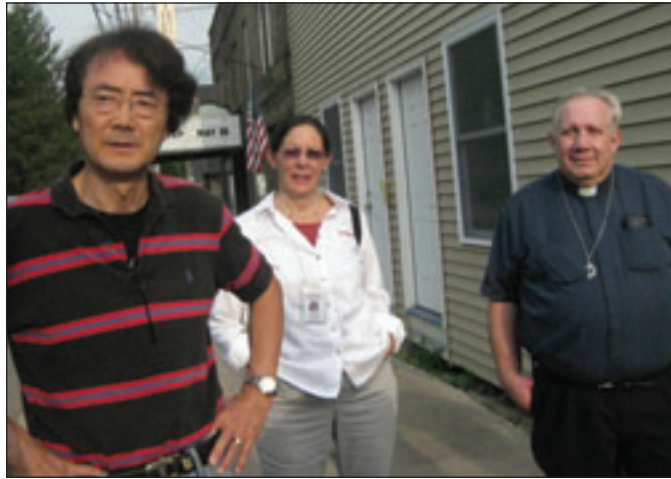
Benjamin, a member of Windham-Hensonville United Methodist Church, helps coordinate the effort of townspeople to cook, serve, and offer a word of comfort to their neighbors who are still reeling from the storm that blundered through the Catskill Mountains region just over a week ago.

"We're full all the time," Benjamin told a small delegation from the New York Annual Conference and the United Methodist Committee on Relief, who came last Thursday (September 1) to get a sense of the storm's scope and of needed relief. "At the end of the day we're lucky if we have three small pans of food left," Benjamin added.

But then, like the miraculous multiplication of loaves and fishes, she said, fresh pans of food will arrive in time for breakfast the next morning. As has been the case since the day the floodwaters began to recede from the center of town, three meals a day will again be offered to survivors and work crews.

A tent set up on the lawn of the community center where the string of tables of food and drinks rested offered shade from the now blue and sun-filled sky. The lawn wasn't so soggy, and the tent offered protection from the pervasive dust left by the muddy floodwaters.

"The water got to be nine feet high and half-a-mile wide,"



LEFT: Bishop Park and Cathy Earl of UMCOR check in with Rev. Larry Dunlap, right, in Margaretville, N.Y. Volunteers from Simsbury and Hyde Park UMCs have already begun work in Margaretville and Fleischmanns. RIGHT: Bishop Park and the assessment team pray with Rev. Elliott Oakes in the sanctuary of Prattsville UMC on Sept. 1.



Benjamin recalled.

Jared Schwartz, a local fire commissioner, came and stood beside Benjamin. Glancing around, he said, "We're standing right now in what was a river—and not a river of standing water. It was going 25 miles an hour." Flooding, he said, was "instant and devastating."

The local community responded immediately, Schwartz underscored. "People who weren't affected went door-to-door to check on those who were. We lost our cars, our jobs, and our homes," he said, "but we're okay. We live in a great town."

Overview and initial assessment

Resident Bishop Jeremiah Park led the NYAC-UMCOR delegation as it toured five small mountain towns impacted by the storm: Windham, Prattsville, Roxbury, Margaretville, and Fleischmanns. At each one, he wrapped an arm around his pastors' shoulders, and prayed with them.

Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie, NYAC Disaster Response coordinator; Rev. Jim Moore, district superintendent of the Catskill Hudson District; Rev. Dale Ashby, District Disaster Response coordinator, volunteer Mike Weinlein, and Cathy Earl, US

Disaster Response executive for UMCOR, made up the delegation.

Within days of the storm, UMCOR had supplied NYAC with an emergency grant—as it has done for six other conferences affected by Irene, which began as a hurricane and became a tropical storm by the time it reached the Catskills. UMCOR has disbursed \$70,000 in grants and shipped hundreds of cleaning buckets.

"Our work with UMCOR is vital to our recovery efforts here," Ashby said. "The initial grant is helping us get our teams in place, get them the equipment they need, and assist these hard-hit families in need. It gives us a good leg up so that we can see the people through this disaster."

NYAC set up a call center at the conference Learning Center in White Plains so that it could take calls from affected individuals. Nearly a dozen volunteers staff the call center from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., five days a week. When they go home, Ewoodzie continues to field calls on his own phone.

Three of the conferences other five districts—namely Long Island East, Long Island West, and Connecticut—suffered damage from Irene, but nothing like the magnitude in the Catskill Hudson

area.

"Among the resources we have to offer in the wake of this storm are UMCOR-trained Early Response Teams," Ewoodzie said. He added that NYAC would offer training on a weekly basis.

On the way to Prattsville (pop. 700), the delegation stopped at the Huntersfield Christian Training Center (HCTC), just five miles from the town, but at a higher elevation overlooking the picturesque green peaks of the Catskill Mountains.

The center's location kept it from harm and allowed it to shelter Prattsville families left homeless by the flooding, said Youth Director George Williams. It is likely that the retreat center will soon house volunteer teams that will help with early response and cleanup.

The "Other side of the fence"

As the delegation pulled into Prattsville, over a still wet and muddy main street, most of the town appeared to be congregated in a parking lot, where FEMA and the Red Cross had established a command center. An ambulance pulled carefully through the crowd, and a local official addressed them through the ambulance's

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Bishop Calls for Special Irene Relief Offering

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you."—Isaiah 43:2a

September 1, 2011

Dear United Methodists of the New York Annual Conference:

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior and Redeemer, the Prince of shalom, Healer of our brokenness, and Hope of the world!

Hurricane Irene has come and gone and left in its wake massive damage to many communities, our churches and parsonages. You may have seen some of the towns of our churches that were inundated by floods on national news reports. Especially hard hit were our coastal areas and the usual flood prone places. More than 10 inches of rain fell in the Catskill Hudson District.

Effective immediately, our Conference has established a Call/Response Center in the Learning Center of our Conference building. The phone number (914-615-2226) and e-mail (nyacdisaster@gmail.com) will be staffed from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. However, after hours the phone number and e-mail will be answered 24 hours a day. In collaboration with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM), and the New York Annual Conference Disaster Response Team, our church will continue to engage in the relief, recovery and rebuilding process.

As God's people who care for our neighbors in need, we all can be a part

of this effort. Please visit the website of the New York Annual Conference at www.nyac.com for more information.

In consultation with the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, our Conference has set up the "Hurricane Irene Relief Fund." I would like to ask our churches to take a special offering during worship on Sunday, September 11. I believe that giving in response to the needs created by a disaster is one of the most meaningful ways of observing the 10th anniversary of 9/11. Please make checks payable to "New York Annual Conference (NYAC)" and designate for "Hurricane Irene Relief." Mail your gifts to New York Annual Conference, Attention: Fran Collins, 20 Soundview Ave., White Plains, NY 10606.

In times like these, we are blessed to be part of a connectional church. I know I can count on our churches and God's people for generous financial and personal support. Irene was big. But our God is bigger. Please be assured of my prayers for all of you.

In Christ's Ministry with you,

Jeremiah Park

Resident Bishop
New York Annual Conference

Volunteers, Cleaning Supplies Needed in Recovery

Continued from page 1

facility on Main Street for our operations there. And as Rev. Dale Ashby wrote in an update report, "The church rising from the devastation of the flood can become a symbol of hope and renewal in the community, and that is desperately needed. It will provide a place for people to gather and worship and pray, even as reconstruction work takes place in the church and parsonage."

Damage to other UM churches and/or parsonages has been reported in the following places—Catskill Hudson: Lexington, South Cairo, and North Blenheim; Connecticut District: Thomaston (First), South Meriden (Trinity), North Haven (Faith), Westport, Watertown, Trumbull (Long Hill), and Torrington.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

1. Pray

Keep all the affected people, churches and communities in your prayers. Mention the recovery effort in worship, and in bulletins and newsletters.

2. Volunteers Needed

All volunteers (both ERT trained or not) are needed for one day, weekends, or three to five days. Can be individuals or teams. Register online at <http://nyac.com/registrations/register/47>, or call the call center at 914-615-

2226.

People are also needed at the call center in the White Plains conference office to receive and make phone calls and do some office work. Minimal computer skills will be helpful, but are not required. Please call the above phone number to volunteer.

3. Hurricane Irene Relief Fund

Donate to the newly established Hurricane Irene Relief Fund. Bishop Park asked all churches to take a special offering on Sunday, Sept. 11, to benefit the fund that will be used solely for recovery work within our conference. The Bishop wrote, "I believe that giving in response to the needs created by a disaster is one of the most meaningful ways of observing the 10th anniversary of 9/11."

Make checks payable to: NYAC and designate for "Hurricane Irene Relief." Send your gift to the New York Annual Conference, Attn: Fran Collins, 20 Soundview Ave., White Plains, NY 10606.

You may also donate to the cause through Advance #901670 via UMCOR. Donate online at <http://bit.ly/ooK1ib>.

4. General Supplies

These items are needed, and may be dropped off at the conference center—every Tuesday and Thursday through Oct. 6, from 9 a.m.–5 p.m. All



A member of the Lexington-West Kill UMC helps in the sanctuary cleanup in Lexington, N.Y.

items must be NEW.

- Scrub brushes that can be attached to an extension handle
- 5 gallon buckets
- Rubber and work gloves
- Safety glasses/goggles
- Garden hoses, 2-gallon garden sprayers

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Irene Fails to Sweep Away ‘Community’

Continued from page 1

for Hurricane Irene’s arrival.

In the upper Catskills, air conditioning is rarely a necessity. Summer evenings find windows open to the cool night. By 4:30 a.m. on Sunday, the winds of Irene reached the Catskills, waking families who got up to shut windows, and marveled at the downpour. By 7 a.m., some woke in terror, their homes suddenly surrounded, or filling, with angry rust-colored water. Though many had been evacuated in preparation for the potential floods, this level of flooding was unprecedented. Hundreds of water rescues were undertaken across the Catskills throughout the long Sunday. Debris rapidly clogged swollen mountain brooks and slammed bridges. Bridges became dams, and creeks broke their banks and sought new paths. By mid-morning, 10 inches of rain had fallen on Hunter Mountain alone; all that water, carving down the mountainsides, seeking ultimately the Hudson and the Delaware rivers, relentlessly overtopping old streambeds.

The Catskill Hudson District encompasses the Hudson Valley and the Catskill State Park and surrounding area. At the upper end of the Appalachians, the Catskills are ancient mountains formed predominantly by two forces: retreating glaciers and steady streams. These mountains are vibrantly alive, blest with a widespread network of life-giving springs, brooks and creeks. For generations, people have built homes and farms on rich or rocky land near these life-giving waters, making a life in rhythm with the seasons of mountain, which—even in the 21st century of four-wheel drive and SUVs—cannot and will not be ignored. The interweaving of human community, diverse wildlife, the mountains and waters, and the seasons in an interdependent network is still manifest here as in few other places. And it is this very interdependence and rich network of waterways that made



Heavy equipment filled the Main Street of Prattville, N.Y., as household goods destroyed by the flooding were hauled away.



LEFT: Salvaged clothes hang in a tree next to uprooted plants left behind as the floodwaters receded. RIGHT: Rev. Karen Monk, pastor of the East Jewett & Kaaterskill United Methodist churches, helped arrange volunteers to muck out the Lexington-West Kill UMC.



Irene so devastating. A week later, homes and hamlets remain cut off from surrounding villages by the roadways riddled with caverns and washed-out bridges.

Many of the communities of the Catskills cohere around a post office, a fire department and

a church—most often a United Methodist Church. Because of the itinerate system, small United Methodist churches have not had the burden of “attracting” a pastor. Where other mainline Protestant churches have retreated, United Methodist congregations have

persevered. For many pastors in this district—especially in the more rural villages and hamlets—the pastoral role is not simply to serve and grow a church, but to chaplain a community. The work is akin to that of a contemporary

Continued on page 11



ABOVE: The mud swept in with the floodwaters was shoveled out through the windows. **LEFT** Pastor Elliott Oakes, right, talks with Vern Snyder, a volunteer from Herkimer, in the entrance of his parsonage.

Irene's Wrath Can't Sweep Away 'Community'

Continued from page 10

missionary, ministering to a variety of local needs, physical and social, as well as spiritual.

When Irene hit on Sunday, pastors in some of the hardest hit communities were in the streets with their neighbors and members—as fire department chaplains and EMTs, as well as pastors. Rev. Elliot Oakes lost his parsonage and his church was severely damaged; but his village of Prattsville was literally swept away. Pastor Elliot stayed in the midst of the devastation, offering his pastoral presence as well as his emergency response experience.

The main street of Windham became a river on Sunday. Rev. Richard Lenz had water reaching the first floor of his parsonage, but fared much better than his neighbors. Pastor Dick and his wife, Kathy, were in the midst of the cleanup on Monday—organizing volunteers, helping feed peoples, and lending a listening ear.

In Grand Gorge, Rev. Dorothy Morris, as chaplain of the Grand Gorge Fire Department, was a pastoral presence to men and women who were risking their lives to carry out water rescues and to provide relief to neighboring Prattsville. These three pastors and their seven congregations are not unique; the stories could be repeated across the district, simply changing the names.

“Does anyone know where the love of God goes / When the waves turn the minutes

to hours?”—asks the folk ballad about the shipwreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald. The roaring red waters Irene left behind have many asking the same question. Some of the hardest hit communities are also some of the poorest communities of the mountains. The first help to arrive in the area came from neighbors who were also affected to varying degrees. Command centers were established in local fire departments or municipal buildings. Folks raided their own food stores to donate to these centers. The local radio station—WRIP 97.9—stayed on the air throughout the storm and the long week that followed, providing a steady stream of information and support. Senior citizens stranded in homes on washed out roads called in to the radio station to talk, and to get help. People called in offering supplies, asking what was needed where. On-air personalities at times wept from the pain of the losses and the extreme generosity of those who'd also suffered. Prayers were called for and offered over the airwaves. Social media—particularly Facebook—were utilized as they came back on-line: “I have clean well water—come on over to my house!” “Need a warm shower, and something to eat. Come on over!”

The people of the Catskill churches are largely working class, resilient, and generous. You could find United Methodists shopping for flood bucket supplies, or working with the fire

department to feed people at command posts, or praying for their neighbors while mucking their own basements. United Methodists are the firefighters, town supervisors, the rescue squad members, the highway repair workers, the electricians. The floods washed away so much—family photos and the pianos on which they sat, oil tanks and cars, the topsoil of farms a century old and fields of crops in the already-too-few family farms. The number of lives lost was not large, but each loss heartbreaking as the ties of family and community run deep. A grandmother and matriarch was swept away in her home; a 60-year-old man caught in a rising stream as he tried to help a neighbor move her car; and another man suffered a heart attack after mucking out his business. But also washed away were old grudges as people sat down at tables at the Lexington Baptist Mission who had not spoken in years. And at the end of the long week, United Methodist Churches in the area worshipped—creating spaces for people to simply sing, tell their stories, pray, weep, laugh and feast. So much was washed away, so much lost. But in the midst of it, a word from the Lord: “Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away” Song of Solomon 8:7

Rev. Monk has been an emergency medical technician since 1990, and has been serving the Hunter Area Ambulance since 2004.

Reflections On Irene: God's Mysterious Ways!

*God moves in a mysterious way
God's wonders to perform;
God plants God's footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.*

—"God Moves in A Mysterious Way,"
by William Cowper

By Rev. Patrick Perrin

St. John's UMC, Valley Stream, N.Y.

It is Monday, August 29, 2011. I pull back the shades and look out of my window on to a beautiful August morning. The sky is as blue as in not a single cloud. The grass on the lawn is smiling green. The soft summer breeze is as gentle as it is cool. There is a sound of sheer silence. No one could have convinced me that only 20 hours ago a tropical storm, Irene, had roared through the quiet hamlet of Alden Terrace in Valley Stream, N.Y. Yes, the reminder for me was that we were still without lights; so were half a million others. No electricity at the church—no electricity at the parsonage.

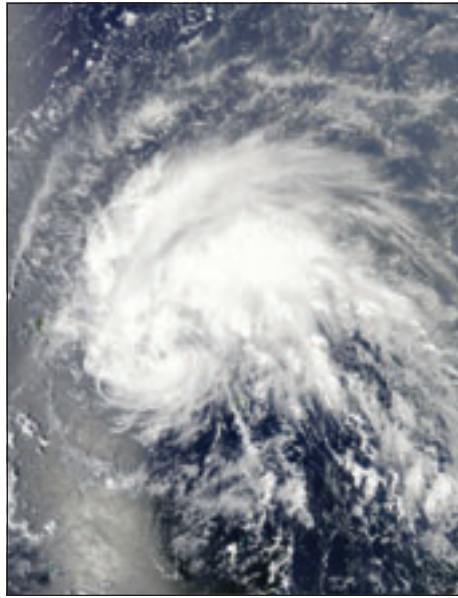
No Electricity but Plenty of Power

A loving and faithful member of St. John's sent me a text message as various persons tried to cope with whatever effects or evidence the storm had left behind. Her message was, "Rev, is there power at the church or at the parsonage?" My response was, "Yes, there is power, but no electricity."

God, our faithful, unchangeable Friend, with a mighty and powerful hand spared us from the worst that could have happened when Irene passed by. There are many questions that arise at times like these and some of these questions strike heavily at our belief system or our faith. Because I know that no theological explanation of whatever faith will ever suffice, will ever adequately respond to those who are puzzled by the seeming lack of power of an "Almighty and All-Powerful God"; because I know that, I default to the only true explanation. And that is, some things will remain a mystery. I am prepared to accept that God moves in a mysterious way.

Elijah and God

We read in the history section of the Bible (1 Kings 19) a story about God's prophet, Elijah, who seemed to have had a problem similar to the one that some are having trying to cope with the storm and God's apparent powerlessness in preventing the storm. Elijah's problem was that he had just witnessed a mighty demonstration of God's power when he confronted the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. The God who 'answers by



fire' showed up as fire.

The people we meet in the Hebrew Scriptures were a people who perceived of God not as an idea, but as a presence. And, unlike we who can think in abstract and mathematical terms, they had to see concrete evidence of the existence of God. And so the mountain as it quaked and blew out smoke and fire, the bush that burned and was not consumed, the cloud that had an unusual shape, the lightning and thunder, and the wind that ripped and peeled leaves from trees, "splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces" (1 Kings 19:11); all these were manifestations of the presence of God.

In the particular Elijah story cited, Elijah was very desponded because he could not grasp the fact that a God who had just shown such mighty power could not protect him from Queen Jezebel, a pagan goddess, who had put out a contract out on Elijah's life.

Some Faithful Women, A Skeptical Disciple and God

But such is the mystery of God who seemed rather powerless on Good Friday when God's "only begotten Son" remained crucified. The disciples of Jesus could not grasp what happened on that Friday. Nor did they quickly grasp what happened very early on "the first day of the week"—the first day of the rest of history.

God's mysterious ways found another expression in Resurrection. With Resurrection the heavy stone mysteriously rolled away. The heavily armed security guards almost died with fright and could not tell what happened. The plans of some faithful women who meant well as they journeyed to the tomb to see the reality

of death came to naught. The cultural (judicial) exclusion of women as witnesses was thwarted by women who were the first witnesses of the Resurrected Jesus, and who first told the good news. A doubting and skeptical disciple fell at the risen Lord's feet in worship and awe and wonder. "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

Still Small Voice

Was it Resurrection that I experienced on that August morning after Hurricane Irene passed? Let's go back to Elijah and see. Elijah had expected to see God in the great wind. But God was not in the hurricane. Nor was God in the earthquake that followed. Nor was God in the fire that followed both. "... and after the fire a sound of sheer silence (*still small voice*)."

Elijah heard God—felt God's presence—clearly in the silence. And with that he seemed to have taken on new life. He anointed new kings and selected his successor, Elisha. He received confirmation that God had thousands of witnesses available—where Elijah had mistakenly thought that he was the only one left. So God's powerful presence would not be in question.

God's powerful presence was what I experienced as I peered through my window and experienced that brilliantly-clear August morning. "Irene" is the English version of the Greek word that means peace. And as I peered through the window into an area that showed no evidence of a storm, it was the peaceful side of hurricane Irene that greeted me.

It was a religious feeling. I needed to give thanks. I needed to worship. I needed to praise. And so when my wife, Pansy, suggested that we should have a prayer service on Wednesday night, the last day of August, she confirmed what the sheer silence had already communicated to me. And it is that God was indeed present and had been present from beginning to end. God was present when the earth quaked. God was present when the winds blew. God was present when electrical power lines and lightning became intertwined. And God was present more so when we, who borrow life from God, took the time to reflect on the mighty power of God; and reflecting, took the time to worship, pray, testify and praise.

*O God, Our help in ages past, our hope for
years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast, and our
eternal home!—Isaac Watts*

Pastor Perrin wrote this reflection for his church newsletter.

Bishop Offers TLC on Tour

Continued from page 8

loudspeaker, pleading for patience.

One resident called out, "When are we going to get back into our homes?" Another, holding a toddler, wiped tears from her eyes.

How many of the damaged homes might be habitable was still unclear. Up and down the town's main street, one home after another had been pushed off its foundation by the rushing floodwaters. Strips of aluminum siding hung like sashes from homes; trees were uprooted; and chunks of road were simply missing.

Rev. Elliott Oakes, pastor of Prattsville United Methodist Church and nearby Lexington UMC, empathized with his neighbors. Their frustration was palpable. Though tables laden with food and other supplies were available at the command center, residents were really anxious to move on.

"As a fireman and as an emergency coordinator, I've been to a lot of disasters," Oakes said. "It's very different being on this side of the fence."

Oakes took the NYAC-UMCOR delegation to his church, just down the road from the command center. A pair of children's bicycles lay encased in mud in front of the building, and a lectern stood just outside the front door, now drying in the sun.

Inside, a thick layer of wet mud curled around the participants' shoes as they made their way up the aisle. A water line was visible above the altar; stackable chairs lay in clusters where they'd been tossed by the floodwaters. Pews were nearly completely covered with the dust left by the receded water.

Across the street, a home bore the red "X" that signifies mandated destruction. That will not be the fate of Prattsville UMC, but much work will be needed to make it fit once again for worship.

Bishop Park gathered the group together in the muddy sanctuary. They held hands as he prayed in a voice broken with emotion.

"This is the place we claim as our church," he said. "As we hold each other's hands, we trust, Lord, that you are holding our hands. We trust that something good will come out of this. Thanks be to God that you are here with us and we are with each other."

Your gift to US Disaster Response, UMCOR Advance #901670, will help UMCOR continue to be there for communities struggling with the aftermath of Hurricane/Tropical Storm Irene. Please give generously, earmarking your check "Hurricanes 2011." Online Giving



A sign along Main Street in Prattsville gives voice to the frustrations of some of the affected homeowners.

Recovery Updates on Web Site

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- Plastic bags
- Hammers, nail pullers, pry bars
- Utility knives with extra blades
- Extension cords: indoor and outdoor; GFI surge protectors
- Electric pressure washer; hoses for pressure washers
- Cordless drills and saws
- Square tip shovels (long handled)
- Halogen work lights
- Generators, air compressors
- Large box fans
- Portable sump pumps
- Concrobium Mold Control, 1 gallon jug (available at Home Depot)

5. Flood Buckets

Churches may also assemble flood buckets to be used for mucking out homes. Flood buckets can be delivered to the NY Conference Center, 20 Soundview Ave., White Plains, NY 10606. Catskill Hudson District churches should send them directly to the Prattsville Community Operations Center, 14563 Main St, Prattsville, NY 12468.

6. More Information

For further information, please contact our call center at 914-615-2226, email nyacdisaster@gmail.com, or visit our "Hurricane Irene Disaster Relief" page on the web site www.nyac.com/relief for news and photos. Also check for updates on the NYAC Facebook page.

Parker Remembered for Social Justice Work

This tribute appeared on the GBCS' "Faith in Action" report, and has been supplemented with local reporting

Rev. Richard Parker, who died at age 80 on July 12, was well-known for strong social justice stances in the New York Annual Conference as well as the denomination. He was a former member of the Board of Directors of the General Board of Church & Society.

No bishop, no other clergy person and no layperson has had a deeper or longer-lasting effect on the New York Conference, according to Rev. Tim Riss, pastor of Hicksville United Methodist Church.

"When I first became a pastor, way up north, the experienced pastors that I respected all said that Dick was the best the New York Conference had, and that all new pastors should look to him as a model," Riss said. "I could not believe how effectively he would articulate the core issues at the right times during debates. But I most admired him for moving the immovable: institutions and bishops."

Parker began his ministry as a pastor in 1951, and retired in 1997. He served congregations in South Meriden and Kensington in Connecticut, and Islip, Poughkeepsie (Trinity), Broadway Temple and Port Washington in New York. He was superintendent of the Long Island West District for six years in the 1970s.

Twice the New York Conference called Parker out of retirement: to serve as interim Superintendent of the Connecticut/New York District, and to serve as interim pastor of Washington Square and Island Park.

In an email, Long Island East District Superintendent Adrienne

Brewington wrote of her former mentor: "As I was preparing for ministry I interned for Dick when he was pastor at Port Washington. He gave me more responsibility than was probably wise; my abilities as a pastor grew on this account. To this day, I believe that some of my most effective ministry practices—especially those related to administration—are a result of the time I spent under Dick's wing."

Parker was elected to the New York Conference's General and Jurisdictional delegations nine times, from 1972 through 2004. At the 1980 General Conference, he chaired the Church & Society subcommittee that presented the "Charter for Racial Justice," "The UMC & the American Native People Boycott of J.P. Stevens Co.," and the "Report on Agricultural & Rural Life Issues." He also chaired the Church & Society legislative committee at the 1984 General Conference.

He served as a director of the General Board of Church & Society for eight years during the 1980s, chairing its Social & Economic Justice work area.

The Rev. Parker was active for decades in many social justice issues and was a long-time member of the Methodist Federation for Social Action. He was a founding member of Methodists in New Directions (MIND), a grassroots organization in the New York Conference working to end the denomination's doctrinal prejudice and institutional discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Ironically, his memorial service was held on July 24, the day that New York's same-sex marriage legislation took effect.

OBITUARIES

Russell McDonald

Russell McDonald died August 18, at age 85, in Whitesboro, N.Y. He was the husband of Rev. Madeline L. McDonald, a retired member of the New York Annual Conference.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by four daughters: Susan (Steve) Montrose of Whitesboro, N.Y.; Deborah (Don) Frank of St. Louis, Mo.; Laura McDonald of Danvers, Mass.; and Karen McDonald (Gary Frazier) of Herndon, Va.; and eight grandchildren.

A service of remembrance was held August 25 in Whitesboro. Memorial donations may be made to the Dunham Public Library, 78 Main Street, Whitesboro, NY 13492.

Rev. Vernon C. Stutzman

Rev. Vernon C. Stutzman, a retired pastor of our conference, died August 10, in Rutherfordton, N.C. He was 92. He served as executive director of the Methodist Hospital in Brooklyn, N.Y. for more than 22 years; and as special

consultant to the Division of Health & Welfare Ministries, before retiring in 1981. In retirement, he volunteered for Habitat for Humanity of Rutherford County, serving as supervisor of construction.

Rev. Stutzman is survived by his wife, Marjorie, and two sons, Charles (Pat) Stutzman of Rutherfordton; and Ken (Linda) Stutzman of Bartow, Fla; five grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. Three sisters, Dorothy Walters of Scottsdale, Ariz., Millie Stoddard of Tulsa, Okla., and Velma McConnell of Oregon; and a brother, Ray Stutzman of Virginia, also survive. He was predeceased by his wife of 50 years, Evelyn, and a daughter, Susan.

A memorial service was held on August 13, at First UMC in Rutherfordton, N.C.

Memorial gifts may be given to: Habitat for Humanity of Rutherford County, 850 Mercury Blvd., Murfreesboro, TN 37131; or First UMC, 264 North Main Street, Rutherfordton, NC 28139.

Terrorism Response Remains True After 10 Years

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES USA

Immediately after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, an interfaith group representing millions of citizens drafted a religious response to terrorism. Entitled, "Deny Them Their Victory," the group expressed bitter anger at the attacks that killed so many but pleaded with government decision makers to avoid reactions that would accelerate the indiscriminate loss of life. The statement was signed by 4,000 people.

Its eloquence may not have significantly slowed the momentum to war, but it remains a historic expression by people of faith who were deeply pained by the attacks, and deeply committed to expressing the love of God to halt further bloodshed. Ten years later, the words ring as true as they did in the stinging aftermath of September 11, 2001.

The statement, written by Jim Wallis of Sojourners, Rabbi David Saperstein of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, then general secretary of the Reformed Church in America, and the Rev. Bob Edgar, then general secretary of the National Council of Churches, reads:

We, American religious leaders, share the broken hearts of our fellow citizens. The worst terrorist attack in history that assaulted New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, has been felt in every American community. Each life lost was of unique and sacred value in the eyes of God, and the connections Americans feel to those lives run very deep. In the face of such a cruel catastrophe, it is a time to look to God and to each other for the strength we need and the response we will make. We must dig deep to the roots of our faith for sustenance, solace, and wisdom.

First, we must find a word of consolation for the untold pain and suffering of our people. Our congregations will offer their practical and pastoral resources to bind up the wounds of the nation. We can become safe places to weep and secure places to begin rebuilding our shattered lives and communities. Our houses of worship should become public arenas for common prayer, community discussion, eventual healing, and forgiveness.

Second, we offer a word of sober restraint as our nation discerns what its response will be. We share the deep anger toward those who so callously and massively destroy innocent lives, no matter what the grievances or injustices invoked. In the name of God, we too demand that those responsible for these utterly evil acts be

found and brought to justice. Those culpable must not escape accountability. But we must not, out of anger and vengeance, indiscriminately retaliate in ways that bring on even more loss of innocent life. We pray that President Bush and members of Congress will seek the wisdom of God as they decide upon the appropriate response.

Third, we face deep and profound questions of what this attack on America will do to us as a nation. The terrorists have offered us a stark view of the world they would create, where the remedy to every human grievance and injustice is a resort to the random and cowardly violence of revenge—even against the most innocent. Having taken thousands of our lives, attacked our national symbols, forced our political leaders to flee their chambers of governance, disrupted our work and families, and struck fear into the hearts of our children, the terrorists must feel victorious.

But we can deny them their victory by refusing to submit to a world created in their image. Terrorism inflicts not only death and destruction but also emotional oppression to further its aims. We must not allow this terror to drive us away from being the people God has called us to be. We

assert the vision of community, tolerance, compassion, justice, and the sacredness of human life, which lies at the heart of all our religious traditions. America must be a safe place for all our citizens in all their diversity. It is especially important that our citizens who share national origins, ethnicity, or religion with whoever attacked us are, themselves, protected among us.

Our American illusion of invulnerability has been shattered. From now on, we will look at the world in a different way, and this attack on our life as a nation will become a test of our national character. Let us make the right choices in this crisis—to pray, act, and unite against the bitter fruits of division, hatred, and violence. Let us rededicate ourselves to global peace, human dignity, and the eradication of injustice that breeds rage and vengeance.

As we gather in our houses of worship, let us begin a process of seeking the healing and grace of God."

To read a contemporary news report about the statement, go to www.nccusa.org/news/01news74.html.



Clergy Day Apart: Liturgy as Healing, Renewal

Dear Elders and All the Clergy Members of the New York Annual Conference:

Greetings of Peace and Grace in Jesus Christ! I pray that you have had a good, restful summer.

It is already time to remind you that clergy will gather next month for the Clergy Day Apart on Thursday, October 13, at the Memorial/Central Korean UMC in White Plains, N.Y. We will gather at 9 a.m., and adjourn by 3 p.m. Even though the Order of Elders sponsors this event, it is open to all clergy members of our conference.

Have you experienced truly spirit-filled worship services lately? Would you like to experience great worship services and convey your inspiration to your congregation for spiritual renewal? Then, with your fervent desire, please come and join us!

For our sacred time together, we have invited very gifted speakers and worship leaders from the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference.

Rev. Dr. Irving Cotto is the director of Congregational Development for his conference. This position involves starting new churches, and helping all churches engage in congregational revitalization. In his 32 years in pastoral ministry, he has also taught at several seminaries including Perkins School of Theology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, and Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Cotto is an accomplished



Rev. Dr. Irving Cotto



Rev. Lydia Munoz

musician, author, evangelist, worship coordinator and is sought after as facilitator and instructor in liturgy.

Rev. Lydia E. Munoz is the pastor of a new church start, PlumbLine Fellowship in Narberth, Penn. She has been involved in leading worship for 20 years, particularly with young people. Rev. Munoz has also served as a facilitator and consultant for the General Board of Global Ministries, and a trainer for National Plan Modules.

She is a composer and arranger of her own original songs as well as congregational songs and new liturgies for the celebration of Holy Eucharist and other celebrations. Rev. Cotto and Rev. Munoz have been leading many events and worship services at diverse settings and conferences inside and outside our

denomination, and now this marvelous team is coming to us.

The theme for the day is “The Liturgy: Source of Healing, Source of Renewal.” The liturgy of our congregation (prayers, songs, responses, litanies, confessions, etc.) can point to where our congregation is and where it can be. Does the process of liturgy, writing and delivery, give us the tools to measure the spiritual health of our congregations? What does the worship of our particular congregations say to us?

These are some of the questions that will be explored together as we view the liturgy of the church as a spiritual barometer and health indicator through our times of discussion and worship.

Please make this event a priority on your calendar, and register by October 8, for \$15 (\$20 after October 8). A beautiful breakfast will be provided for you, and in addition we will provide drinks, fruit, snacks and light sandwiches. For the registration form, go to: <http://nyac.com/events/detail/3450>.

We look forward to seeing you then. Many blessings on you and your ministry! Shalom!

Sincerely,
Constance Y. Pak
Chairperson of the Order of Elders

P.S. Another date to put on your calendar is a four-day spring retreat on April 16–19, 2012.

Bolivia Team Returns With Memories

The 2011 Bolivia VIM Team has been back for some weeks, and we'd like to wrap up our report for this year by sharing some thoughts about two questions:

What was my most memorable experience from the trip?

▪ “My most memorable experiences involve the people of Bolivia. Their warm and welcoming greeting is the beginning of new friendships. The women work so hard and are faithful to their families and God . . . The prayers of the little ones were so real and their willingness to lead in prayer shows their love of God.”

▪ “. . . the relationships with the team members, the house staff at the Institute, the children in VBS, and the women in the churches.”

▪ “The ceremony for the teenagers turning 15. What a great event to celebrate! I think (of) the presentation of the Bible and the candle as symbols for them to shine their light under God's direction.”

And from some of the young people on the team:

▪ “Meeting all the people down there, especially the children. They all were just so welcoming and loving. You could see it in the children's eyes. Even if they couldn't understand what we were saying, just the look in their faces told us they cared and were learning something.”

▪ “The last day of Bible school at Nazareno, because you could tell the kids had understood God's message better.”

How have I been changed by participation as part of this team (and what effect do I think this will have on my future actions)?

▪ “These relationships have enlarged my view of the world and helped me again realize that love of God is alive in the hearts of these people.”

▪ “Being in the little churches with the faithful people worshipping God together is a memory I will remember each Sunday as I worship here. I feel connected to the people

because I shared life with them and I look forward to sharing this joy with others as I tell of my experiences.”

▪ “This year was a big challenge for me to act with grace and faith in others. I didn't do as well as I would have hoped, but I believe I learned a lesson that will help me in the future.”

And from some of the youth on the team:

▪ “Just seeing how happy some of these people were, who have so little, makes me think I'm so blessed to have some of the necessities I have. This trip is something I'm going to hold dear to my heart for a long time, and I can't wait to return again.”

▪ “I realized how fortunate I am to have all I do . . . I will try not to take anything for granted anymore.”

The 2012 trip is tentatively scheduled for June 21–July 7; please contact Bob and Ginny Stevenson at manofnotes@comcast.net for details.

Paz y Gracia,
Your Bolivia VIM Team

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10/15: *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century*

Jesse Lee Memorial UMC and the NYAC are sponsoring this seminar with Rev. Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., director of the Center on Aging and Older Adult Ministries of the General Board of Discipleship. Dr. Gentzler is a sought after speaker and seminar leader. He will assist pastors and church leaders in understanding aging issues, and help develop intentional ministry, by, with, and for older adults. Cost: \$20; lunch provided. Seminar from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., at the Ridgefield, Conn. church. For more information, contact Rev. Douglas Osgood, 203-438-8791, email: drgoodpath@aol.com. To register, go to <http://nyac.com/events/detail/3488>.

10/21–22: *Healing in Our Families*

Two-day conference on healing prayer led by Judith MacNutt and Linda Strickland from Christian Healing Ministries, at Jesse Lee Memorial UMC, Ridgefield, Conn. Check-in begins at 8 a.m. Friday, with worship music at 9 a.m. Cost: \$75. To register online, go to <http://www.prayandsee.org/>, and click on the 2011 Healing Conference. Information on area hotels offering a discount is also on the link.

10/22: *“Know Your Neighbor, Know Yourself”*

This immigration conference is co-sponsored by the NYAC Immigration Task Force, MFSA, MIND, and the Conference Board of Church and Society. More details will be available soon; location is Memorial UMC, 250 Bryant Ave., White Plains, N.Y.

10/28–29: *Christian Educators Conference*

Christian educators throughout the Northeast Jurisdiction are invited to attend “Building Bridges: Exploring the Importance of Bridges in Christian Education,” at Calvary UMC, Annapolis, Md..

Hosted by Baltimore-Washington Conference Christian Educators Fellowship Chapter, the event includes worship, plenary speaker, after-

hours dessert lounge, three workshop sessions for all age-level ministries. Keynote speaker is Mike McCurry, former White House press secretary and member of the Baltimore-Washington CEF Chapter. Group rates for members of the same church. Continuing education credit available. Deadline for registration is September 15; for further information, go to: <http://bit.ly/pW55Ko>.

10/29: *Clergy Spouses: A Day Apart*

The event runs from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., in the Learning Center at the NYAC offices, 20 Soundview Ave., White Plains, N.Y.

11/2: *UM Home Awards Dinner*

The Brooklyn United Methodist Church Home will hold its 24th annual awards dinner dance at Russo’s on the Bay, 162-45 Crossbay Blvd., Howard Beach, N.Y. The event begins at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call 718-827-4500, ext. 102; or go to the web site, www.bumch.org.

11/5: *UMW 39th Annual Meeting*

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.

11/11–13: *Exploration 2011*

This event in St. Louis, Mo. offers young adults the opportunity to explore the call to ordained ministry in the UMC through worship, prayer, workshops, networking, and small groups. Sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Exploration 2011 is open to those ages 18 to 26. The registration fee (\$150-\$200 depending on the deadlines) will cover a two-night stay at the Millennium Hotel, meals, and program fees. Registration information can be found at www.gbhem.org/exploration.

Help Elderly Rid “Veil of Helplessness”

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant on Older Adult Ministry

The opening words of the article left me saying, “Wow!” The words? “After two years of living behind a veil, Charla Nash revealed on TODAY the new face that science has given her, a visage that replaces the one mangled in a vicious attack by a friend’s pet chimpanzee that left her without a nose, eyes or lips.”

We all remember the story; it was truly horrific. Seemingly there was no hope for her to ever having a “normal” life again. She had been robbed of that in that terrible incident. Or so many of us assumed! But thankfully, we were wrong. Through the miracle of modern science and medicine, Charla has the opportunity at a new life.

As Linda Carroll, the reporter, said, “Once again she has a nose and lips. Once again she may be able to do the simple things we take for granted: to literally smell the roses, to taste her food, and to breathe through her own nose. Her first meal after the surgery: Eggs and cream cheese.”

How can we not say, “Wow?”

For those of us who remember our seminary training, the meaning of the word apocalypse carries with it the sense of removing a veil. In

that sense Charla Nash has had an apocalyptic moment. Her experience calls us to look again at the underlying message of apocalyptic passages of scripture—the message of a new life always being possible, no matter the circumstances. To see that possibility requires the removal of a veil, the removal of our inability to see God’s promise clearly, as we are.

Isn’t that the work of the Church, of the Christian community, to equip each other to remove our veil, to look at the promise of God clearly, the promise of new life?

Isn’t that a large part of our ministry to and with older adults?

So often growing older brings so many losses and changes in our abilities that we no longer see the possibilities before us. So often it leads us to veil who we really are and who we can still be behind a mask of helplessness. Helping older adults to live up to their full potential requires a ministry that challenges them to remove the “veil.” Not to do so is to fail in our witness to the message of new life always being possible.

It’s always possible to smell the roses, to experience the joy of the moment, but not if we dim our vision with a mask. Be apocalyptic! Help others see clearly! Help enable them to remove the veil.

