

"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

January 20, 2012

**'We had to find a way to feed them.'**

## Summer Food Ministries Serve Children

This article appears in the January/February 2012 issue of the Interpreter. It can be found online at <http://www.interpretermagazine.org/>.

By **EMILY SNELL**

Grace United Methodist Church in Newburgh, N.Y., a city of about 28,000 people, organizes Abraham's Table, an ecumenical children's food ministry, which began in summer 2010. Started after the city eliminated its federal feeding program because of budget concerns, Abraham's Table served 12,500 lunches to children younger than 18 during its six weeks of operation in 2011.

Abraham's Table serves children in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). While the relationship requires following specific rules, said the Rev. Evy McDonald, she sees it as beneficial. Being associated with the USDA relieves many of the financial concerns.

"If you don't want to follow their rules, don't even try it," the pastor of Grace Church said. "We had a fairly easy time because the chairperson of our board was a former head of a school lunch program in the area. She knew how to work with the USDA program."

Abraham's Table consistently serves lunches at eight locations. The sites are staffed by about 40 volunteers and by four monitors, required by the USDA, who receive small stipends.

In the area around Belle, Mo., a rural town of roughly 1,300, Belle United Methodist Church packs food bags for children in need. Because of funding cuts, the school district

Continued on page 7



Part of Rev. Barrett's prison ministry takes place in the Bronx's Vernon C. Bain Correctional Center, an 800-bed barge in the East River.

## VISION BEARER / An End of Year Report Prison Ministry Changing Lives

BY **REV. DELORES BARRETT**

*Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

—Matthew 25:34–35

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It has been another year and the Lord has been good to me. I am delighted to share with you some of my experiences in the yearlong ministry.

**Prison Ministry:** It's a joy to work with Minister Sharon Cundy from Bushwick Parish UMC in the prison ministry at Rikers Island and the Vernon C. Bain correctional facilities. At Rikers we minister to the adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18.

On Wednesdays we have fellowship with the young women, and on Fridays with the young men and adult women. We share the word of God with them through their own testimonies. Some of these testimonies have opened the floodgates of their hearts as they reflect on the journey from the beginning of their lives to their time in Rikers.

Here are some of their testimonies:

- "I came into a sum of money and God knows what he was doing when He allowed me to get arrested and come in here. If I was in the streets, I would have blown all the money on drugs. Now I get to know God for myself right here in jail. When I get out I will be a better person and will be able to manage my money and live a life for Christ because he loves me so much God brought me in here to save me".
- "I am charged for committing a crime of murder. Since I got here I got involved in the services, and every day I learn more and more about God—I gave my life over to Him. I shared the Scriptures with other inmates; I even started a prayer group with the women. Now I see the hands of God working mightily in my life. I go to court and everyone from the judge to the attorneys seem confused—they don't know what to do with me. I can surely say I have been transformed. I was once a proud egotistical individual, but now my relationship with God has humbled me. I thank God for saving me."

By coming to these meetings they have experienced God in a mighty way. Prison has changed the whole concept of what motherhood is to many of these women.

They have blown away their money on drugs and God has saved them from their selves. We witness the work of God as many repent and

Continued on page 6



### January–May: Permaculture Design Course

Tune your design skills within a permaculture learning community one weekend a month for four months. Dates are Feb. 25–26, March 31–April 1, April 21–22, and May 18–20 at the Green Phoenix Permaculture site at Camp Epworth in High Falls, N.Y. Tuition ranges from \$900 to \$1500 and includes accommodation. For more information, or to register, contact Joan via email at: [mamajoane@yahoo.com](mailto:mamajoane@yahoo.com), or call, 845-687-7646.

### 1/7–3/31: NY/CT Lay Speaking Ministry

Classes are being offered on seven Saturdays at Jesse Lee Memorial UMC, in Ridgefield, Conn. Details at: <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/3631>. To register contact Elaine Winward, director of lay speaking ministry for NY/CT, at [ewinward@optonline.net](mailto:ewinward@optonline.net), or 914 669-5264.

### 1/31: Deadline for SMART Goals

The final day to record your congregation's goals in response to the UMC's Call to Action initiative. Go to the Vital Congregations web site, <http://www.umvitalcongregations.org>, to submit your plans. All of the goals will be compiled and given as an offering to God's work among us at the General conference in Tampa.

### 2/10: Pre-Valentine's Day Red and Black Affair

An evening of entertainment, dancing and refreshment at Tremont UMC, 1951 Washington Ave., Bronx, NY 10457. 7:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. Donation: Adults \$20, youth and Children \$10.

For information call 718 583-8700, or email [tremontumc@optonline.net](mailto:tremontumc@optonline.net).

### 2/19–11/11: Fordham Preaching Series

In honor of the church's 160th anniversary year and Rev. Leo Curry's 25th anniversary as pastor, Fordham UMC will have a yearlong guest preacher series. The guest preachers all have a special connection to Rev. Curry.

February 19, 11 a.m.: Rev. Dr. Gennifer B. Brooks

March 4, 11 a.m.: Rev. Dr. Dale Irvin

March 11, 11 a.m.: Rev. Dr. Evelyn R. McDonald

April 8, 8 a.m., Men's Easter breakfast service: Rev. Noel N. Chin

April 22, 11 a.m.: Rev. Fr. Darryl F. James

May 13, 11 a.m.: Rev. Cecilia B. Loving

June 17, 11 a.m.: Rev. Nathaniel T. Grady

June 24, 2012, 11 a.m., 25th Anniversary Service for Pastor Curry. Guest preacher, Rev. Robert O. Simpson and guest liturgist, Dr. Addie J. Butler

September 16, 11 a.m.: Ernest L. Swiggett

October 26, 7 p.m. 160th Anniversary Dinner with guest preacher, Rev. Ian B. Straker

October 28, 11 a.m.: Rev. Dr. William S. Shillady

November 4, 11 a.m.: Rev. St. Clair A. Samuel

November 11, 11 a.m.: Rev. Dr. Cathy S. Gilliard

### 2/22–23: Retirement Seminars

Seminars are being planned for both lay employees and clergy. Wednesday's sessions will be at Anchor House, and is for lay employees only. Thursday's session will be for clergy at the Conference Center in White Plains. Details to come.

### 2/23–26: Prayer Retreat

"Prayer: Holy Conversations With God" offers an opportunity to set-aside time for exploration of the many ways to connect with God through a prayerful heart. Methods used will include, *lectio divina* with nature, body awareness prayer, centering prayer and meditation. The retreat also delves into the significance of places of prayer, using art-making to hear God, and how we image God. It will be a time not only to pray, but also to investigate questions about prayer.

In addition to group learning experiences, time will be set aside for worship, individual reflection, labyrinth walking and meditative reading and music at the Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, Tenn. For more info or to register, go to: [www.scarrittbennett.org/programs/pr.aspx](http://www.scarrittbennett.org/programs/pr.aspx).

### 2/27–29: Creating Jazz Liturgy Workshop

A workshop for pastors, church musicians, worship planners, and seminary students interested in jazz as legitimate music for worship at the Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, Tenn. Keynote speaker will be Dr. Kwasi Kena. Topics will include conceptual understandings of worship and jazz, worship planning, and selection of music, music arrangements and musicians. For info or to register, go to [www.scarrittbennett.org/programs/Jazz.aspx](http://www.scarrittbennett.org/programs/Jazz.aspx).



### 3/10: Black College Fund Luncheon

Dr. Cynthia Bond Hopson, assistant general secretary of the Black College Fund, will be the guest speaker at this annual gathering to benefit 11 Black colleges. 1 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, White Plains, N.Y. Donation is \$85 per ticket—payable to NYAC, Black College Fund. For tickets contact: Doreen Cosbert at 718-654-1167, Cleolene Jones at 718-739-9046, Veronica Darby at 718-455-7784, Thelma Fortune Little at 718-693-3513, Rev. Hermon Darden at 914-668-3334, Ena Nemley at 718-367-4803, or Caroline Nanton at 718-377-7568.

### 4/16–19: Elders Retreat

Spiritual retreat at Graymoor Spiritual Life Center, Garrison, N.Y.

Continued on page 11

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

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# New Year a Time for Brainstorming, Goal-Setting

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

With the beginning of a new calendar year, it's New Year's resolution time. This is a perfect time for your church to take advantage of the universal goal-setting, fresh-start mindset.

While this time of year is ideal for personal goal setting, it is also a time that your congregation and community will be most accepting of new ideas and goals. Take advantage of the can-do attitude with these tips:

## Enhance brainstorming sessions.

Have you ever hosted a brainstorming session only to leave as clueless as you were when you came in? Tweak your approach. Think of brainstorming as a time to combine and enhance ideas rather than as a time to come up with ideas. Before gathering your programming team, ask each person to brainstorm ahead of time and bring three ideas to the meeting. As the team members share their ideas, focus on how they can be combined or expanded to create the ideal program. When you hear a particularly good idea, ask others in the room how it could



**This month, we begin dedicated coverage of how our churches can, and are, responding to become more vital congregations. So let us know about your ideas, plans and struggles to achieve your SMART goals by emailing The Vision at: [vision@nyac.com](mailto:vision@nyac.com). And don't forget those photos, too!**

be made better. The combination of different personalities and experiences will round out each idea and give it the boost from good to great.

## Collaborate on church goals.

Invite your congregation to submit their ideas on what the church should focus on via a suggestion box, email, social media, online forms and more. (For online forms, [www.Wufoo.com](http://www.Wufoo.com) offers an easy-to-use online form service some churches use to accept prayer requests. You can create your own form or adapt one of Wufoo's templates.) Although suggestions can be anonymous, encourage members to put their names on their ideas so you can go back to them for help in implementing it. Publicize the goals you choose to work on and meet several times a year to ensure the goals are being met.

## Communicate your goals.

Once you've decided on your goals, you'll want to make sure you communicate them effectively. While you'll likely receive many great ideas, the key here is to pick only two or three to focus on in one year. Similarly, only communicate one at a time. You're communicating all types of information to your

**Continued on page 4**



## Highland Mills Has An App For That!

Highland Mills UMC in New York has gone mobile and created an application for Android model cellular phones. The HMUMC app provides the church's service times, events calendar, and contact information. Photos can also be viewed, and prayer requests submitted. The app can be found at this shortened link: <http://bit.ly/xp0HXp>.

# Smooth Filing of Vital Signs

Rev. Ann Pearson, director of Connectional Ministries, offers these tips for filing your church's Vital Signs online:

## The link in the email to your reporting screen

The link will not expire, but it will only work one time. Please have your numbers ready when you click the link. Each Monday, you will be able to enter numbers for that week, and update the numbers for the prior three weeks.

## Instructions regarding all questions

The numbers you report should only reflect your weekly totals, not cumulative.

## Regarding Question #1: Total worship attendance at all regularly held weekly services

If a church has more than one congregation—for example, one church has three separate (unchartered) congregations—you would report the combined attendance number.

## New Question #3 for January 9: Total number of small groups

Make a decision about which groups you will count and be consistent—use the same criteria

week after week.

## Regarding Question #4: Total number of persons actively engaged in small groups (count only once)

This question remains; here is where you record the people attending the groups in the previous question.

## Regarding Question #5: Total number of persons from the congregation engaged in local, national and international mission/outreach

New description: Enter here the number of persons who participated on behalf of the congregation in ministries intended to transform people in your community, your region, and the world.

## Regarding the opt-out link in the email you receive

Please do not click this! We expect all churches to participate. If you click the link, it is a bit of a process to get you added back into the system.

Please contact Pearson with any other questions or concerns via email at: [apearson@nyac.com](mailto:apearson@nyac.com).

# Online Discussion Group Created for Treasurers

Ross Williams, treasurer and director of Administrative Services, has announced the creation of a Google Group for church treasurers within the New York Annual Conference.

## What is a Google Group?

A Google Group helps people connect, share information, access documents and communicate effectively over email and the Internet. After joining a group you can reply to a message that someone else has posted, or post a message or question of your own. You can access files and see all prior discussions sorted by topic. You can choose whether you want to read and post messages online or use your email to read and respond. You can also select the frequency of receiving e-mail updates and choose the option of receiving digest (combined) updates.

## Why should I want to be a part of it?

Well, the short answer has to do with not reinventing the wheel. The challenges faced by most Treasurers within the Conference are extremely similar. For example, questions about accounting software, tax exempt status, accountable reimbursements, audits requirements, apportionments, insurance, benefits costs, etc. Joining this group will provide access to potentially hundreds of other Treasurers within the Conference. Most likely one or more of them has already researched and solved the question you have or the problem you are facing. You will also

have the active participation and ear of the Conference Treasurer (me). So it's a great way to save time, get questions answered and develop relationships with other like-minded Methodists—the accountants among us. Who knows, maybe someday we'll even want to meet in person!

## Do I have to be a church treasurer to join?

No. If you have anything to do with the finances of your church you may find value in joining this group. While it has been specifically created for church treasurers, all members of the finance committee and other interested persons—including pastors—are invited to participate.

## How do I join?

If you already have a Google account, click on this link: <http://groups.google.com/group/nyac-treasurers> and choose "Sign in and apply for membership." For future visits you will choose "Sign in to Google Groups" to access.

If you do not already have a Google account, you can create one at: <https://accounts.google.com/Login>. At the top right, click on "Sign up for a new Google Account." Once you complete your registration and receive your ID/Password, go back to the paragraph above and follow the directions.

# Time for Brainstorming, Goal-Setting

## Continued from page 3

members on a regular basis, and you want to make sure you're not bombarding them with so much information that they tune you out.

While you can continually remind your congregation of the goals by publishing them in your bulletin or newsletter, consider communicating via storytelling. On a quarterly basis, share a story illustrating how your church is meeting a goal. For example, if your goal is to recruit and welcome more church members, have a member speak after a service about how they really connected with a recent visitor. If your goal is to create more opportunities for youth, have your youth minister relay a story from a recent trip on your blog. Most people will remember a compelling story more than facts and figures. Some churches have integrated "ministry moments" into their worship service.

Delivered by lay persons, these can be effective ways of communicating to the masses.

## Reach out to the community.

One of the most popular New Year's resolutions is to go back to church or attend church more regularly, so this is a great time to open your doors to the community. Set a specific time and day for an open house that includes both a service and a social gathering to show people what your church is all about. Have marketing materials available that people can take home. Tap members of your congregation to reach out to unfamiliar faces and take them on a personal tour. Also make sure your public web site, social media page, and Find-a-Church listing all have thorough information about your church—service times, ministries, programming—for interested newcomers.

# Recent Changes In Appointments

Rev. Jeannette Bassinger-Ishibegan serving as assistant to the bishop, effective January 1, replacing Rev. Dennis Winkleblack, who decided to "fully" retire after seven years in the position. Both Winkleblack and Bassinger-Ishii were among the class of retirees at our last session of annual conference.

Bassinger-Ishii most recently served as superintendent of the New York Connecticut District from 2004 to 2011.

Rev. James Moore, Catskill Hudson district superintendent and dean of the cabinet, made the following announcement on January 1:

Rev. Jin Choi, who has been serving Grace UMC in Putnam Valley, has resumed service as a Navy chaplain. Please hold Rev. Choi and his family in your prayers during this time of transition.

Pastor Jennifer Pick, who has been serving Rye and Armonk in the Metropolitan District, will begin a new appointment at Grace UMC, effective January 1. Please hold Jennifer and her husband in your prayers.

The people of the Rye UM Church also need prayers and support, as the church has closed effective December 31st. Appointment information regarding Armonk will be announced as soon as possible after the first of the year.

# "My Brother's Keeper" Resources Available

Churches interested in educating their congregations about a Christian response to hate crimes can now access a variety of materials on the NYAC web site. These resources were compiled as a result of the November 2010 symposium "My Brother's Keeper: People of Faith Confront Hate Crimes."

Resources available for download at <http://nyac.com/pages/detail/1802> include handouts on ways to counteract hate speech and bullying, teaching tolerance, and action steps to take in your community. There is also an "I'm anti violence and pro \_\_\_\_" slide show outreach tool.

The organizers of the symposium have compiled a video from the event and written a study guide. To order your study guide (\$5), please email Kristen Dunn at [kristen.dunn@comcast.net](mailto:kristen.dunn@comcast.net).

# Young Missionary: Go Ahead, Tell Me No!

BY BRINNA KOLITZ

US-2 Missionary

A few months ago I read a blog post from a fellow young adult missionary from the Class of 2011, Joy Prim, who is serving in Hong Kong as a mission intern. It inspired me to write a similar post in my own blog (<http://kolitzb.wordpress.com/>).

Over the course of applying to be United Methodist missionary, and while I have been here in Billings, Mont., people have asked me or have told me things that belittle my ministry or question if there really is a need. That is what inspired me to write this blog post in early December.

## **Try to tell me my work is NOT making a difference**

- I'll share stories of laughing with clients over the little things in life, for sometimes the first time in their life.
- I'll explain to you the sound of confidence in my client's voices when they realize they can do it themselves, for probably the first time.
- I'll tell you that I am helping families be happy, healthy families.
- I'll introduce you to some of my coworkers who have been in this work for over a decade, and still have the passion to continue.

## **Try to tell me there is NOT a need here in Billings, Mont.**

- I'll take you to spend any day down at the Billings Food Bank, Free Stores, and the shelters.
- I'll show you the numbers of children that are in foster care.
- I'll calculate the statistics of child and domestic abuse, chemical dependency, homelessness, and families living at or below the poverty line.
- I'll drive you around to look at the low-income housing and trailer parks that Billings' families cannot maintain, because they choose to feed their families just a bit.

## **Try to tell me I'm NOT in this with others**

- I'll take you to the office for a day to observe and meet my co-workers, and fellow volunteers, who all strive to help the families that we work with.
- I'll re-introduce you to Facebook, Skype, Twitter, and the fact that, yes, although I am 2100 miles from home, and live by myself, I am still totally connected to my home.
- I'll tell you about my church family back home that has supported me all



**Brinna Kolitz is a US-2 missionary serving as a specialist with the Family Support Network in Billings, Mont.**

my life, and now.

- I'll introduce you to 25 other Young Adult Missionaries (just from the class of 2011) that are serving all over the country and world. Yes they may be doing very different things than I am, but we are still in this together.

## **Try to tell me I'm NOT doing what's best for my future**

- I'll openly admit I'm crazy but remind you that as Christians we are called to follow God's call.
- I'll show you Isaiah 6:8, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"
- I'll be honest and say I have no idea what my future holds but I know that God has a plan for me, and this must have been part of it.
- I'll tell you that I wouldn't prefer to be anywhere else than right here, right now.

I invite you to read and catch up on my blog posts at <http://kolitzb.wordpress.com/>. And to

also read the blogs of my classmates that are linked on the right hand side of the site. They are all filled with inspiring heartfelt messages about these journeys that we are on.

If you feel so called to financially support me in my ministry as a US-2 Missionary, please go to [www.advancinghope.org](http://www.advancinghope.org), click on the box on the right hand side that says "Give now to The Advance of your choice." Type in 3021354 into the "Find project" field and click search, then click on my name. If you would like to mail a check instead, please make your check payable to ADVANCE GCFA. Write "Brinna Kolitz 3021354" on the memo line, and send to:

Advance GCFA, P.O. Box 9068, GPO, New York, NY 10087-9068

Peace,  
*Brinna Kolitz*

*Kolitz, who grew up in the New Milford UMC, was commissioned in August 2011 along with 25 other young adults who are serving as UM missionaries in the United States and overseas.*

## Support for the Kims

Rev. Eumin Kim and his wife, Prumeh, of the New York Annual Conference, are serving as UMC missionaries in Kazakhstan. You may support their work through the Global Ministries online system; Rev. Kim's Advance number is #3021370; Prumeh Lee Kim's is #3021369. Go to: <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/give/missionaries/> for more information.

# Prison Ministry Changes Lives, Brings Hope

Continued from page 1

receive God's forgiveness.

On every fourth Sunday, we conduct worship at Vernon C. Bain Center in the Bronx. There we minister to the men only.

Many of them have surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. It is an awesome sight to witness the miracles of God in their lives. The men—with the encouragement and Bible teachings from the Sunday services—have taken the initiative to conduct weekly Bible studies among themselves. They return on Sundays with questions about what they have studied.

During the Christmas season, we served more than 200 children in our annual toy drive. Thanks to Vanderveer Park UMC, The Women Advocate Ministry and The Tribune Society, Inc. of the Courts of New York.

## Women's Advocate Ministry

**(WAM):** We are also working with Rev. Annie Bovian, the executive director of WAM. In this collaboration, we are able to keep close contact with the incarcerated women that we serve at Rikers. We provide active outreach, crisis intervention, referral and supportive services to these women and their children. WAM works with the women to improve their quality of life in prison and their possibilities to integrate themselves back into society and avoid recidivism after release.

The office is located inside Salem UMC in Harlem; from there we are able to set up meetings with the released inmates from all five NYC boroughs and follow up on their progress.



**Rev. Delores Barrett, far right, is commissioned with five others in the first class of Vision Bearers in the NYAC.**

As a connectional ministry, we want to thank the churches who are supporting the prison ministry by donating books, Bibles and toys. We are grateful to Vanderveer Park, Lynbrook St. James, Fenimore and Springfield Garden, and for the assistance of Evangelist Evadney Murray and Pastor Rodriguez (Ray). The books compared contemporary life to the world of at-risk youth in the Bible, like David and Joseph. The books were "The Ben Carson Story" and "The Pact." The adolescents discovered ways to overcome obstacles and rise up to be examples to the world, as the characters in the Bible and the books did.

On Sunday December 25, we worshiped with the men at the Bain facility and what a joy it was

to hear their testimonies about God's goodness.

One of the inmates said, "When I was out in the bars drinking I was a talker, but now that God is talking to me I find myself learning to talk all over again. I am shy I can't speak; I know that this is God teaching me a different language so when I get back out in the streets I will be talking for God."

Another said, "I know that God brought me in here to save me because if I was still in the streets I would have died already. But God brought me in here to save me, and now that I have accepted Him in my life I found such joy in reading the Scriptures."

And a third said, "God had to strip me of all the material things that I had. I lost my home, cars, money, and it's the first time that I found such peace. I am not angry I am ready to live my life with God."

During the year, more than 40 men, women, and adolescents accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. Lives have been changed through Bible study. We take time to share the Word of God with them and experience the work of God, in not only the lives of these inmates, but also in our lives as we minister to them. We are proud of the prison ministry and its accomplishments.

This being the first year, I can truly say that I have accomplished some difficult tasks—yet God is in the midst, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6 "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." We will move forward in 2012 hoping to achieve greater heights with the goals that God has set before us.

*Rev. Barrett is a provisional elder in the NYAC and was among the first group of Vision Bearers commissioned at annual conference in June 2010.*

## Advent Wreath Lights Up Lawn

**Drivers along Route 32 in Highland Mills in December observed an unusual sight—a 7-foot high Advent wreath on the lawn of Highland Mills UMC. The wreath was created as a witness to the community, in the hopes that viewers would want to learn more about Advent. Church member Bill Doyle and a few helpers constructed the wreath from cardboard tubes, PVC pipe, purple, pink and white LED lights, and fresh greens donated by church members and local businesses. The dedication was held on the first Sunday of Advent, when the first purple**



**candle was illuminated. Plans are to store the candles and reuse them each year. A video of the dedication can be viewed at [www.highlandmillsumc.org](http://www.highlandmillsumc.org).**

# Summer Food Ministries Serve Children

Continued from page 1

ended its summer feeding program in 2010. Belle Church recognized a need to provide the children with food.

Collaborating with the USDA was not a feasible option during the summer, largely because of the regulations requiring the children to eat at a central location with staff present, said the Rev. Sandra Dixon. In Belle, most children live outside the city limits and do not have transportation into town.

## Revamp existing ministry

With the federal rules complicating providing hunger assistance, the community faced “three months of kids going hungry,” Dixon said, “and that just weighed heavily on our hearts.”

The solution was to continue the food bag ministry the church offers throughout the school year but to use a different format during the summer.

Belle school counselor Constance Smith helped church members create a system. They packed the bags with ready-to-eat items or food the children could prepare, just as they do during the school year. Then Smith delivered the bags to the children’s homes.

The Belle and Newburgh programs operate very differently yet both sprouted from recognizing a need in the community. Both pastors say their feeding initiatives are successful and growing.

Offering such a ministry is doable, McDonald said, adding that churches need to get the community and the school system involved.

“I think anybody can do it,” she continued. “It just takes one step at a time—being excited about the vision, getting the plan ready, getting other people involved and motivated.”

Nearly 75 percent of the children in the Newburgh Enlarged City School District qualify for free or reduced-price lunches, she continued. After the city went through the summer of 2009 with no organized feeding program, a few church members discussed the issue and were determined not to let the same thing happen again.

In Belle, high unemployment and underemployment plague the people, Dixon said, adding that sometimes the needs of hungry children are exacerbated by parents engaged in illegal activities.

Her community has problems similar to those in urban areas. “You see it a lot more



**Rev. Evelyn McDonald, pictured during a service at Grace UMC, says getting community and school support is critical when starting a feeding ministry for children.**

plainly when you know your neighbors’ names. Our hearts just bled when we knew what was going on. We had to find a way to feed them.”

## Expanding into the school year

Thurston United Methodist Church in tiny Thurston, Ohio, began a summer feeding program in 2010, after seeing the needs of children involved with its after-school program.

“Children in town come from low-income families,” said the Rev. Rebeka Maples. “We were worried about them in the summer. It grew out of knowing the needs in the community. People started seeing the needs and (developing) a passion for the kids.”

Church members purchase and cook the food at Thurston Church. One woman oversees the menus, ensuring healthy options for a balanced diet.

The program continued this fall, providing meals two days a week to adults and children who are not in school.

All of the pastors see their ministries as a clear fulfillment of Jesus’ command to feed the hungry.

## Serving where we are

“As Christians, this is our whole purpose,” Dixon said. “The program has allowed us to open our eyes and see the needs around us and begin looking at Christ

“The church exists to put forward Christ to the world, and if we’re not doing something beyond our walls, we’re no better than a country club,” she continued. “I wanted the church to be in ministry, to truly look beyond itself into the world around us.”

Maples said it is important for the church to do ministry in its own community and not neglect the needs of those who live next door.

“We need to be in mission to the world beyond this community, but, especially, I think we need to be serving right where we are,” Maples said. “The church begins where we are, not where we aren’t. If we can grow this, all things become possible. It’s what we’re called to do.”

Adding new ministries to a church does mean financial commitment. The pastors said the process has taught their churches to walk in faith and to trust God with their resources.

Dixon said when her church encountered a financial quandary in its feeding ministry, the members sought community help.

“(We) tuck our fear back and if God is in it, trust that he will provide,” she said. “We ask for donations from companies. Whenever things start to dry up a little bit, we ask. The best way to get help is to ask for it.”

Maples said the Thurston ministry receives funding from a variety of groups including the VFW, organizations in towns nearby and other churches in the surrounding community—as well as the congregation.

“People in the church have been really good about seeing the need and responding,” Maples said.

Ultimately, McDonald said, the feeding program is about much more than providing meals.

“You’re doing more than just handing out a lunch,” McDonald said. “You’re handing out love; you’re giving hope; you’re making lives better. . . with sandwiches and fruit and milk.”

*Emily Snell, a communications major at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., completed her internship at United Methodist Communications in December.*

# Marine Never Stops Serving—Even on Holiday

BY ALICE LUM

UMC of Richmond Hill

Lance Corporal Bill Naegele, who grew up in South Richmond Hill, came home for the holidays. But he didn't spend all his time with family and friends; on a couple of days in late December, Naegele could be found helping out at the food pantry of the United Methodist Church of Richmond Hill.

"He always goes where help is definitely needed," said his father, Robert Naegele, a regular volunteer at the pantry.

The younger Naegele, who was baptized at the church, carried in food supplies, helped pack hundreds of grocery bags, and then joined others to distribute the bags.

"Bill grew up as a Boy Scout. It's in his blood to serve God and country," said Herbert Brown, church historian and a retired scoutmaster. "I taught him the fundamentals. He is a smart young man."

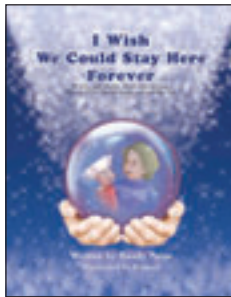
When he graduated from high school, Naegele readily signed up for the Marines. After he completed basic training, he was totally transformed. Even his mother did not recognize him in his Marine dress uniform.

Pastor Moonsook Kim couldn't be more delighted that this young man felt the need to help others. She offered a special prayer of protection for Naegele at the January 8 worship service.

Lloyd Edwards, co-director of the food pantry,

## Book to Aid Grieving Kids

A new book, "I Wish We Could Stay Here Forever," will help children who are grieving the loss of a loved one, according to author, Rev. Dr. Randy Paige. Paige, who is the pastor of Christ UMC in Port Jefferson



Station, said, "This children's story is born from personal experience as a Christian pastor who takes funerals seriously. When young children are present my heart goes out to them."

Paige, who also does marriage and family counseling, has crafted a story around a decades-old parable about experiencing the joy of life, facing death and trusting God.

The book was released in December and is available in both hardcover and soft cover form. It can be ordered from either of these web sites: <http://sbpra.com/RandyPaige/>, or [www.randypaige.com/store.htm](http://www.randypaige.com/store.htm).



PHOTO BY ERNIE SEARLE

**Marine Bill Naegele, center, joins other regular volunteers at the food pantry at the UMC of Richmond Hill.**

was pleased and honored to have Naegele come and help serve some of the community's neediest residents.

"We are truly blessed to have him here. Each

person is somebody. He's our local hero. Besides serving his country he serves here. We pray for his safety when he leaves for Afghanistan next year (in 2012)."

## Tech-Savvy Ways May Isolate Older Adults

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant on Older Adult Ministry

Sound bites! Who knew this expression would gain such wide usage? It speaks to the language of social media where many words are not even fully spelled out—brevity and the sense of rushing being deemed more important than taking the time to truly speak to one another. It speaks to a time where many communicate in one or two words.

Later!  
Gotta go!  
Call me!

It may be one approaching a milestone birthday who muses about such things. I'm not sure. But nonetheless I miss the days of phone calls. Texting is not as satisfying. I miss postcards and letters. E-mail (which I use daily) somehow feels less personal than a letter someone actually wrote and signed and which doesn't go to who knows how many other people.

In such musings, I think of all the older adults I know and love. With rare exception this is a strange environment, this environment of short, terse messaging. I hear them complain about how they miss the long hand-written letters, the personal phone calls.



One of them commented that she felt she was imposing when she asked the church she has belonged to for years to send the church newsletter and other information the "old way."

"It seems as if my church has forgotten me," she said. "I don't have access to a computer, nor do I know how to use one."

Another showed me, with great disdain, "This damn machine my daughter bought me." She says it will allow her to stay in touch more readily and save her the time of phoning or visiting. Do you know how that makes me feel?"

Our congregations are full of older people, many of whom do not feel at home in this new environment. Many adjust wonderfully to it. Others either cannot or will not. Either way is rife with the possibility of increased loneliness and the sense of having "lived too long."

Those of us who are involved with ministering to and with older adults do well to remember that, just as we try to stay relevant by adjusting to the new ways of a younger generation, so too, we need to remain relevant to our older population. As is probably always the case we need to minister in more than one world at a time.

In the spirit of sound bites and terse messaging: "Have a happy!"

# Liberian President Named United Methodist of Year

BY MARY JACOBS  
UM Reporter

For her work in peace-building and championing women's rights in Liberia—and in turn, inspiring women around the world—Liberian president and Nobel Peace Prize-winner Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is the Reporter's 2011 United Methodist of the Year.

"She is, in my view, an illustration of what God can do through the United Methodist Church, in terms of making a disciple of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," said Boston Area Bishop Peter D. Weaver.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became Africa's first democratically elected female president in 2005, and is widely credited with helping Liberia to emerge from a brutal civil war. Ms. Sirleaf was one of three women who received the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in December.

"We are celebrating her achievements and consider it an achievement of the entire church and the Liberian people," said the Rev. Jerry Kulah, superintendent of the Monrovia district in Liberia.

Raised in the United Methodist faith and educated at a UM-affiliated high school, Ms. Sirleaf is an active member of First United Methodist in Monrovia, Liberia. Many who have met her say her faith deeply informs her leadership.

"She has a sense that her life and her talent ought to be given to trying to make this world look a little like the kingdom of heaven," Bishop Weaver said.

Sirleaf was born in Monrovia, the granddaughter of a Liberian chief. In her autobiography, *This Child Shall Be Great* (2009), Ms. Sirleaf relates a family story about an old man who visited shortly after her birth, took one look at the infant and proclaimed, "This child shall be great. This child is going to lead."

For years, Sirleaf wrote, the comment seemed like a cruel joke. Married at age 17, later the mother of four sons, she felt trapped in an abusive marriage and struggled to pursue her education.

However, Sirleaf was able to eventually complete her education. She attended high school at the United Methodist-affiliated College of West Africa in Monrovia, and later studied at Madison Business College in Wisconsin, the University of Colorado and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Her entry in politics came in 1972, when she delivered a now-famous commencement address at her high school alma



UMNS FILE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won re-election this year as president of Liberia, and also shared in the Nobel Peace Prize. A faithful United Methodist, she's seen here speaking to the 2008 General Conference in Texas.**

mater, sharply criticizing the government.

Sirleaf worked for the World Bank in Washington, D.C., then served as head of the African Regional Office of Citibank in Nairobi. In the mid-1980s, she returned to Liberia and was imprisoned for her criticism of the regime under Samuel Doe. With the outbreak of the First Liberian Civil War in 1989, Sirleaf initially supported Charles Taylor's rebellion against Doe, but later opposed him and had to leave Liberia. In the early 1990s, she led the United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa. In 2005, she won the election, and this past October, she was re-elected.

Her status as Liberia's president sets "an important precedent. . . . Not only has it inspired women, they like what her election says about the inclusiveness of politics in Africa," said Ambassador Charles Stiith, former ambassador to Tanzania and former pastor of Union United Methodist in Boston. He has met Sirleaf and remembers her as a "woman of great bearing and presence."

Sirleaf shared the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize with Leymah Gbowee, her Liberian compatriot, and Tawakkol Karman of Yemen. The peace prize committee recognized the three women for championing women's rights in regions where oppression is common and for empowering women to promote peace.

On accepting her Nobel in December, Sirleaf dedicated it to the women of Africa, particularly the Liberians.

## Getting Published In The Vision

How is your congregation or district responding to the UMC's Call to Action Initiative? Please let us know! The Vision welcomes stories and photos about events across the conference, and in individual churches. We also invite commentaries and reflections on topical and newsworthy topics. The deadlines for the online newsletter are usually the first Friday of the month. Deadlines in 2012 are listed below:

**February 3**

**March 2**

**April 6**

**May 4**

**June 1**

**July 6**

**August 3**

**August 31**

**October 5**

**November 2**

**November 30**

Photos should be sent as email attachments; all submissions should be sent to [vision@nyac.com](mailto:vision@nyac.com).

## JOB OPENINGS

### Administrative Assistant

Drew United Methodist Church in Carmel, N.Y., is seeking a part-time administrative assistant for 20 hours/four days a week. The ideal candidate needs to be a self-starter able to work independently, as well as with leadership in the church.

Knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite and Windows Vista required. Accounts payable and accounts receivable knowledge a plus.

Requires a high school diploma with one to three years experience in administrative support. Salary is commensurate with experience. Please send resume and salary requirement to [drewumc@verizon.net](mailto:drewumc@verizon.net), or call 845-729-0857.

### Children & Youth Coordinator

Stony Brook Community Church seeks a coordinator who is grounded in the Christian faith, open-minded, and experienced with children and youth. Ten hours weekly including Sundays; position available immediately.

Please send letters of interest and resumes to: [Elizabeth.braddon@gmail.com](mailto:Elizabeth.braddon@gmail.com), or via mail to: 216 Christian Ave., Stony Brook NY 11790, Attn: Rev. Elizabeth Braddon.

# 2 Big Disputes Ahead at General Conference

BY HEATHER HAHN

A UMNS Report

Two proposals hover near the top of the controversy list as The United Methodist Church approaches this spring's General Conference.

The first would restructure the denomination, including consolidating nine of the church's 13 general agencies under a 15-member board.

The second would end job guarantees for ordained elders in good standing.

The 2012 General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking body, will have final say on the proposed changes when it meets April 24-May 4 in Tampa, Fla. However, the proposals already are drawing scrutiny from United Methodist groups across the theological spectrum, and those groups will be out in force at General Conference to advocate their points of view.

Both proposals aim to address four decades of declining United Methodist membership in the United States. Legislation to restructure the denomination originated with the Call to Action process. The Study of Ministry Commission drafted the legislation to alter "security of appointment" for elders, a move endorsed by Call to Action leaders.

"I don't think there is any question that the restructuring proposals and the entire ministry report, of which security of appointment is one piece, will be some of the primary places of debate," said Rev. Robert J. Williams, the chief executive at the UM Commission on Archives and History.

Almost everyone agrees the denomination needs to change. Where views differ is how best to go about it.

In general, leaders of the denomination's unofficial progressive groups fear the recommended restructuring will lessen the church's commitment to ethnic diversity and minimize programs that foster church growth, particularly among people of color.

The recommended restructuring "isn't United Methodist, and it isn't Wesleyan," said Donald L. Hayashi, who worked with the Methodist Federation for Social Action, a denomination-wide progressive caucus, in drafting an alternative reorganization that has been submitted to General Conference. Reconciling Ministries Network, another progressive caucus, also supports the alternative plan.

Meanwhile, leaders of unofficial evangelical groups see the restructuring as a cost-saving measure that will put more focus on local congregations. "We believe that a lot of the



proposals are moving us in the right direction," said Rev. Thomas Lambrecht, vice president and general manager of denomination-wide evangelical caucus Good News.

Although often on opposing sides, some progressives and evangelicals share misgivings about legislation to eliminate "security of appointment" for elders in good standing. In the UMC, bishops and their cabinets are responsible for appointing clergy to congregations and other ministries.

## Reorganization

The two proposals come after a number of studies over the past four years showing that the denomination's status quo is unsustainable.

While The United Methodist Church is growing worldwide, particularly in Africa and the Philippines, the U.S. membership has declined by 29 percent since 1968, going from 10.7 million members to fewer than 8 million. The U.S. membership still provides most of the denomination's financial support.

The initial legislation to restructure the denomination's agencies came out of the multiyear Call to Action process, initiated by the Council of Bishops and Connectional Table to "reorder the life of the church."

The proposed agency—the United Methodist Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry—would combine the functions of nine general agencies: the Board of Discipleship; Board of Higher Education and Ministry; Board of Global Ministries; Board of Church and Society; Commission on Religion and Race; Commission on the Status and Role of Women; Commission on Archives and History; Council on Finance and Administration and United Methodist Communications, which operates United Methodist News Service. The work would be organized into offices of congregational vitality, leadership excellence, missional engagement, justice and reconciliation, and shared services.

The hope is that the consolidation will eliminate walls of separation, competition for responsibilities and redundant activities among the agencies, said Illinois Area Bishop

Gregory V. Palmer, a leader in the Call to Action process. A "more nimble, cost-effective and focused" agency structure would in turn help annual (regional) conferences foster more vital congregations, he said.

However, Hayashi—who is also president of the National Federation of Asian American United Methodists—said the proposed reduction of agency governing boards from more than 400 people to 15 would "effectively eliminate racial/ethnic leaders on the agency boards," he said.

He pointed out that that ethnic minorities, particularly Latinos, account for the greatest population growth in the United States. "They are younger and more family-oriented," he said. "This offers the greatest opportunity for church growth, but they don't offer high income. Will they be a priority?"

Evangelicals take a different view.

Reducing the size of boards and agencies can help local congregations by reducing what they pay to support the general church, said Patricia Miller, executive director of the Confessing Movement Within the United Methodist Church, an evangelical caucus.

## Point of agreement

Progressives and evangelicals do share some concerns about the restructuring. Leaders of both Good News and Methodist Federation for Social Action criticized the Call to Action plan for not offering enough representation to church members in the central conferences—church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.

In the proposed legislation, the board of the newly created United Methodist Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry would be accountable to a 45-member advisory board called the General Council for Strategy and Oversight. This council would replace the 60-member Connectional Table, which coordinates the denomination's mission, ministries and resources.

The legislation designates that the 45-member council board should include one member from each of the seven central conferences. The board's 41 voting members also will include five bishops, five members the denomination's ethnic caucuses, three representatives from the Advisory Committee on Ministries with Young People and 21 members elected from jurisdictions in proportion to their jurisdictions' membership.

## Security of appointment

Methodist Federation for Social Action

Continued on page 11

# 2 Big Disputes Ahead at General Conference

Continued from page 10

and Good News also join together in panning proposed legislation to eliminate “security of appointment”—which is also known as guaranteed appointment—for ordained elders.

The Study of Ministry Commission, in its report, said the practice is not financially sustainable and “limits the ability of the church to respond to the primacy of missional needs.” An earlier report estimated there are 784 more U.S. clergy than positions needed in the church.

The commission has submitted legislation that would allow bishops and cabinets to give an elder in good standing a less than full-time appointment. The legislation also would permit bishops and their cabinets, with the approval of their boards of ordained ministry and annual (regional) conference’s executive session, to put elders on unpaid transitional leave for up to 24 months. Clergy on transitional leave would be able to participate in their conference health program through their own contributions.

Lambrecht said he fears the current legislation offers too few protections for clergy.

“At Good News, over the years we’ve become aware of numerous

stories of pastors who are either arbitrarily denied an appointment or appointed to a much lower position simply because the bishop or (district) superintendent didn’t like their theology,” he said.

Clunn voiced a slightly different concern.

“For us, the big question has been: ‘Why do we give more power to bishops in terms of appointment of clergy, when they are not using the power they have now?’” he said. “If there are clergy who are ineffective now, they have the right and responsibility to take that to the (conference) board of ordained ministry to work on to either help that clergyperson become more effective or to help them find a new vocation.”

For the full version of this report, go to this shortened link, <http://bit.ly/xtV80t>.

## Board Screens Out Private-Prison Stocks

The UMC’s Board of Pension and Health Benefits announced Jan. 3 its decision to prohibit investments in companies that derive more than 10 percent of their revenue from the management and operation of prison facilities.

“It came down to that profiting from the incarceration of others was just not consistent with our view of what the (denomination’s) Social Principles ask for,” said David Zellner, the board’s chief investment officer.

The agency has the authority to make investment decisions.

The week after Christmas, the board sold about \$1 million in stock in two companies that fell under the new screen—Corrections Corporation of America, more commonly called CCA, and the GEO Group.

With almost \$17 billion in assets, the United Methodist program is the largest church pension fund—and 80th largest pension fund—in the United States. Some 74,000 clergy and lay personnel participate in the denomination’s pension and benefits programs.

One of those participants is the Rev. V. H. “Sonnye” Dixon, lead pastor of Hobson UMC in Nashville, who applauded the decision. He was an observer at a Nov. 14 demonstration at the CCA headquarters in Nashville.

“You want your investment in the pension fund to be placed with companies that are doing well, but you don’t want them putting money in companies that are doing well at the expense of the dignity of other people,” he said.

Incarceration is necessary at times, he acknowledged. However, Dixon sees private prison companies as more interested in pursuing a profit than promoting possible rehabilitation and re-entry.

“It’s just something that I don’t think we as The United Methodist Church should be participating in in any kind of way,” he said.

The board’s decision comes after the United Methodist Interagency Task Force on Immigration first raised concerns about private, for-profit prisons, which governments around the globe increasingly use to detain unauthorized immigrants.



Continued from page 2

### 4/24–5/4: General Conference 2012

“Making Disciples of Jesus Christ to Transform the World” is the theme for the quadrennial gathering of the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church, to be held at the Tampa Convention Center. The 1000-member assembly will consider revisions to church law, as well as adopt resolutions on current moral, social, public policy and economic issues. For additional information, go to: <http://nyac.com/events/detail/3578>, or [www.gc2012.umc.org](http://www.gc2012.umc.org). See related story on Page 10.

### 6/6–9: Annual Conference

The 213th gathering of clergy and laity, Hofstra University, Hempstead, N.Y.

### 7/15–20: UMC Secretaries Institute

The General Council on Finance and Administration sponsors an annual certification institute that provides advanced professional training and enrichment for United Methodist church secretaries. A participant who completes the program and meets the requirements set forth by GCFA is eligible to apply for certification as a Professional United Methodist Church Secretary. The institute is in Nashville. Class size is limited to 30; registrations will be honored in the order in which they are received. For details, go to: <http://www.gbgm-umc.org/paumcs/certification.html>.

### 7/18–20: Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference

Will be held in Charleston, W.Va. For additional details, go to: <http://www.nejumc.org/>.