

*"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

October 21, 2011



**Rev. Betsy Ott receives a baptismal bowl and water from Paul Bernabe, a member of Christ UMC in Beacon, N.Y.**

## New Superintendents Celebrated

On successive Sunday afternoons this fall, the appointments of two new district superintendents were celebrated—Rev. Betsy Ott on September 25 in the New York Connecticut District, and Rev. St. Clair Samuel on October 2 in the Metropolitan District.

Both services gave the respective districts

Continued on page 9



**Bishop Park, Rev. Samuel and his wife, Brenda, wait to greet the crowd after the installation service.**

## CALL TO ACTION

### Questions Of Context, Content, & Conduct

**BY REV. JOANNE S. UTLEY**

Editor, *The Vision*

"The church is calling our people to this. Bishops are calling our people to this. *This bishop* is calling our people to this," said Bishop Jeremiah Park as he began discussing the 2010 Call to Action report at the southern tri-district retreat in late September. "We need to engage in this together."

And engage we did—in a two days of discussion that first played out at Mount St. Alphonsus in Esopus, N.Y., where the three northern districts convened on September 26–27, and was echoed September 28–29 at the Bishop Molloy Retreat Center in Queens. The retreats focused on the "whys, wheres and hows" to begin the process of revitalizing churches across the conference to join in God's plan for transforming the world by increasing the number of

Continued on page 7



### **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 will address the crisis faced by our immigrant communities amid ongoing political hostility, prejudice and unjust immigration policies. The day will focus on countering myths and misinformation, grounding ourselves in the biblical basis for solidarity with immigrant communities, and giving our congregations the tools to move to action. The 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. event is co-sponsored by the NYAC Immigration Task Force, MFSA, MIND, and the Conference Board of Church and Society. Location is Memorial UMC, 250 Bryant Ave., White Plains, N.Y. Cost is \$15, and scholarships are available. For registration information, go to <http://nyac.com/events/detail/3530>.

More Event listings on page 25

## **Early Response Training**

### **“Train the Trainer” Class**

Friday, Nov. 4: 6–9 p.m.; NYAC Center, White Plains, NY

Saturday, Nov. 5: 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Trainer: Barbara Tripp, UMCOR Consultant  
Limited to 15 participants. Upon completion of the two-day session, you will be qualified to teach an ERT class as a UMCOR trainer in your church and around the conference.

Requirements:

- ERT certified with a badge and current expiration date
- ERT or VIM experience

To register, contact coordinator: Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie, [nyacdisaster@gmail.com](mailto:nyacdisaster@gmail.com).

### **VIM Early Response Training & Certification**

October 22, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.; Newman Memorial UMC, 257 Macon St., Brooklyn, NY.

To register, contact coordinator: Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie, [nyacdisaster@gmail.com](mailto:nyacdisaster@gmail.com).

### **Early Response Training**

November 5, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.; Trinity UMC, Windsor, Conn.

Trainer: Rev. Dr. Craig Fitzsimmons


Cost: \$20.00 (Covers background check and lunch)

To register, contact coordinator: Rev. Skip Eggimann, at 860-688-9245, or [skipjite@juno.com](mailto:skipjite@juno.com).

### **Early Response Training**

November 12, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.; Kaaterskill UMC, 5942 Main St., Tannersville, NY.

To register, contact coordinator: Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie, [nyacdisaster@gmail.com](mailto:nyacdisaster@gmail.com).

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

# Irene Update: Working Against Weather

We are making good progress on the disaster relief work in the Catskill Hudson District. The number of teams and volunteers has increased over the last several weeks, which has helped us address more of the areas that were impacted by flooding.

Teams have been at work in Prattsville, Lexington, Maplecrest, Gilboa, Fleischmanns, Arkville, and Margaretville. Many of the homes that were impacted by the flooding have now had the mud and debris cleared out, and most have had water-damaged sheet rock, floor coverings, and cabinets removed. We still have a significant number of homes that need to be sanitized for mold remediation and that is the focus for many of our teams.

The other good news is that power and water are being restored to many of the damaged homes, which helps us with our cleanup work. Unfortunately, we are still

Continued on page 4



**A Newtown UMC team from Sandy Hook, Conn., pitches in at the Lexington UMC.**



**ABOVE: Rev. Dale Ashby power washes a basement.**



**RIGHT: Rev. Wongee Joh, right, and her volunteers from Holmes UMC.**



**ABOVE: Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie greets Pastor Sung Moy, center, and members of the Poughquag UMC on October 1. LEFT: Rev. Bette Johnson Sohm, center, and New Paltz volunteers.**

# Irene Update: Working Against Weather

Continued from page 3

finding some homes that sustained serious flooding and have not been touched yet. So we are trying to get those at least started in the cleanup process to prevent further damage from occurring.

The Catskill Hudson District made a district-wide appeal for volunteers for October 15 so that we could make a significant step forward toward our goal of cleaning out, sanitizing, and stabilizing as many flood-damaged homes as possible before the colder weather arrives.

We also continue to make good progress in the churches that were badly damaged by the flooding. Our church in Lexington has been largely cleaned out and sanitized. Damage to the foundation and support columns for the main floor beams has been repaired. The condition of the Prattsville church is similar, with the exception that repairs to foundation damage and shoring up of sagging floor beams still needs to be done. Our church in South Cairo needs to be sanitized and there is still some mud that needs to come out of the basement area.

We are so thankful for all the wonderful volunteers that have offered their time and energy to come and help us with disaster relief efforts in the Catskill Hudson District. It is great to see our Methodist connection in action. It inspires hope for us all.

*Rev. Dale Ashby*  
*Catskill Hudson Disaster Coordinator*

## Babylon UMC Youth Awarded Hope Scholarship

Griffin Burr, a member of the United Methodist Church of Babylon, received a \$1,000 Gift of Hope Scholarship, awarded by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

Burr, the son of Ken and Cheryl Burr of West Islip, N.Y., is in his first year at the University of Chicago.

The Karen Layman Gift of Hope Scholarship is awarded to about 250 undergraduate students who have been active and full members of the UMC for at least three years, have a 3.0 grade point average, and have demonstrated strong leadership in the

## Hurricane Irene Relief Fund

As of October 6, a total of \$69,545 has been raised through the following sources:

- Park Avenue Trust: \$25,000
- UM City Society: \$10,000
- Bishop's Partners in Mission: \$10,000
- UMCOR: \$10,000
- Local churches and communities: \$14,545

While many have given generously, the needs are far greater than the current sum will address. UMCOR monies cannot be used to repair churches or parsonages. We urge all Conference congregations and individuals to consider making additional gifts of any amount to aid those churches in this time of need.

## TO VOLUNTEER

Telephone: 914-615-2226

Email: [nyacdisaster@gmail.com](mailto:nyacdisaster@gmail.com)

## TO DONATE

Online at:

<http://nyac.com/registrations/register/46>

Via check: Make checks payable to NYAC with "Irene Relief" on memo line, and mail to: New York Annual Conference, Attn: Fran Collins, 20 Soundview Ave, White Plains, NY 10606

church, said Allyson Collinsworth, director of the Office of Loans and Scholarships at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

Burr has traveled on two mission trips with the United Methodist Church. In February 2009, he helped build a school classroom in Costa Rica, and the following February he went to Cambodia where he helped construct a playground. He has also participated in a Habitat for Humanity house build in Bellport, N.Y. Burr has also taught Sunday School for second graders.

# My Religious Experience on Wall Street

**BY REV. JOHN COLLINS**  
Retired United Methodist  
pastor

Last week, I took a walk on Wall Street and had myself a religious experience. My wife, Sheila, and I had decided to join the Occupy Wall Street rally to show our support for the young people who had been camping out in a small park near Wall Street for the past few weeks. I wore my clerical collar because I wanted the marchers to see they have some support from the religious community (Also, the collar comes in handy if there is a disturbance).

We gathered for the rally in front of the federal courthouse in Foley Square where Bernie Madoff was sentenced to 150 years for stealing \$60 billion. There were more police on hand than ever went after Bernie and the banks. The words inscribed over the courthouse steps say: "The True Administration of Justice is the Foundation of all Good Government." It seemed that the crowd was an appeal to those words.

Because the crowd was so big and the sound system so inadequate, we couldn't hear the speeches, so we occupied ourselves in talking with those around us as the march proceeded slowly down Centre, Chambers and then Broadway. It was in these encounters with other marchers that I had my religious experience.

A man in his 50s, noticing my walking sticks and my unsteady

## COMMENTARY

gait, said, "I'm walking with a six-inch hernia protruding from my gut. I've got it in a pouch at my waist."

"When are you going to have it repaired?" I asked.

"As soon as I can get \$5,000." He is an unemployed jazz musician who last year did a 25-city tour in Germany.

The march was difficult because the police herded us onto the narrow sidewalks, slowing the march to a snail's pace. I spotted an officer whose white shirt denoted higher rank, and said, "Why don't you let us walk in the street? It's closed to traffic." Not surprisingly he refused, but a Black woman nearby said "Thanks for trying."

One of the cops was a community relations officer. I held up my sign saying "Jobs For All At



**Members of the board of directors of the United Methodist Women joined in the protest while in New York for a meeting.**

Decent Pay" and asked her, "Do you agree with that?" She said "I can't comment," but she was smiling.

A young woman marching near us came over. "We can't tell you how inspiring it is for us to have you here." I don't know if she was referring to the collar or our age, but it was lovely either way.

I told another marcher who was taking time off from work that I had to cancel a session with my therapist to be there. He replied "This is the best form of therapy!" He had a point.

The faith community was not very visible. I walked for a while with a woman from the Community Church of New York, which is Unitarian. A little later we passed a woman minister holding a sign, which said "On earth as in heaven." But as we passed St Paul's Chapel, which still has George Washington's pew, the great iron gates were locked—no sign saying come in, rest and have a cup of water." That's when I realized Jesus was in the street with us.

We heard a cheer ahead and soon we were passing a group of young doctors from Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx, wearing their white jackets and stethoscopes, holding signs to support the march. I walked over to one of them and said, "Since you're here, Doc, I have this sore knee." We both laughed.

There was a noisy contingent from the Socialist Workers Party, along with schoolteachers, public

**Continued on page 6**

# My Religious Experience on Wall Street

Continued from page 5

employees, and the unemployed in great numbers.

There were straightforward signs like “Good Jobs for All,” held by a friend from the Consumers Union. He engaged in conversation with a West Indian who wanted to know, “Where are you going to get the money for those jobs?”

There were other, less subtle signs, like “Screw You, Alabama” a reference to George Wallace’s state’s passage of new Jim Crow laws for immigrants. Another advised “Take all your money and invest it in pepper spray.”

Suddenly, while greeting Connie Hogarth, a longtime fighter for peace and justice, I was embraced from behind—it was Amir, who three years ago was in a class I taught in an upstate prison. He is out on parole and studying to become a social worker so he can aid others coming out of prison.

Finally, as darkness descended, and feeling my bad back and knees, we left the march at Murray Street to get a bite at the Stage Door Deli. Before I could sit down, a young man with a camera asked, “Were you on the march?” When I said yes, he asked if he could interview me. He is a documentary filmmaker, originally from Poland who makes films to support himself so he can make the ones he really cares about. Today was the latter, and for half an hour he questioned me about whether Christianity and Jesus have anything to say about Occupy Wall

Street and the issues, which gave rise to it. We talked about Jesus’ parables of the laborers in the vineyard and the wicked tenants, the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes. He seemed pleasantly surprised to find a Christian minister linking Jesus’ teachings to class struggle and the cause of the poor and the earth.

While I was being interviewed, Sheila fell into conversation with two young women marchers from Jersey City. Both were unemployed. One had worked for Verizon in retail but quit because of the pressure to sell things to people even if they couldn’t afford it. “Only the sharks succeed” was the way she summed it up.

I asked the other what her last job was, and she said “retail.”

“What kind?”

“Shoes—nothing important.”

“No work is unimportant.”

“What do you do while not working?”

“I write poetry.”

“Can you share one with us?” And she recited from memory and with passion a beautiful poem. Then the other woman said, “I have one on my phone,” and she graced us with a wonderfully humorous piece. They are both performance poets. We exchanged emails.

As we trudged to the A train for the ride uptown. I realized again that I was having a religious experience—four hours on the streets of Manhattan and I connected with more people than I usually do in a year—and I am pretty gregarious. People were friendly, shared their personal struggles and hopes, exchanged emails and did all the things I never thought could happen in the public square. *We were a community.*

Whatever else these young people are doing, they are rediscovering political hope in solidarity. I hope to God the rest of us support them. We don’t have a lot of time.

## Truglia New Benefits Administrator

Sally Truglia has joined the New York Annual Conference staff as the new full-time benefits administrator. Truglia comes to us from McMahan Securities Co. where she most recently served as human resource manager and benefits administrator.

NYAC Treasurer Ross Williams said, “I believe that Sally’s benefits knowledge coupled with her experience working with and educating employees on benefit matters will be invaluable to our organization.”

Truglia earned a bachelor’s of science degree from Southern Connecticut State University and lives in Stamford, Conn. She can be reached at [struglia@nyac.com](mailto:struglia@nyac.com), or at 914-615-2220.

Also, in an effort to expedite your finance questions, there’s a new quick link on the NYAC web site called “Who Do I Contact In Finance & Administration?” Please check it out at, <http://nyac.com/>.

# Questions Of Context, Content, & Conduct

Continued from page 1

disciples.

The entire denomination is being invited to “redirect the flow of attention, energy and resources to an intense concentration on fostering and sustaining an increase in the number of vital congregations effective in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” (Call to Action Report, p14)

“This is a wake-up call on how we can sustain ourselves,” Bishop Park said. “It simply is not sustainable as is . . . Churches cannot just do the same thing for much longer.”

Rev. Dennis Winkleblack and Rev. Ann Pearson agreed that the Vital Congregations initiative is the single greatest attempt to revitalize the church in United Methodist history. Winkleblack added, “Remember, it’s a process, not a program. We have 10 years; we can be creative within the framework.”

The CTA report describes vital congregations as “Spirit-filled, forward-leaning communities of believers that welcome all people, make disciples of Jesus Christ, and serve like Christ through justice and mercy ministries.” Vital congregations were found to have inviting and inspiring worship; engaged disciples in mission and outreach; gifted, equipped and empowered lay leadership; effective, equipped and inspired clergy leadership; and



**Participants at the southern districts retreat listen to a plan developed to lead congregations.**

small groups and strong children’s programs and youth ministry.

A series of questions will help guide the church discussions and decision-making. “We haven’t asked these questions in a long time,” said Pearson. “It’s good to ask the questions even if you think they don’t apply.”

Rev. Matt Curry, pastor of the Mount Kisco UMC, shared a discernment plan he had developed to use in the planning at his church. The step-by-step plan names the three key phases of the discussion as Context, Content and Conduct.

Context delves into the background of the community and individual church. Content explores the spiritual commitment of the church and helps set future goals. The conduct phase creates actions and strategies to reach

the goals that have been set. The goals are classified as “SMART” by the denomination when they are: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-framed.

Curry’s plan involves activities to more closely engage congregations in the work, such as finding a church’s Bible story, creating a congregational timeline, and naming a theme song/hymn.

Pearson said that connectional ministries is ready to support the accomplishment of the “Smart” goals set by churches. To aid the process, she is establishing “incubator groups” that will serve as accountability groups within each conference. Currently, four clergy in each of the six districts are being trained. Those 24 will each train an additional 12 in the district in winter 2012; and

**Continued on page 8**

# Questions Of Context, Content, & Conduct

Continued from page 7

by the time of annual conference, those 288 clergymembers will have trained 12 members of the laity in their own church.

In January 2012, each church will begin submitting weekly attendance, participation and offering numbers to the denomination as part of the Vital Congregations process. These numbers have traditionally been reported just once a year.

And while some may bristle at the renewed focus on numbers, vital signs will be seen in both quantitative and qualitative ways. Winkleblack said, "Numbers aren't everything, but they do provide a reasonable look at what's going on in your church."



**Rev. Matt Curry shares a plan he developed to lead his congregation through a prayerful and meaningful discussion.**

Bill Shillady pointed out that the 5,000 vital congregations documented in the report were diverse in size, location, and ethnicity. "Vitality will be expressed differently in different places," he said. The challenge is to "define it within your own context."

Each congregation's goals will be submitted to the Vital Congregations web site and will be presented as a gift offering during the 2012 General Conference in Tampa, Fla.

The bishop has organized a taskforce to develop a report on how the NYAC will move forward, financially and otherwise, as part of the Vital Congregations process. Rev. John Cole is heading up the taskforce.

Community profiles are available to access via the General Board of Global Ministries web site. If you get a response that information is not available by your zip code, please email the GBGM Research Office and they will be able to create a profile based on the radius around a specific street address.

For additional information, materials from the retreats, or community profiles, go to the Vital Congregations link on the NYAC web site at, <http://nyac.com/pages/detail/1797>.

## Park Honored For Leadership By NYC Council

Bishop Jeremiah J. Park was honored by the Council of Churches of the City of New York with their outstanding executive leadership award at a banquet on October 13. Each fall, the Council recognizes clergy and lay leaders in New York City whose ministry and service display courageous pioneering leadership. Bishop was commended for his ecumenical leadership in New York and Connecticut. A hearty contingent of the cabinet, clergy and laity from the conference were on hand to congratulate the bishop.

Four other people were honored along with Park at the awards banquet held in the grand ballroom of

Saint Vartan Armenian Cathedral, Manhattan. Special Leadership Awards for the Tenth Anniversary of 9-11 were presented to Edward Cardinal Egan, archbishop emeritus of New York, and former Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani. Outstanding leadership awards also went to Paul M. Galvin, chairman of SG Blocks in business, and LaChanze Fordjour, a Tony award-winning actress, in entertainment.

The CCCNY is the oldest ecumenical organization in the United States, having been founded in 1895. Today, the council has 30 denominational members and affiliated agencies throughout the five boroughs of the city.

# Ott, Samuel Appointments Celebrated

**Continued from page 1**  
an opportunity to gather together to meet the district superintendent and give glory to God through song, dance, praise, and word.

Grace UMC in Newburgh, N.Y. hosted Ott's service. Rev. Evy McDonald, pastor of Grace, and Rev. James Hoffman, chair of the district superintendency committee, welcomed the gathering. Music was provided by praise teams from both Grace and Beacon UMC, a joint choir from Trinity-Boscobel and Grace, the Harmony for Habitat Choir, and a number of instrumental solos ranging from the oboe to the organ.

In his introduction of Rev. Ott, Bishop Jeremiah Park noted that her district reflects who we are best at annual conference. "Not just New York, but Connecticut, too," he said.

Park went on to mention that Ott is a fourth generation Methodist preacher, and that her son, Rev. Gene Ott as the fifth, is serving the Stevens Memorial UMC. Ott's background as a professionally



**Clockwise from left: Rev. St. Clair Samuel greets a child during the recessional; Rev. Leo Curry leads Rev. Samuel through the affirmations in the covenant service; with a broad smile, Rev. Gene Ott presents a red stole to his mother, Rev. Betsy Ott.**

trained singer also appealed to the bishop.

"It's no wonder the singing bishop chose a singing district superintendent!" he said to laughter from the gathering. Bishop Park then asked Ott to respond to the vows of the covenant service.

During the presentation of the signs representing the role of the superintendent, laity and clergy lined up to present a Bible, bread and cup, towel and basin and other symbols. When her son, Gene,



stepped up to give her a red stole, Ott smiled, and laughed. But Gene got an even bigger laugh when he broke the pattern of addressing her as Betsy, and said, "Mom, receive this stole, signifying your

ordination, and shepherd us as our pastor. Amen."

In her sermon, "Not on An Empty Stomach," Ott said that as a PK (preacher's kid) much of what she knew about

**Continued on page 10**

# Ott, Samuel Appointments Celebrated

Continued from page 9

being fed she learned from Methodist church potlucks and fellowship around her parents' table. She commended the feeding programs she's heard about—Abraham's Table in Newburgh and the food pantry at Red Hook—and encouraged the expansion of similar efforts across the district.

She noted that when people get really hungry, the body does strange things. The hunger will become the sole focus of life, nothing else matters. It can be the same for those who are spiritually starving. Ott stressed the need for both clergy and laity to be fed body, mind and spirit.

"You don't sending the starving out to feed the hungry. We must be richly fed to do God's work," she said. Jesus believed in feeding people; he fed the disciples and reminded them of their call. "Jesus does not want us to go out and do the Lord's work on an empty stomach," Ott said.

Ott wrapped up her message by singing the spiritual, "O, I Know the Lord's Laid His Hands on Me," accompanied on the piano by John Rose.

The celebration of Rev. Samuel's appointment was held at Mamaroneck UMC, where pastor, Rev. Richard Allen, welcomed the gathering. Following the opening prayer, the choir from Butler Memorial UMC performed two joy-filled selections from the balcony loft. Samuel had been serving Butler Memorial

when he was appointed district superintendent. The choir later sang a medley of "Ain't Got Time to Die" and "They That Trust in the Lord."

During his introduction of Rev Samuel and his family, Bishop Park he called for an impromptu singing of "Happy Birthday" for Samuel's son Brendan, who was celebrating his 21st birthday.

The bishop then credited Samuel's background as a teacher and coach in his native St. Vincent and the Grenadines for helping shape his passion and ministry.

"His passion for doing things the Methodist way, with order and kindness, are sweet music to this bishop," Park said. "Rev. Samuel leads God's people by his example of following Jesus Christ."

As the covenant service began, the afternoon sunlight swept patterns of bright diamonds across the floor and people alike. Standing amid the colorful glow, Samuel accepted the symbols of his new role as leader of the Metropolitan District. Rev. Leo Curry, head of the district superintendency committee, led Samuel through the affirmation of his ministries.

It was attaining a Christ-like attitude that Samuel explored in his sermon before the gathering. Jesus Christ showed us how to be a true servant, he said. "We have to give up our own attitudes to take on the attitude of Christ," he added, as a few "yes, preacher's" peppered the air.

He suggested that is the challenge for each of us. "Where is God calling us to obey? . . . what is our response? . . . Are we still saying, 'Here I am, Lord, don't send me, send someone else?'"

Samuel believes there is hope for the church today because the church is not a resting place. "That's not what it's all about," he said. "Jesus Christ finished the work of salvation . . . Jesus is Lord, not anything else – not money, power, privilege or prestige."

He brought his message to a close by recalling the words of a song he remembered from his childhood:

*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in  
me  
All His wonderful passion and  
purity  
Oh, Thou Spirit divine, all my  
nature refine  
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in  
me*

"The task is ours, to lift him up and make disciples as we transform this world," he concluded.

After another hymn and prayer, Rev. Bill Shillady called for the offering and explained that it would go to benefit the Hurricane Irene Relief Fund established by the conference. The Mamaroneck choir offered an energetic rendition of "Everybody, Let's Praise the Lord" during the offertory.

Both celebrations, ended with a time of food and fellowship in the respective church halls.

# SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

## ‘Covenant of Conscience’ Challenges UMC Ban

In recent months, there has been significant media coverage of a growing movement among United Methodists to make weddings available to all people on an equal basis. The MIND marriage initiative, co-sponsored by MFSA, which has been followed by similar efforts in 10 other annual conferences, is grounded in A Covenant of Conscience. Since much has been written about it, we thought that members of the New York Annual Conference should have a chance to read the covenant for themselves. We invite all who agree with our pastoral stand—clergy, laity and congregations—to join us in this pledge to extend our ministries to all people.

—The steering committees of Methodists in New Directions and the Methodist Federation for Social Action, NY Chapter ([www.mindny.org](http://www.mindny.org))

### A Covenant of Conscience

In his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” The nonviolent Civil Rights movement fought for justice and equality in civil and religious life in the United States with compassion and courage. Yet

*injustice continues to threaten us, in the United States and in the United Methodist Church. The recognition of the full humanity, sacred worth, and equal rights of gay and lesbian people is crucial to the civil rights struggle of our time. Gay, lesbian, and straight United Methodist laity and clergy are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. The continuing denial of full access to all the rights and privileges of church membership in the United Methodist Church is causing deep spiritual harm to our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and is a threat to us all.*

*In his sermons “The New Birth” and “The Catholic Spirit,” John Wesley taught that as long as we hold in common the essential elements of our faith, and as long as we unite in love—meaning that we love one another, that we commend each other to God in prayer, that we provoke each other to love and to good works, that we love each other not only in word but in deed and in truth—then our hearts are right and we should walk together hand in hand. Wesley further taught that differences of*

*opinion ought not to tear this union of hearts asunder. The forcible denial of rights and privileges to gay and lesbian persons through provisions in the Book of Discipline serves as shackles on pastoral care and ministry, and in their harshly punitive application these provisions of the Discipline are not only a grave injustice; they strike at our union in affection, challenge our ability to live amicably in disagreement, and violate the sacred command to love our neighbors as ourselves. We cannot tolerate the Church’s injustice and discrimination any longer and, out of our Christian faith and Wesleyan love, we feel bound to respond and together to make the following declaration:*

Pastoral care and the sacraments and rituals of the church are means of grace by which the lives of all Christians are blessed by God. Therefore we, as congregations and as individual laypersons and clergy, declare our commitment to offer such means of grace to all persons on an equal basis. We refuse to discriminate against any

Continued on page 12

### Oct. 17 Launch Of Initiative

On October 16—the eve of the public launch of the initiative—clergy and laity signers gathered for a covenanting service. At the October 17 launch, the list of signers was made public, and MIND and MFSA began to formally promote the initiative, both within the conference and within LGBT communities in the conference’s geographic region.

## ‘Covenant of Conscience’ Challenges UMC Ban

Continued from page 11

of God’s children and pledge to make marriage equality a lived reality within the New York Annual Conference, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression.

Our conference’s record, in resolutions passed and petitions forwarded to the United Methodist Church’s General Conference, already makes clear our opposition to the UMC’s prejudice and discrimination against LGBT people. While the rite of Christian marriage officiated by our clergy and celebrated in our church buildings is denied by UMC law to same-sex couples, we affirm the New York Annual Conference’s 2010 resolution urging “clergy to minister equally to all members

of their churches and to consider the conference’s call to inclusive ministries in deciding how to honor their congregants’ covenantal commitments.”

We seek to embody the beloved community of hope by openly and joyfully affirming the lives and loves of all United Methodists, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression.

We, United Methodist clergy, in accordance with our ordination vows to “seek peace, justice, and freedom for all people,” commit to marrying all people, both gay and straight, who seek the blessing of the church, without bias or discrimination.

We, United Methodist laity, in accordance with our membership

vows to “resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves,” commit to supporting our clergy in faithfully ministering to all, including through any consequences of their living fully into that duty.

We, United Methodist congregations, refuse to discriminate in the sacraments and rituals provided to our members and pledge the full and equal use of our facilities as we welcome and celebrate equally all couples and the families they may choose to create.

Further, each of us—clergy, laity, and congregations—pledge to one another our spiritual and material support in fulfilling this covenant of conscience.

## Doubling Up: Shoes & Nets for Africa

The Highland Mills UMC and its sister church, Mountainville, recently began collecting shoes for Rerun Shoes, an organization based in Massachusetts that calls itself “a social enterprise with an environmental mission.”

Rerun sends shoes—men’s, women’s and children’s—to West African micro-entrepreneurs who refurbish them and then bring them to market. By receiving these shoes, micro-entrepreneurs earn an income while providing affordable shoes to their customers. These efforts divert usable shoes from the waste

stream in North America for reuse in markets in Mali, Guinea and Liberia.

As an extra incentive for United Methodists, Rerun Shoes partners with Imagine No Malaria to donate one bed net for every 100 pounds of shoes received from UM churches. This keeps the continuing need for bed nets in our sight to continue what we began supporting during a “Change the World” weekend.

In just about a month, the response from the community has been absolutely amazing. The church missions team advertised

the project through social media, the local paper, flyers, and church signs. Highland Mills put a big blue plastic bin on the front porch of the church, and almost every day someone leaves a bag of shoes. The churches also hope to place collection bins in local shoe stores that have expressed an interest in the campaign. There is no cost to churches to participate; Rerun Shoes pays for all the shipping.

More information, or to get involved with the project, go to: [www.rerunshoes.com](http://www.rerunshoes.com), or check out this link to Imagine No Malaria: <http://bit.ly/oIxRzw>.

# 6 Reasons Young Christians Leave Church

Excerpted from  
[www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org)

Many parents and church leaders wonder how to effectively cultivate durable faith in the lives of young people. A five-year project headed by Barna Group president, David Kinnaman, explores the opportunities and challenges of faith development among teens and young adults within a rapidly shifting culture.

The study of young adults focused on those who were regular Christian churchgoers during their teen years and explored their reasons for disconnection from church life after age 15.

The research uncovered six significant themes why nearly three out of every five young Christians (59 percent) disconnect either permanently or for an extended period of time.

## Reason #1: Churches seem overprotective.

A few of the defining characteristics of today's teens and young adults are their unprecedented access to ideas and worldviews as well as their prodigious consumption of popular culture. As Christians, they want their faith in Christ to connect to the world they live in. However, much of their experience of Christianity feels stifling, fear-based and risk-averse. One-quarter of 18- to 29-year-olds said, "Christians demonize everything outside of the church" (23 percent indicated this "completely"



or "mostly" describes their experience). Other perceptions in this category include "church ignoring the problems of the real world" (22 percent) and "my church is too concerned that movies, music, and video games are harmful" (18 percent).

## Reason #2: Teens' and 20somethings' experience of Christianity is shallow.

One-third said "church is boring" (31 percent). One-quarter of these young adults said that "faith is not relevant to my career or interests" (24 percent) or that "the Bible is not taught clearly or often enough" (23 percent). Sadly, one-fifth of these young adults who attended a church as a teenager said that, "God seems missing from my experience of church" (20 percent).

## Reason #3: Churches come across as antagonistic to science.

The most common of the

perceptions is that "Christians are too confident they know all the answers" (35 percent). Three out of ten young adults with a Christian background feel that "churches are out of step with the scientific world we live in" (29 percent). Another one-quarter embrace the perception that "Christianity is anti-science" (25 percent). And nearly the same proportion (23 percent) said they have "been turned off by the creation-versus-evolution debate." Many science-minded young Christians are struggling to find ways of staying faithful to their beliefs and to their professional calling in science-related industries.

## Reason #4: Young Christians' church experiences related to sexuality are often simplistic, judgmental.

With unfettered access to digital pornography and immersed in a culture that values hyper-

Continued on page 14

# 6 Reasons Young Christians Leave Church

Continued from page 13

sexuality over wholeness, teen and 20-something Christians are struggling with how to live meaningful lives in terms of sex and sexuality. One of the significant tensions for many young believers is how to live up to the church's expectations of chastity and sexual purity in this culture, especially as the age of first marriage is now commonly delayed to the late twenties.

Research indicates that most young Christians are as sexually active as their non-Christian peers, even though they are more conservative in their attitudes about sexuality. One-sixth of young Christians (17 percent) said they "have made mistakes and feel judged in church because of them." The issue of sexuality is particularly salient among 18- to 29-year-old Catholics, among whom two out of five (40 percent) said the church's "teachings on sexuality and birth control are out of date."

## Reason #5: They wrestle with the exclusive nature of Christianity.

Younger Americans have been shaped by a culture that esteems open-mindedness, tolerance and acceptance. Today's youth and young adults also are the most eclectic generation in American history in terms of race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, technological tools and sources of authority. Most young adults want to find areas of common ground with

each other, sometimes even if that means glossing over real differences. Three out of 10 young Christians (29 percent) said "churches are afraid of the beliefs of other faiths" and an identical proportion felt they are "forced to choose between my faith and my friends." One-fifth of young adults with a Christian background said "church is like a country club, only for insiders" (22 percent).

## Reason #6: The church feels unfriendly to those who doubt.

Young adults with Christian experience say the church is not a place that allows them to express doubts. They do not feel safe admitting that sometimes Christianity does not make sense. In addition, many feel that the

church's response to doubt is trivial. Some of the perceptions include not being able "to ask my most pressing life questions in church" (36 percent) and having "significant intellectual doubts about my faith" (23 percent). In a related theme of how churches struggle to help young adults who feel marginalized, about one out of every six young adults with a Christian background said their faith "does not help with depression or other emotional problems" they experience (18 percent).

*The findings of the research are included in a new book by Kinnaman titled, "You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church and Rethinking Church." For more of this story, go to this link: <http://bit.ly/qylEYu>.*

## OBITUARY

### Rev. William H. Hunter III

Rev. William Henry Hunter III, died on September 11 in Rhinebeck, N.Y., at age 77. Hunter served our conference at Harriman and Southfields, Ashokan, Glenford and West Hurley, Hillsdale and North Hillsdale, Van Cortlandtville, Coxsackie and Earlton, Cairo, South Cairo and Round Top, Bayside, Rhinebeck and Hillside, Hancock, and Georgetown and Long Ridge. He retired in 1993.

He survived by his wife, Shirley Marie Risch Hunter of Kingston, N.Y., and a sister, Elinor Bayse of Cleveland. Six grandchildren and three great grandchildren also survive. He was predeceased by two sons, William H. Hunter IV, and Timothy Raine Hunter.

A memorial service celebrating his life was held September 24 at Saint James UMC, Kingston, N.Y. Expressions of concern may be sent to: Mrs. Shirley Hunter, 64 Garden Street, Kingston, NY 12401. Memorial gifts may be given to: Saint James UMC, 35 Pearl St., Kingston, N.Y. 12401.

# LIE Clergy Make Sky-High Leap of Faith

When your district superintendent says “jump,” how high will you go? For 10 clergy in the Long Island East District that answer is 13,000 feet.

At the September 13 district clergy meeting, Superintendent Adrienne Brewington invited clergy to take a tandem skydive as “leadership training.” (Brewington had recently made her first jump with husband, Fred, to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.)

So two weeks later, the brave volunteers found themselves at Skydive Long Island in Calverton, N.Y. Brewington was joined by Susumu Ando, Chuck Van Houten, Julia Yim, Leslie Duroseau, Lynda Bates-Stepe, Huibing He, David Mantz, Ken Prill, Bob Leibold and Jim Van Schaick. The group watched a safety video, signed insurance

papers, and then each one was paired with a jumpmaster.

Despite a couple of delays due to the cloud cover, anxieties were kept at manageable levels and everyone made their jumps. While waiting, Bob Leibold kept reminding himself of the words of 2 Timothy

1:7: “For God did not

**Continued on page 16**



**Rev. Susumu Ando glides to ground in his tandem jump.**



**Top guns Lynda Bates-Stepe, Leslie Duroseau and Huibing He after their jumps. Below, the group poses at the end of the day.**



**Waiting to board the single engine plane.**





PHOTOS BY ALICE LUM

## Linden Hill Cemetery Gatehouse Rededicated

Bishop Jeremiah J. Park, above, presides over the rededication of the refurbished gatehouse administration building at the Linden Hill Cemetery on October 4. The renovation work began three years ago primarily to provide more office space, according to Rev. Charles “Chick” Straut, president of the Board of Directors of the cemetery. The gatehouse is located at the

cemetery’s main entrance at 323 Woodward Ave., Ridgewood, Queens. The cemetery is managed by a corporation consisting of the bishop of the New York Area and the superintendents of the NYAC Districts with churches in the five boroughs of New York City. The cemetery has also recently added two columbarium walls, at right, to allow the respectful storage of cinerary urns.

## LIE Clergy Make Sky-High Leap of Faith

Continued from page 15

give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”

Van Schaick wasn’t sure why he had volunteered at the clergy meeting. “My arm just disconnected from my brain and went skyward,” he said. “This frightens me so much that I just want to see if I can overcome it.”

Ando and Van Houten were the first to climb into the Cessna Grand Caravan and came back from their jump with adrenaline-induced smiles. Van Houten said

the most difficult thing was just trying to breath. “There’s this rush of air when you come out of the plane, and the cameraman’s there trying to get you to smile!”

Rev. Huibing He began jumping up and down in excitement as soon as her feet touched the ground. It was excellent leadership training, she said. “I always know that someone is behind me . . . you can’t see the beauty without that height, when there’s nothing to block your view.”

Prill, who said he was the “most terrified I’ve ever been,” was

delighted to scratch skydiving off his bucket list. Yim, who had her own cheering section in two members of her congregation who came to watch, said, “It was definitely a step out in faith . . . we can do things for the kingdom even in our fear.”

Duroseau made the jump for her daughter, so she’ll “know that she can do all things through Jesus Christ.” She maybe summed up the experience for all the clergy jumpers when she said, “I think I can do anything now—even though I’m a little nauseated.”

# TEN YEARS OF WAR

## UM Military Chaplains Find Support, Stress

### UMNS Report

Thousands of U.S. Reserve and National Guard members found themselves called suddenly into active duty and deployed when the war on terror started 10 years ago.

Among them were United Methodist pastors called out of their pulpits in local churches to go with the troops as chaplains.

That turned out to be a blessing, said the Rev. Tom Carter, a retired Army chaplain, who served during the Vietnam conflict.

The American public—including the United Methodist Church—became more aware and supportive of service members, said Carter, director of the agency that endorses UM pastors as chaplains and pastoral counselors.

“That is radically different than Vietnam,” he said. “Although the wars are not extremely popular, the military personnel were not branded as the baby-killers.”

One example of that support from UM churches was a campaign started on Veterans Day in 2003 to send prepaid phone cards to veterans.

The United Methodist Endorsing Agency, part of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), collected the money, bought the cards and handed them out to UM chaplains to distribute to anyone who needed to call a loved one.

Online communication such as Facebook, Twitter and Skype make



**United Methodist Chaplain Jerry Sieg conducted a baptism service in Kuwait for soldiers of the Third Infantry Division before the Iraq war began in early 2003.**

UMNS FILE PHOTO

it easier for service members to connect with home so the phone card campaign ended in 2010, but not before more than 17 million free minutes were distributed.

The Rev. Dale C. White, a Navy captain and member of the New York Annual Conference who was deployed to Iraq for 13 months, said the UMC has been “very responsive” to the needs of service members, from the phone cards to developing liturgies for churches to send members into combat and then welcome them back home.

Capt. White was part of a meeting in 2007 between the GBHEM and the General Board of Church and Society. Active and retired military chaplains met with agency staff to form a task force to write those liturgies.

“United Methodist chaplains bring a unique balance of grace and faith to the military,” Capt. White said. “We have deep ecumenical and interfaith

traditions, perfect for the pluralistic military environment. I truly believe we are extremely well suited for this chaplaincy setting and have tremendous influence on those we serve.”

However, service members, including chaplains, still must deal with the effects of long and repeated deployments in harm’s way thousands of miles from home.

Capt. White’s long deployment took “a tremendous toll” on his family. “Four years later I am still rebuilding the relationships with my daughter and son.”

The Rev. Dave Smith, Army colonel and chaplain now serving in Iraq, said there is more the church can do for returning veterans.

Active service members have support agencies on their posts when they return, he said, while Reserve and Guard members often

**Continued on page 18**

# UM Military Chaplains Find Support, Stress

Continued from page 17

do not find the necessary agencies to help them.

“I believe the church is missing a chance,” Smith said. “I think the church could be in mission to our returning veterans. I have addressed some ideas to my conference. The cabinet and bishop agreed to the importance, but the idea did not move further than an idea. In my opinion, we could do more.”

Col. Smith said there has been a lot of stress placed on service members and their families in the last 10 years. Still, he sees something good that has come from this experience.

“The Army has recognized the importance of developing resiliency in our soldiers and families through comprehensive soldier fitness. One of the five pillars of this program is spiritual



**Rev. Dale C. White, a Navy chaplain from New York, was deployed in Iraq for 13 months.**

fitness,” he said.

Chaplains develop spirituality through worship, Bible study, counseling, Strong Bonds training events, praying and visiting soldiers and their families, Col. Smith added.

## Comes down to faith

Many UM chaplains were on active duty on Sept. 11, 2001.

Capt. White was at the Pentagon on 9/11 as the deputy director of plans and operations, office of the Chief of Navy Chaplains. He said it is hard to put into words how that day changed him and his ministry.

“Ultimately, it helped me reshape and reprioritize what is important. There is nothing more precious than life.”

Capt. White is back at the Pentagon in the exact place he was on 9/11.

“It is kind of surreal, but a stark reminder that life is not forever and our faith is what is most important in this life.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Currently, three other members of the NYAC are in appointments that directly serve the military:

- Laura Bender, chaplain, U.S. Navy, USS New York
- Matthew Byung-Ho Ahn, pastoral coordinator, U.S. Army, Ft. Bliss, Texas
- William T. Young, chief of the chaplains, California State Military Reserve

## New Digital Library Offers Global Access

A unique and ambitious web-based theological resource was launched on September 23 as a joint venture of the World Council of Churches and Globethics.net. The Global Digital Library on Theology and Ecumenism (GlobeTheoLib) aims to redress a global imbalance of access to research materials in theology and related disciplines.

The multi-lingual GlobeTheoLib contains several hundred thousand articles, documents and other academic resources that can be accessed online free-of-charge by registered participants from anywhere in the world via Internet ([www.globethics.net/gtl](http://www.globethics.net/gtl)).

“The time has come to launch a new model of

ecumenical sharing of theological resources in order to prepare world Christianity for the 21st century,” said the WCC general secretary, the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit.

GlobeTheoLib is intended to use new digital models of information exchange to make the theological voices and resources of the global South more visible and accessible, across national, cultural and denominational barriers.

It uses the electronic platform of Globethics.net, the Geneva-headquartered organization that already holds more than 650,000 full-text documents in its Global Digital Library on Ethics.

# Learning How to Grow Old With Grace

**BY JIM STINSON**

Consultant on Older Adult Ministry

*I was having difficulty living alone, but did not want to live with my children. My wife had died, the house had become too big for me, and my kids live out of state. So I made the decision to come to United Methodist Homes, not saying, "Gee how glad I am to leave my life behind, but saying what choice do I have?"*

These words speak to the observation in a quote attributed to Billy Graham, who, at age 87, said: "All my life I've been taught how to die, but no one ever taught me how to grow old."

Phillip was struggling with the question implied by Billy Graham. How do I grow old? Where can I go for help? Is there someone who can teach me how to deal with this phase of my life? Philip reminded me yet again that no matter how much we might want to deny it, the time of aging often brings unwanted changes; diminishing abilities, change in mental status, and a variety of ailments.

In a culture that urges financial preparation for the retirement years, pushes age-denying panaceas, and all kinds of treatments and gimmicks to keep us feeling and looking younger than we are, there often is not



adequate preparation for the reality of growing old.

How many times I've heard adult children say: "If only mother had exercised more, if only Dad had eaten better and other such wishful thinking, he/she might not be needing to make these changes."

Our culture has suggested in various ways that we do not have to grow old. If we would just do the right things, aging would be a thing of the past. While practicing healthy living is a desirable thing for people of any age, there is only one way to avoid growing old, exercise and other good habits notwithstanding. It is called death. Short of that as a goal, there is a need to help people grow old.

Our churches are in a strong position to do just that. It involves preaching and teaching the value of every living being. It involves telling the truth as made known by our Creator God. In doing so it means seeing all of life, in all its phases as part of the creative plan. The Church sees life on earth as linear, rather than circular. Aging is one of the phases along this line. It is no less a phase

than toddler or adolescence. It is not something to be ignored by wishing it will not happen to me or to the ones I love. It begs for understanding and acceptance. Just as a wise parent learns to cope with these other phases, allowing for the reality of the "terrible twos," or teen behaviors, adjusting to their limitations and needs, we need to help prepare the old among us, adjusting to and accepting their needs and limitations.

We need to help our older adults and all members of our congregations to grow old with grace. But, the problem seems to be there are no rulebooks. But there are generalities that can be adapted for each individual situation and purpose.

- **Dignity:** Older adults want to be treated with dignity. They do not want to be treated like infants.
- **Independence:** Despite limitations, older adults want to maintain as much independence as possible.
- **Choice:** Older adults, if cognitively able, need to make their own choices, even if adult children or caregivers disagree.

The Church has a role to play in teaching people how to grow old. Our basic Christian values can guide us in finding that role as individual congregations.

# Knowledge Can Help End Domestic Abuse

Domestic Violence Awareness Month evolved from the “Day of Unity” in October 1981 conceived by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The intent was to connect advocates across the nation who were working to end violence against women and their children. The Day of Unity soon became an entire week devoted to a range of activities conducted at the local, state and national levels.

In October 1987, the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month was observed. That same year marks the initiation of the first national domestic violence toll-free hotline. In 1989, the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 101-112 designating October of that year as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Such legislation has passed every year since. During October, the Day of Unity is celebrated on the first Monday of October.

Domestic violence is best understood as a pattern of abusive behaviors—including physical, sexual and psychological attacks as well as economic coercion—used by one intimate partner against another to gain, maintain or regain power and control in the relationship. This is true for both adults and adolescents.

Batterers use a range of tactics to frighten, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, and sometimes kill a current or former intimate partner.

For more information about domestic violence including warning signs and resources to stop the violence, contact your local Domestic Violence Hotline; or the National Domestic Violence Hotline, at 1-800-799-7233.

Sources: <http://dvam.vawnet.org/> and Chemung County Child Advocacy Center. The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence offers a package of information on “Working with Children Towards a Healthy & Non-Violent Future.”

Go to: <http://bit.ly/pfRZkY>, for details.



## Warning Signs

Your teen may be experiencing patterns of an unhealthy relationship if:

### Your Teen:

- Apologizes and/or makes excuses for his/her partner's behavior.
- Loses interest in activities that he/she used to enjoy.
- Stops seeing friends and family members and becomes more and more isolated.
- Casually mentions the partner's violent behavior, but laughs it off as a joke.
- Often has unexplained injuries or the explanations often don't make sense.

### The Partner:

- Calls your teen names and puts him/her down in front of others.
- Acts extremely jealous of others who pay attention to your teen.
- Thinks or tells your teen that you, the parent(s), don't like them.
- Controls your teen's behavior, checking up constantly, calling or texting, and demanding to know who he/she has been with.

### You:

- See the partner violently lose their temper, striking or breaking objects.

Source: <http://loveisnotabuse.com>

# New Report Finds More U.S. Children in Poverty

## UMNS Report

In August, the Annie E. Casey Foundation reported that another 2.4 million children joined the ranks of the U.S. poor during the past decade.

Then the U.S. Census Bureau announced that the total number of Americans living below the poverty line—46.2 million—was the highest total ever in the 52 years the bureau has tracked such data.

For church members involved with food pantries and after-school programs, the Casey Foundation's report of "a significant decline" in the economic wellbeing of low-income children and their families "is consistent with what they're seeing," said the Rev. Mary Ellen Kris, a consultant for the UM General Board of Global Ministries.

The real face of poverty often isn't apparent to most Americans. People are shocked, for example, "when they find out the [homeless] shelter system in New York City is overwhelmingly children and single moms," Kris said. "There's this huge number of people in need who are really not visible."

United Methodists always have been responsive to the poor. One of the denomination's four areas of focus for mission is "ministry with the poor." But what really is needed, Kris believes, is an understanding of how to break cycles of poverty that are just as



UMNS FILE PHOTO

**Children and their families enjoy a free meal at Wesley United Methodist Church in Fresno, Calif.**

problematic as they were 50 years ago.

In other words, part of the denomination's commitment to ministry with the poor has to be understanding how to fix the system, she said.

Jim Winkler, top executive of the UM General Board of Church and Society, agrees.

"We can and should have feeding programs, soup kitchens, food pantries and gleaning drives to help feed hungry people, but if we are not working for livable wages, affordable housing and health care for everyone, then we are only doing half our job," he said.

## Poverty figures up

According to the Casey Foundation's Kids Count Data

Book, some 14.6 million children, or 20 percent, lived in poverty as of 2009.

Statistics from the census bureau's "Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010," show that the poverty rate is at its highest level since 1993.

The median household income declined from 2009 by 2.3 percent to \$49,445, and the official poverty rate jumped from 14.3 to 15.1 percent. The ranks of poor Americans—a family of four living on \$22,314 or less—increased for the fourth consecutive year in 2010, to 46.2 million.

An important question, says John Hill, an executive with the Board of Church and Society, is why "poverty has risen throughout the last decade, even in a period of economic expansions before the great recession."

A portion of the population is being left behind, particularly in attempts since the recession to get the economy growing, he noted. "Clearly the growth and wealth that is being created in this country is not being shared broadly."

## Circle of Protection

On a national level, faith leaders, alarmed last fall by proposals for drastic funding cuts to programs that support those in need, met to discuss their concerns. "I suggested that we were really

**Continued on page 22**

# New Report Finds More U.S. Children in Poverty

Continued from page 21

trying to create a circle of protection around initiatives to help the needy and vulnerable, and that stuck,” Winkler recalled.

The Circle of Protection project included a series of daily prayer vigils in July on the lawn of the United Methodist Building on Capitol Hill that have resumed this fall.

The Rev. David Beckmann, executive director of Bread for the World, is an active participant in the project. “What we are deciding is the shape of our nation and the shape of the world 10 years from now,” he said.

Many United Methodist congregations have been involved in Bread for the World’s letter-writing campaigns, and Beckmann, a Lutheran minister, is appreciative of those efforts.

To advocate for that connection on a grassroots level, Winkler suggests that local church members:

- Familiarize themselves with the church’s Social Principles and official resolutions on poverty-related issues.
- Use church teachings to educate elected officials.
- Meet regularly with city, county, state and national legislators to discuss why tax dollars should be used effectively to assist the needy.

## Food Stamp Challenge: Living on \$1.50 Per Meal

Could you feed yourself for one week on \$31.50? That’s approximately \$4.50 per day and \$1.50 per meal.

The people behind Fighting Poverty With Faith are issuing a challenge to live for one week—Thursday, Oct. 27 to Thursday, Nov. 3—on the average SNAP (food stamp) allotment of \$31.50. The “Food Stamp Challenge” is just one activity the group is promoting to mark their fourth mobilization week, “Working Together to End Hunger.”

Participants will be joining with elected officials and community members across the nation who are taking the Food Stamp Challenge in order to better understand how the program works on a personal level and to highlight the continued need for and importance of feeding programs to alleviate hunger in the United States.

Fighting Poverty with Faith is building a nationwide, interfaith movement to cut domestic poverty in half by 2020. FPWF efforts are co-sponsored by the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Catholic Charities, and the National Council of Churches, and the mobilization is endorsed by over 50 national faith-based organizations.

Fighting Poverty with Faith encourages local communities to plan community-wide, preferably



interfaith, events and actions during the week-long mobilization—such as a Food Stamp Challenge, Hunger Banquet, or screening of the documentary “Food Stamped”—to both educate the community and elected officials about the issue of hunger and advocate to protect SNAP (food stamps) from funding cuts and structural changes.

To register yourself or your church for the challenge, or for more information about FPWF advocacy and the SNAP program, go to <http://fightingpovertywithfaith.com/f2/>.

# Kims Join 8 Other New Missionaries

After more than three weeks of training, 10 United Methodists were commissioned on October 7 and sent as missionaries around the world. Among the group were Rev. Eumin Kim and his wife, Prumeh, of the New York Annual Conference, who will be serving in Kazakhstan. During the commissioning, each of the 10 received an anchor cross to symbolize their steadfast connection to God and to their fellow missionaries.

The service was held in a place quite familiar to the Kims, the First United Methodist Church in Flushing, N.Y. Eumin's father, Rev. Joong Urn Kim, had served the congregation there since 1998 before retiring this year. The service was available for viewing via a live web cast on the General Board of Global Ministries web site.

Global Ministries executive Judy Chung said that the training helps prepare the individuals for the mission field while building a foundation of support.

"These three weeks are important not only to learn the nuts and bolts of mission, but for bonding with other new missionaries and getting to know the staff of Global Ministries who are standing behind them."

The Kims, will serve as co-directors, of the United Methodist Mission Center in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The center in Almaty plays a pivotal role in the Central Asia Mission Initiative, which is linked to the Eurasia Area of the denomination. The initiative began in 2003 and by 2011 had 19 congregations or Bible groups in four of the five Central Asia republics, once part of the Soviet Union. The Almaty center was opened in 2006 through a generous contribution from the First Korean UMC in Flushing. It houses space for Bible study classes, clergy education, church and district offices, and as the Central Asia site of the Moscow United Methodist Theological Seminary.

Rev. Kim recalled his first visit to Kazakhstan, noting the distance between United Methodist churches.

"After traveling through the night on a train, I arrived eight hours later to the house church off a dirt road in Ushtobe." Upon returning home to Queens, where there are more than 200 faith communities,



Eumin and Prumeh Kim, will serve as co-directors, of the UM Mission Center in Almaty, Kazakhstan.



he thought, "Why are there so many churches here and so few churches over there? This marked the beginning of my sense of calling to become a missionary to Central Asia."

Rev. Kim has served pastorates in the Greater Washington, D.C. area; Trinity United Methodist Church in LaGrangeville, N.Y., and the Vision Christian Fellowship of The United Methodist Church, a ministry in Queens with links to the First UMC of Flushing.

Eumin comes from a strong Methodist family, explaining: "My grandmother committed her life to Christ during the Korean War, in a time when she was a refugee who had lost her husband and was raising four young children as a single mother . . . An image that stands out is her spending 4 to 5 hours a day, praying quietly in the closet of her bedroom. Clearly her life influenced those closest to her as her four children, including my father, went on to become either pastors or to marry pastors. Including me, five of her grandchildren are now in ministry as well."

He says his call to mission was refined by a 10-day mission experience in Kazakhstan.

"Of all the people, places, and cultures I have been

**Continued on page 24**

# Kims Join 8 Other New Missionaries

Continued from page 23

a part of,” he said, “the culture that resonated with me more than any other was the Kazakh culture. How can I describe in words a heart that identifies, burns, and breaks for a certain people? . . . I take to heart Jesus’ words, ‘the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.’”

Prumeh Kim underwent a long time of prayer around the question of whether she should become a missionary. “Through prayer, God has confirmed this. Since I decided to accept this calling, I have been filled with peace. I also sought the counsel of family, friends, and my Christian peers. Everyone has affirmed our decision.”

She was born in Seoul, Korea, but immigrated to the United States as an infant. She speaks English, Korean, and basic Russian. The couple was married in 1999, and has a 6-year-old daughter, Ye-Ari, and a son, Eli, who was born in 2011.

Prumeh has experience and skills in Christian education, youth ministry, administration, teaching, and music. From 2006 to 2010, she served as program

director for the United Methodist Korean American Youth Initiative, and earlier served as a private tutor and a youth pastor.

“My great-grandmother was the first Christian in my family,” she said. “She became a Christian when she met an American Methodist missionary. Subsequently, my grandfather and father both became Methodist pastors. My family first became Christian because of the faithful service of missionaries; I would also like to serve the Christian church by becoming the first missionary in my family.”

Both the Kims are available for covenant relationship support in New York Annual Conference. Donations can be made through Global Ministries Online System; Rev. Kim’s Advance number is #3021370; Prumeh Lee Kim’s is #3021369. Go to: <http://new.gbmg-umc.org/give/missionaries/> for more information.

More information about the 10 missionaries and their placement sites, go to this link for the GBGM web site: <http://bit.ly/pTMPOC>.

## Bethel Staff Walks the Walk For Alzheimer’s

**Thirty staff and family members from Bethel Homes joined in the 2011 Walk to End Alzheimer’s event held in White Plains on October 2. Bethel was also one of the corporate sponsors for the three-mile trek along Bryant Avenue in White Plains. Staff**

**from the Croton-on-Hudson and Ossining campuses collected donations to help find a cure for Alzheimer’s. Bethel’s CEO, Beth Goldstein, who walked along with her husband and two children, said, “This is what we are all about. With a dedicated, memory-impaired unit at our Croton-on-Hudson campus, we see first-hand the**



**heartache and ravages brought about by Alzheimer’s disease. We need to find a cure as soon as possible to ensure a more lasting, quality of life experience for our mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, and all those diagnosed with this debilitating illness.” The Bethel Homes is one of the NYAC-related health and welfare ministries.**



Continued from page 2

### **10/28–29: UM Men's Annual Retreat**

Workshop leader Wayne Custer, who is the UMM president for the Northeastern Jurisdiction, will discuss "Building Men's Ministry in the Local Church." Rev. Kenny Yi and Rev. Gordon Edwards are co-leaders. Registration begins at 4 p.m. Friday; event concludes with lunch on Saturday. Cost is \$130–\$160, depending on accommodations at Stony Point Center in Stony Point, N.Y. To register, go to: <http://nyac.com/events/detail/3602>.

### **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](http://www.bumch.org).

### **11/5: Safe Sanctuaries Training**

This Safe Sanctuaries Workshop, at Bushwick UMC

in Brooklyn, is designed for congregations who don't have a written policy. The workshop prepares a core team of 4–5 to work with the congregation to write a policy, as well as provides information on how to train trustees, teachers, parents and pastors on the implementation of that policy. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m.; workshop from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. To register: <http://nyac.com/events/detail/3581>.

### **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.

### **Begins 11/7: Compensation, Taxes & the IRS**

Keith Muhleman of the Frontier Foundation will present these workshops for clergy and spouses. There is no charge, but registration is required. 10 a.m.–2 p.m.; lunch is provided. To register, go to: <http://nyac.com/events>, and click on the date you would like to attend.

### **11/7: St. Mark's UMC, Napanoch, N.Y.**

### **11/8: Newtown UMC, Sandy Hook, Conn.**

### **11/9: First UMC, Middletown, Conn.**

### **11/15: Crawford Memorial UMC, Bronx, N.Y.**

### **11/16: Dix Hills UMC, Dix Hills, N.Y.**

### **11/21: St. John's UMC, Valley Stream, N.Y.**

### **1/17–19/2012: Bishop's Convocation**

Bob Farr, author of "Renovate or Die: Ten Ways to Focus Your Church on Mission," will be the guest speaker. New location is the Villa Roma Resort & Conference Center in Callicoon, N.Y.

<http://www.villaroma.com/>.