

"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

November 19, 2010



PHOTO BY BARBARA EASTMAN

Wearing a cap from the Boston Marathon, Rev. John Capen crosses the Connecticut River via the Founders Bridge during the ING Hartford Marathon on October 9.

Catch Him—If You Can!

Rev. John Capen is a hard man to keep up with. In the past month alone, he's completed two full marathons—New York and Hartford—in addition to logging some of the 2,000 miles he covers annually on daily jaunts around his home. Those statistics are impressive enough, but there's more. Since Capen ran his first marathon in 1981, he has made the 26.2-mile trek 63 times including 11 times

in Hartford, 23 times in New York City, and 24 times in Boston. His fastest time in Boston was 4:5:00 in 1996; and his best Hartford finish came last year, 5:33:00.

Capen, 73, retired in 2008 but still serves a two-point charge in the Catskill community of Athens, N.Y.—High Hill UMC and Federated Church of Athens. He puts in between five and seven miles most days of the week. Since

Continued on page 8

Dialogue, Action On Hate Crimes An Urgent Need

BY REV. KRISTEN DUNN

The Christian Century magazine reported recently on the aftermath of the razing by arsonists of Macedonia Church of God in Christ in Springfield, Mass., hours after President Obama's election as the nation's first black president. The arsonists admitted to harboring hatred for blacks and Hispanics and said they set fire to the church to denounce Obama's election. Volunteers from Christian and Jewish communities from as far away as California came to Massachusetts to help rebuild the church. Bishop Bryant Robinson, leader of the predominantly black Macedonia church, said that a small miracle was born from the ashes.

On September 22, Tyler Clementi committed suicide by jumping from the George Washington Bridge after his roommate secretly filmed Tyler in intimate moments and then posted the films on the Internet. Tyler was one of six gay young people whose lives were cut tragically short by what those

Continued on page 4

SAVE THE DATE

United Methodist Student Day

November 28: One of the Special Sundays of the church year; the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry directs 90 percent of the offerings into scholarships and loans to UM students. Ten percent is returned to the annual conferences for merit scholarships. For more information, select the "Special Sundays" button on the web site, <http://www.umcsgiving.org/>

Christmas in Gaylordsville

December 3–4: Annual Holiday Bazaar at Gaylordsville (Conn.) UMC, 7 to 9 p.m., Friday, and 9 to 3 p.m., Saturday. Handmade quilted items, jewelry, Vermont cheese and pickles, soup and bread lunch, a children's craft room, photos with Santa, cookie walk, and silent auction. A life-size Neapolitan Nativity will be on display on Gaylord Road.

Consumer-Oriented Preaching

December 7: Explore how to preach in a consumer-driven society at this 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. workshop led by Rev. Dr. Albert Hahn. Register by Nov. 30 for \$25; \$35, after that date.

Write a check to Talithacum Ministry and mail it to Smithtown UMC along with your name, church, and email address, or call 631-265-6945 for credit card payments. Smithtown UMC, 230 Middle Country Rd., Smithtown, N.Y. 11787.

Ignite Early Registration

December 31: Register at www.umyouth.com by this date for the bargain price of \$159 for the "Ignite" youth weekend for all teenagers in the NYAC. Then mark your calendars for January 21–23, 2011, at Taconic Retreat Center, Poughkeepsie.

NY-CT Lay Speaking Course

January–March: Basic Lay Speaking Course prepares laity to provide a ministry of caring, leadership, and communicating God's word. Seven

Saturdays: 8 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., January 8; and 8:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., January 22; February 5, 18; March 5, 18 and 26. Jesse Lee Memorial UMC, 207 Main St., Ridgefield, Conn., 06877. For details, go to <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/3060>

LI West Lay Speaking Courses



January–April: Long Island West will offer youth, beginner, certified and advanced classes on January 15, February 5 and 19, March 5 and 19, and April 2 at two locations:

- UMC of Floral Park, 35 Verbena Ave., Floral Park, NY 11001
- Union UMC, 121 New York Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11216

Closing worship and fellowship will be celebrated on April 16 at Floral Park. For additional information, go to: <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/3223>.

Permaculture Design Course

January–May 2011: Learn about living practices and land use that are in tune with nature and good stewardship at Epworth Camp and Retreat Center, High Falls, N.Y. Weekend/holiday dates in January, February, March, April and May. Kay Cafasso and Connor Stedman will lead the course with guest teachers. If interested, please contact Joan Ewing, Green Phoenix Permaculture, at mamajoane@yahoo.com, or 845-687-7646.

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

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Bishops' Letter Calls for End to Racism

(UMNS) United Methodist bishops have called on Christians to overcome racism and other sources of animosity to recognize the sacredness of every human being.

“As people of faith, we are charged to build the beloved community because Christ has broken down the dividing walls and ended the hostilities between us,” says a pastoral letter approved at the Nov. 2–6 Council of Bishops meeting in Panama city, Panama. “Yet, we continue to build walls in the church and in the world which separate us and cause our hearts to grieve.”

On the meeting’s final day, more than 80 active and retired bishops also agreed to a planned campaign for humane immigration reform in 2011.

The New Year’s Resolution Campaign 2011 calls on Christians to contact U.S. Congress members and pray daily for reform that “reunifies families and provides a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants.” The campaign is sponsored by the U.S. Immigration Campaign of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition with support from the National Council of the Churches and the United Methodist Board of Church and Society.

The bishops said they hope to



UMNS 2008 FILE PHOTO

Wisconsin Area Bishop Linda Lee

encourage civil discourse with their statement on racism.

Wisconsin Area Bishop Linda Lee, a member of the council’s Task Force on Racism, said it was urgent that the Council of Bishops call for greater compassion in human relations because of intensifying rhetoric and violence against racial, ethnic and religious minorities around the globe.

“At this moment in history in the U.S. and elsewhere, our silence is a statement,” she said. “So if we don’t make a statement in writing, it could be seen as complicit with what is happening. ... We will have lost an opportunity to speak to our churches at a moment when

they need to have an idea what we believe.”

The far-reaching statement dealt with sources of animosity in the various regions of the world where United Methodists worship.

- In the Philippines, the statement calls for “breaking down the barriers between mainline society and tribal peoples,” with equal rights in land possession and free education for all.
- In Africa, the statement condemns the legacy of colonialism.
- In Europe, racism is a growing problem “with political parties openly working against minority, ethnic and religious communities,” the document says.
- In the United States, the document cites a “rapid escalation of violence related to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religious preference.”

The statement also denounced the rise of terrorism and “the religious persecution of various faith communities, including Christians.”

See Pages 12 and 13 for other stories from the Council of Bishops’ meeting, and on recent Judicial Council rulings.

Dialogue, Action On Hate Crimes An Urgent Need

Continued from page 1

grieving their deaths have called “bullycides.”

The video game, “Border Patrol,” portrays 88 Latino men, women and children running swiftly across a small blue strip of water under the image of a gun’s telescope. The players shoot at them as they try to “cross the border” and earn high points if they successfully hit pregnant women with children.

In Patchogue, N.Y., in 2008, Ecuadoran immigrant Marcelo Lucero was surrounded and attacked by seven white teenagers in a parking lot of the Patchogue train station shortly before midnight. The teenager who led the attacks had a history of racially motivated violence, and was convicted of manslaughter as a hate crime.

And last month in the Bronx, two teenage boys and a 30-year-old man were abducted and tortured because they were suspected of being gay. This is a long list of events from which our spirits recoil. What do they have in common? They are all violent; they all took place here in the United States. And in each circumstance, a human being was attacked not for hitting someone or for stealing or lying or defrauding—not for anything they did wrong—but simply because of whom they are. In each of these tragic events, hatred drove people to attack.

Where does it come from, this hatred? Where do young people—

for sadly all the attackers in these events were young—learn to hate? And what does God call us to do—or stop doing—to protect our neighbors, our brothers and sisters, ourselves from these attacks?

We don’t need to dig very deep in the teachings of Jesus to find what he did and said about hatred based on identity. Who is our neighbor? Not just the one who sits next to us in the pew or who shops at the same market or who lives on the same street, but everyone who suffers, and everyone who shows us love and compassion when we suffer. Who should we shower with every good thing? Not just the children of our own communities; not just those who look or speak or worship like us, but the modern-day Syro-Phoenicians, Samaritans, and lepers.

And it is not just in our prayers and our thoughts that we are called by Jesus to show love and compassion to those who are different. Actions, not just words—give a cup of water, feed my sheep, don’t cast the stone. Jesus came not as an idea or a spirit or a theory, but as a living, breathing man, one of us. In his life we learned how precious in God’s sight we each are, breathing and laughing and crying and sweating and alive in these bodies.

So how grieved and outraged are we, those of us who worship God-made-flesh, when Marcelo Lucero or a black church

community or young gay teens are attacked just for living and breathing and being who they are? And what must our Christian response be?

At Annual Conference this year, we all experienced the power of these questions in the debate about the hate crimes resolution that was brought before the body. Of course everyone in that conversation and debate at conference recognized that hate crimes are wrong. But the question that raised the energy and passion in the room was: As Christians is there some way in which we are helping to cause these crimes?

There are many who would say yes, and many who would say no. What we know for sure is that what we do matters. And with these types of crimes threatening the lives and souls of so many young people—both the victims and the perpetrators—we cannot sit by and do nothing.

On November 20, “My Brother’s Keeper” symposium will be held at Grace UMC, 125 W104th St, Manhattan. The symposium will lift up the common humanity and vulnerability of those targeted by hate crimes, and help to formulate our Christian response. Sponsored by the conference’s Commission on Religion and Race, Board of Church and Society, Immigration Task Force, and Commission on the Status and Role of Women; Methodists for Social Action; and Methodists in New Directions.

Creating Community Outside Church Walls

NEW CHURCH START:

Bread for The Journey,
Sullivan County, N.Y.

Editor's Note: In June, six "vision bearers" were charged to create new communities of faith in various places across the conference. Below, and on the next page, are the first of a series of sporadic reports from two of those vision bearers, Susan Woodworth and Paul Moon. Reports from the four other projects will be offered in the coming months. The conference's goal is to start 30 new churches in the next three years. The NYAC formed its Vision Bearer Task Force to coordinate efforts to start new churches and revitalize existing ones in conjunction with the General Board of Discipleship through their Path 1 initiative. Path 1 is a denominational movement focused on re-evangelizing the United States by creating a national strategy to train and equip church planters to reach more people, more young people, and more diverse people for Christ by creating new places for new people. In addition, existing congregations that are ready to be renewed



Local bluegrass musicians, Little Sparrow Band, (at top left) performed during the OctoberFEAST outdoor gathering



LEFT: A firepit added warmth to the Sullivan County event, and a place to roast marshmallows. RIGHT: Free distribution of bread is part of the new ministry.



into vital, vibrant churches will be energized with a passion for living out the Good News.

By Susan Woodward NYAC Vision Bearer

A bright, breezy October afternoon at the historic Old Stone House in Hasbrouck, N.Y., was a fitting setting for "OctoberFEAST," a community meal, in rural Sullivan County. The event was sponsored by Bread for the

Journey, an outreach ministry working to create community and gatherings beyond the walls of local churches. Fifty folks of all ages came together to enjoy a few hours of mellow bluegrass music by the Little Sparrow Band around a welcoming campfire, and delicious homemade soups, chili and breads, along with bread from Bread Alone Bakery.

The October 10 gathering was the first fundraiser for

Continued on page 7



ABOVE: The BrokenBuilders UMC orchestra plays at the church's first anniversary celebration. RIGHT: Rev. Paul Moon baptizes a new member.



Reaching Out to Urban, Multicultural Young Adults

NEW CHURCH START:
BrokenBuilders UMC,
Manhattan

BY REV. PAUL MOON
Senior Pastor,
BrokenBuilders UMC

To be honest, I did not plant the BrokenBuilders UMC with “urban ministry” in mind, although the sure call to church planting I received through prayer did allow me to start this church without hesitation.

As a parent with two U.S.-born daughters, I have experienced the difficulties of raising children in this immigrant society. So I rented a church building in Long Island, New York, and began to hold services for the parents of teenagers. The first thing we

did was to open a parenting class specifically for those with teenagers. We advertised in the newspaper, and made pamphlets.

Much to our surprise, scores of people began to fill our classroom—and from there, our weekday ministry took off. It was such an exciting time. Within months, the parenting classrooms were bursting with people, and I decided to inaugurate the church. But strangely, the Sunday worship service did not retain even one faithful member.

I could not find a parent who wanted to commit to being a part of a church plant. As a result, only three people gathered for Sunday services for the entire first year. I often found myself preaching to empty pews. But in the midst of all this, a graduate student at a

music college began to attend our service, and slowly started to bring her friends along as well. I picked them up in my car in Manhattan and drove them to our Long Island church. When the number of passengers outnumbered the five seats in my car, we were no longer able to keep our church in Long Island and relocated to Manhattan.

It probably would've been easier to squeeze a camel through the eye of a needle than to find and rent a building with our limited financial ability. Almost every day we walked about Manhattan in search of a place where we can settle. We had to break camp and resettle four times before finding our current host, The UMC of The Village. Each move kept us on edge, but I can testify to the

Continued on page 7

Creating Community Outside Church Walls

Continued from page 5

Bread for the Journey. Proceeds were shared with the Old Stone House to support their work as a community art gallery.

Susan Woodworth was deployed as a “vision bearer” by Bishop Jeremiah J. Park to serve in developing this new ministry in northeastern Sullivan County, New York. Woodworth is a candidate for licensed local pastor in the conference. She officially began work on July 1 in response to the denomination’s focus on creating new places for new people. She is working to reach out to people who have not been comfortable in the settings of the traditional church, but who are interested in connection and fellowship. Bread for the Journey is working

to build relationships through opportunities for fellowship, shared meals, hope, and spiritual care.

Upcoming events include vespers, or evening prayers, an event with singing, stories, prayers, and refreshments. Vespers will be held monthly in private homes. The plan is to move on to larger more visible gatherings quarterly leading up to weekly meetings/meals for Lent 2011.

A special feature of this outreach ministry is the free distribution of bread. Bread Alone Bakery in Boiceville is donating bread left at the end of a business day; the baked goods are then distributed throughout the Grahamsville, Neversink and Loch Sheldrake communities.

“I am delighted that our New York Annual Conference is affirming such creative ministry efforts,” Woodworth said. She has received support from the nearby Grahamsville and Sundown churches through financial contributions, and their presence. Woodward’s husband, Rev. Robert Kersten, serves the two churches as pastor. She also noted, “Community members without formal church affiliation have also become involved, and are excited about putting faith into action in new ways.”

For more information on Bread for the Journey, please contact Woodward at 845-985-2283, or check out the Bread for the Journey Outreach Ministry page on Facebook.

Reaching Out to Urban, Multicultural Young Adults

Continued from page 6

prevenient grace of God that was always with us. Only the grace of God can explain the path that unfolded before our eyes. God has a compassionate heart toward these young adults who live out their life in the 21st century with the prevailing postmodern conditions.

BrokenBuilders UMC, the church that had been unable to save a single soul in Long Island in one year, was able to baptize 30 new believers in the same time frame. By the time we celebrated our first anniversary on November 29, 2009, the BrokenBuilders UMC had developed into a congregation

of 60 baptized members, serving a community of a 120 people. A 39-year-old is the eldest member of the congregation. I can feel a chill run down my spine when I watch one of the members, who was born in 1991, lead us in praise. We have now grown to about 90 baptized members.

Do you know how many people move out and how many new members move into congregational life every year? Almost 50 people in this small congregation have come and gone because they’ve completed an educational degree or relocated to a new job location. But we’re still baptizing new young adults and

growing. It is God’s grace!

This is the new mission field of the 21st century. Perhaps, it is an even harder-to-reach and harder-to-approach mission field than the Amazon rainforest or the African jungle. But we’re blessed to send forth new young Christians—who desire to follow our Lord Jesus in a lifelong journey—into our 21st century world. It is an awesome privilege to be a part of this ministry.

My personal prayer is to establish a community center in Manhattan for these multicultural young generations, where their faith-life stories can emerge in God’s grace.

Race Raises \$33,620

Saturday, Oct. 9 was a beautiful day for a run in the park in Hartford—especially since \$33,620 was raised for the Bishop's Partners in Mission Fund. The NYAC's race team stood out in their yellow t-shirts despite the more than 13,000 runners in attendance.

Bishop Jeremiah J. Park competed in the 5K event along with Ken Kieffer, Connecticut district superintendent, his wife Karen Kieffer, and daughter Olivea; Kun Sam Cho, Fairfield Grace UMC; Terry Medlin, Fairfield Grace UMC; Sam Rosenfeld, NYAC controller; Sung Mo Song, Hartford Korean UMC; along with other friends and family. The bishop posted a time of 31:58 in the race. Bryan Hooper, UMC of Hartford, took on the half marathon, while John Capen, and Jane Walsh of New Milford UMC did the full 26.2 miles. It was Capen's 62nd marathon. Walsh ran for her sister Stacey Huntley to raise money for breast cancer research.

Thanks to all for your generous contributions, and to those who ran in support of the cause!

For additional photos, go to: <http://nyac.com/galleries/slideshow/52>.



PHOTOS BY BARBARA EASTMAN

Bishop Park poses for a post-race photo with members of the NYAC team including Rev. Kun Sam Cho, far right, and Sam Rosenfeld, next to Park.



Connecticut District Superintendent Ken Kieffer runs alongside his daughter, Olivea, in the 5K event.

Catch Him—If You Can!

Continued from page 1
Sundays are a “work day” for the pastor, he substitutes a walk to the corner for coffee—a 2.5-mile roundtrip. Many of his miles are spent praying, meditating, and “just listening for God.”

Capen began running in 1975, and when he ran his first marathon in Massachusetts in 1981, only his wife, Beatrice, was waiting for him at the finish line because

the course was closed after five hours.

During the Hartford race on October 9, Capen was battling heel spurs and plantar fasciitis—an inflammation of the fibrous band of connective tissue that runs from the heel to the toes. That may have slowed him down, but it didn't stop him. Capen again completed the race after the finish

Continued on page 9



LEFT: Rev. Bryan Hooper and Baylah Tessier-Sherman await the start of the race. Hooper's church in Hartford hosted the pre-race pasta party. RIGHT: The NYAC yellow shirts were easy to spot along the course. Bishop Park finished the 5K in 31:58.

Catch Him—If You Can!

Continued from page 8

line was closed, but thanks to a dedicated volunteer, he and four others at the back of the pack still received their completion medals.

According to Capen, his Hartford time was 7:29:25. In the NYC race on November 7, he bested that time by about 20 minutes, finishing in 7:09:20. His advice to others: “Don’t give up. Set a goal and keep going. You don’t have to be fast.”

The night before the race, Capen had the opportunity to meet and talk with Christopher McDougall, who wrote the 2009 bestselling book *Born to Run*. The book details the barefoot running techniques of the reclusive Tarahumara Indians in the Copper Canyons of northern Mexico, who run long distances without the injuries typically found in runners wearing today’s high-tech shoes.

Capen admitted that he has read the book twice and has some experience in barefoot running. The first barefoot run came about by accident;



Rev. John Capen checks his time after crossing the finish line; he completed the race in 7:29:25.

he had forgotten his shoes. He said it was an excruciating five-mile journey along a road that was freshly paved with crushed granite. He later competed in a 10K race sans shoes.

Although he’ll be taking a hiatus from competition for the winter, Capen plans to be back in Boston on April 18, 2011. He’ll run the race as a “bandit”—competing without a

number.

A strong supporter of the Virgin HealthMiles activity program and challenges, Capen has been a cheerleader for his clergy colleagues in the last three challenges, urging them on to get in all the pedometer steps and bonuses possible. He has always come out in the top of the results. The Hartford race occurred in the middle of the latest challenge, and, for the record, Capen’s pedometer recorded 61,060 steps in just that one day. The following day, he went out and added another 12,000 steps to his challenge tally.

Capen says running is “his health thing.” He doesn’t run for speed, but figures that the exercise and the conversations he has with God along the way will add to his longevity. “I figure that someday I’ll come in first because I will have outlived all the competition in my age group,” he said with a laugh.

This story was reported by Barbara Eastman and Joanne Utley, and written by Utley.

BRIEFS

Clergy & Spouse Tax Seminars

Seminars will be offered from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the following locations:

January 7: Learning Center, Conference Center, White Plains, N.Y.

January 14: Hicksville UMC, Hicksville, N.Y.

January 18: Walden UMC, Walden, N.Y.

January 19: Red Hook UMC, Red Hook, N.Y.

January 21: First UMC, Jamaica, Queens

New Retreat at Camp Olmsted

January 15–17: “How Does Your Garden Grow?” will use the garden as a metaphor for spiritual life. This weekend retreat, led by Sheila Peiffer, will encompass many tools to foster new spiritual growth and get your spiritual garden blooming, despite the weather. For more information, call the Olmsted Center at 845-534-7900, or visit the web site at www.campolmsted.org.



ABOVE: Amid the work, there was time for fun, fellowship and a little jump rope. **RIGHT:** VIM team members often found themselves surrounded by the children of the community.



VIM Team Coping With Haiti Challenges

BY REV. WESLEY DANIEL

Bethany UMC, Brooklyn

The commitment of solidarity, presence and practical support from the New York Annual Conference to the people of Haiti following the January 12 earthquake continued with the work of a fourth Emergency Response/Volunteers in Mission team in October. Previous teams traveled to help in the reconstruction of the Caribbean nation in June, July and August.

Three of the four teams worked in the Petite Goave area, reconstructing a church building, one of several damaged by the quake. The July team—that included two doctors—was able to work at the church-run medical clinic at D'Olivier.

Team three went to a site at Milye to work on a perimeter wall securing the church premises. We



Coming together for worship at a Methodist church in Haiti.

worked on this project from the foundation up to the sidewalls.

The teams have also been involved in interactive ministry with the local community that has included games with children, and the donation of medical supplies to villagers.

Each team struggled with the multitude of issues that confronts

one, beginning on arrival and increasing each day. The teams reflected on the kind of legacy that they would leave as mission partners, focusing on what it means to be people from a church with many resources in mission with a people and a church with much less. Each team responded

Continued on page 11

VIM Team Coping With Haiti Challenges

Continued from page 10

in its own way to the challenges, many of which followed teams all the way home.

The October team saw many hopeful signs of cleaning up and renewal as people continue to assume a sense of “normalcy” amidst the tent cities and destroyed buildings, loss of loved ones, and uncertainty as they prepare for elections this month.

There was the added challenge of the cholera outbreak—primarily in the central region—and, as I write, the impending

passage of Hurricane Tomas. Please continue to pray for, and support the mission teams that will travel to Haiti in the new year. Your contributions are invaluable resources to the teams and to the people of Haiti, as we hear the word of Jesus saying: Whatever you do to for the least of my sisters and brothers, especially in their time of need, you do unto me.

I leave you with the words of John Wesley: Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the

places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

Nine ERT/VIM trips are planned for 2011: February 3–10, March 8–15, April 5–12, May 6–13, June 17–24, July 18–25, August 19–26, September 16–23, October 21–28. For more information and an application, go to the NYAC web site at: <http://nyac.com/pages/detail/1740>.

Fruitful Living at Convocation

January 25–27: The 61st Annual Bishop’s Convocation will focus on “Five Characteristics of Fruitful Living,” with Bishop and author Robert Schnase. Begins with 1 p.m. registration Tuesday; concludes after lunch Thursday. Includes gatherings for clergy spouses and under-40 clergy; musicians’



Bishop Robert Schnase

jam session; and workshops on media, PowerPoint and Photoshop. Location: Hudson Valley Resort & Spa, Kerhonkson, N.Y. Register by January 8 for \$575 double / \$355 single; after that date, \$605 double / \$385 single. Children sharing room with parent are \$75, age 12 and under; \$115, age 13-17. Commuters are \$135, including lunch. Continuing education unit of .50 offered for full participation. For other details and registration form, go to <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/2975>.

NE Jurisdiction Clergywomen’s Gathering

February 27–March 2: Join other clergywomen in the region to refresh and re-power . . . through worship, learning, prayer, networking, and laughter at the “Bodacious and Bold” consultation at the Lancaster Host & Conference Center in Lancaster, Penn. For more information and to register, go to: <http://www.epaumc.org/nejclergywomen>.

Rethink Worship & Song

March 1–3: National introductory event for the new GBOD-UMPH Worship & Song collections and website, Nashville, Tenn. Limited to 550; early-bird discounts through the end of 2010. For more information and registration details, go to <http://www.gbod.org/worship&song>. Scheduled leaders include Marcia McFee, Mark Miller, Michael Hawn, Lester Ruth, Vance Ross, Safiyah Fosua, Kwasi Kena, Taylor Burton-Edwards, Gary Alan Smith, and Dean McIntyre.

Council Refuses to Reconsider Virginia Membership Case

BY LINDA BLOOM
UM News Service

A United Methodist pastor has the right to determine local church membership, even if the decision is based on whether the potential member is gay or lesbian.

Annual conferences cannot limit that right or ask the church's top court to set policy, the United Methodist Judicial Council ruled during its Oct. 27–30 meeting in New Orleans.

“The General Conference is the only body authorized and able to resolve the issue for the Church,” wrote Jon R. Gray in a concurring opinion. The General Conference is the denomination's top legislative body and meets every four years.

The council declined several requests to revisit a decision allowing a pastor to bar a gay man from joining his congregation. In one case, the denomination's top court ruled that the Northern Illinois Annual Conference did not have the authority to interpret constitutional language to prohibit pastors from denying membership based on a person's sexual identity.

When the court denied requests for reconsideration made by the Northern Illinois and Arkansas conferences, Judicial Council member Ruben T. Reyes noted in a concurrence that the council had previously taken “a second hard look” at the decision in April 2006, based on 12 briefs and more than 2,000 pieces of

communication. “There should be an end to a controversy,” he wrote.

But the issue has been an unceasing source of debate within the church for the past five years.

Defining church law

Judicial Council Decision No. 1032, from Oct. 29, 2005, related to the case of the Rev. Ed Johnson, who had been the senior pastor at South Hill (Va.) UMC until he was placed on an involuntary leave of absence by the Virginia Annual Conference. Bishop Charlene Kammerer upheld the action. Johnson had refused to admit a self-avowed, practicing gay man into membership in the church.

Decision 1032, based on Paragraphs 214 and 225 of The Book of Discipline, said the paragraphs are “permissive, and do not mandate receipt into membership of all persons regardless of their willingness to affirm membership vows.” The ruling meant that the pastor in charge of a local church has authority to determine a layperson's readiness for membership.

The pastor returned to his pulpit after the court's decisions, but the case's impact extended far beyond Virginia. Various annual conferences and other groups have protested the ruling, while others have supported it. General Conference legislation filed in response to the case did not pass in 2008.

During the Judicial

Council's Oct. 28 oral hearings, representatives for the Northern Illinois Conference argued that other parts of church law—namely Article IV of the denomination's constitution—supersede the previous Judicial Council decision when it comes to matters of membership.

The Judicial Council also ruled it did not have the authority to answer another Northern Illinois request to decide whether an action by the 2008 General Conference “supersedes” Decision 1032 because it does not relate directly to business of the Northern Illinois Conference.

The 2008 General Conference amended Paragraph 225 of the Discipline, replacing the word “may” with “shall.” The revised sentence reads: “A member in good standing in any Christian denomination who has been baptized and who desires to unite with The United Methodist Church shall be received as either a baptized or professing member.”

In a concurring opinion, William B. Lawrence agreed the council did not have the authority to issue an official pronouncement, but said he does believe that action of the 2008 General Conference did “at least in part” supersede the earlier Judicial Council decision.

Split opinion

The fact that the council believes it “lacks jurisdiction”

Continued on page 14

States' Same-Sex Unions Fuels Church Debate

BY HEATHER HAHN
UM News Service

The legalization of same-sex marriage in some states and countries is complicating a long-simmering debate on how the church ministers to gays and lesbians.

The challenge, say bishops from areas where same-sex marriage is legal, is encouraging dialogue and mutual respect among all parties in the debate in the pews while at the same time upholding church law.

“Even though people are coming from across the theological spectrum, we trust that they are willing to engage in conversation with integrity, respect and sensitivity,” said Bishop Jeremiah J. Park, whose episcopal area includes part of Connecticut. “And that’s something we can celebrate. We are not in a perfect place, but at least I see a sincere intention to have holy conferencing on an issue like this.”

At present, Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont and Washington, D.C., grant civil marriages for same-sex couples. Outside the United States, 10 countries also offer legal recognition to same-sex couples.



**NYAC Bishop
Jeremiah J.
Park**

During the November 2–4 Council of Bishops meeting in Panama, bishops from areas where same-sex marriage is legal met for a private lunch to discuss how their congregations are dealing with the issue.

“The conversation was centered around that as more states make it legal, more congregations will be involved (in the debate), and we need to find a way to respond,” Park said.

The United Methodist Church opposes same-sex unions and forbids its pastors from performing such ceremonies or allowing them to take place in United Methodist churches.

The Book of Discipline, the denomination’s law book, states that the practice of homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching.” The Judicial Council, the denomination’s top court, ruled in 2009 that it is a chargeable offense for United Methodist clergy to perform ceremonies celebrating same-sex unions, even in states where such unions are legal.

However, some United Methodist congregations that welcome homosexual members are debating how to handle marriage requests. On Sept. 26, members of Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., voted 367 to 8 to allow same-gender marriages to be performed in its building.

Following Foundry’s vote, Bishop John R. Schol released a

statement to clergy and lay leaders in the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference. “In the midst of these difficult matters of the church,” he wrote, “I will do all I can to be fair and compassionate as I work to maintain the unity and witness of the church.”

But as a bishop, he noted, he is responsible for upholding church law and “will process and follow through with any complaint or charge against a United Methodist clergyperson of the Baltimore-Washington Conference who performs a same-gender wedding or holy union.”

At the Council of Bishops meeting, he reiterated that stand. “The Book of Discipline is very clear,” he said.

The subject of same-sex unions has sparked debate every four years at the gathering of General Conference, the denomination’s top lawmaking body. Delegates have consistently voted not to change the Book of Discipline. But neither supporters nor opponents of same-sex marriage expect the debate to end.

In the United States, public support for same-sex unions has been growing over the past decade, but that support is still in the minority. This year, a Pew Research Center poll found 42 percent in favor of same-sex marriages and 48 percent in opposition. That marks the first time in 15 years of Pew Research polling that fewer than half opposed such marriages.

Council Refuses to Reconsider Virginia Membership Case

Continued from page 12

for reconsideration does not mean that all council members support the 2005 decision. Gray, who wrote a dissent when Decision 1032 was issued, said he still believes the case “was wrongly decided.”

But Gray does not “look favorably” on continued requests for review or reconsideration, he wrote in a

concurring opinion.

Everyone has a stake in this case, said Beth Capen, a council member from the NYAC who originally dissented on Decision 1032. She pointed out that “the implications of the case potentially affect every annual conference, clergy member, and lay member in the connection.”

Court Defers NYAC Request; Refuses Action on Point of Order

(UMNS) In its October session, the UMC’s Judicial Council deferred to its April 2011 meeting a request from the New York Annual Conference related to same-sex marriage.

The conference asked the council for a declaratory decision about the validity of the policy it adopted this year, effective in 2011, allowing any of its clergy members to be “legally married at their own discretion, as permitted by Paragraph 103 of the Articles of Religion.” The policy is based on the premise that Paragraph 103 takes precedence over Paragraph 2702 prohibiting same-sex marriage for clergy. Methodists For Social Action and Methodists In New Directions were the sponsors of the resolution.

The council also refused to intervene on a resolution that Bishop Jeremiah J. Park had ruled out of order on the conference floor, stating that they had no jurisdiction in parliamentary matters. The overruled “Ministry to the Marginalized resolution,” called on the conference to take out ads in lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgendered (LGBT) publications publicizing its longstanding opposition to official UMC doctrine and policies that exclude gay people.

MIND challenged the Park’s decision, requesting a ruling of law.

Bishop Park offered the following response on July 8, 2010:

I ruled the resolution out of order because the resolution requires an advertisement in a public newspaper, which includes a phrase, “NYAC has long been opposed to UMC policy on homosexuality.” This

phrase as a public statement does not accurately define the standing of the New York Annual Conference as it relates to The United Methodist Church policy on homosexuality. That is, the New York Annual Conference has adopted resolutions in opposition to some United Methodist Church policy on homosexuality, but not all. Accordingly, specific United Methodist Church policy on homosexuality to which the New York Annual Conference has voted to express its opposition must be identified with reference to specific paragraphs of the Book of Discipline. Without specific references the advertisement could be construed to imply that the New York Annual Conference holds to a policy that is contrary to The United Methodist Church policy on homosexuality as established in the Book of Discipline or that it opposes specific United Methodist Church disciplinary paragraphs on homosexuality to which the New York Annual Conference has voted its support. The specificity is essential when the New York Annual Conference makes a public advertisement/statement as it relates to United Methodist policy in its name but does not have control of its wording.

According to MIND’s web site, the Judicial Council decision will not be the end of the resolution.

“There is nothing prohibiting us from re-introducing the resolution at the 2011 annual conference, and since Bishop Park’s stated objection is easily addressed in a minor language change, we expect that it will not be unduly blocked this time around,” read a blog post dated November 8 on www.mindny.org/.

Laity, Clergy Partnerships Sign of Vitality

Visiting churches around the New York Annual Conference is one of the personal joys of being Lay Leader. However, our conference spans a wide geographical area and getting around to it all is taking time. I am therefore grateful for other ways to be kept informed, like the Internet and The Vision, our own conference newsletter.

I have read and reread the October issue. I particularly liked the article, "4 Clergy Share Experiences of Leadership," and plan to include it in discussions with laity. Thanks to Rev. Joanne Utley, the editor, for a great paper. I encourage everyone to read The Vision monthly, make sure there are copies available for members in your church and discuss the articles among yourselves.

I enjoy worshipping with different congregations whenever the opportunity presents itself. It is encouraging to see strong lay leadership in operation, and to see clergy and laity working in partnership. At the Westchester UMC in the Bronx, where Rev. Dr. Johnny Johnson is the pastor, and Cora Doram the lay leader, I



was blessed on Laity Sunday by the "sweet, sweet Spirit" that was evident in the worship, the warm family atmosphere and the way that youth are embraced. What an awesome steel band!

Women's Day at St Paul's UMC in Brooklyn was a most fulfilling spiritual experience for me. The large church was packed to capacity. I was excited to see so many men in attendance. Contemporary and traditional worship styles were utilized, and there was participation by both youth and adults. The hospitality was warm and genuine. That the congregation at St Paul's is in love with God, and that they serve their community was evident from the time I arrived there until I reluctantly left. Rev. Delroy Murdock, Lay Leader Albert Neufville, and members of St Paul's, thanks for exhibiting the

marks of a vital congregation.

The annual meeting of the conference's United Methodist Women on October 23 was a time of praise, fellowship and celebration as women gathered under the theme "Faith, Hope, Love in Action." We were warmly welcomed at Golden Hill UMC in Bridgeport by pastor, Rev. Taka Ishii. Melodye Merola, minister for outreach, and the women of the church saw to our every need. Our speaker, Carol Barton, executive secretary for Community Action at the Women's Division led us through an interactive discussion examining, "What moves us? Whose we are?" and some of the work we are doing. Our time together concluded with communion service led by District Superintendent, Rev. Ken Kieffer.

There is so much more that happened this month in our other churches that was good! We are aware that there are some signs of spiritual stagnation among us, but there are also signs of hope and vitality! Thanks be to God!

Human Relations Day

January 16: One of six special Sundays on the UMC calendar when congregations are encouraged to give above their regular giving. Gifts to Human Relations Day provide ways to restore relationships through youth offender rehabilitation programs; Community Developers, self-improvement programs; and UM Voluntary Services, community advocacy that challenges oppression and injustice. More info is available at, www.umcsgiving.org.

Emergency Response Team Training

January 8: ERT Workshop from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., St. John's UMC, 2105 Stuart Ave., Valley Stream, N.Y. 11580.

Plan Now for Week of Christian Unity

BY REV. DENNIS R. WINKLEBLACK
Chair, Commission on Christian Unity & Interreligious Concerns

It isn't too late to begin planning for how you and your church will celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18–25. The theme this year is “One in the Apostles’ Teaching, Fellowship, Breaking of Bread and Prayer” from Acts 2:42. The theme comes from the churches in Jerusalem, the mother church of us all, some say. These Palestinian Christians are calling us to honor Jesus’ high priestly prayer, “that they all may be one.” (John 17:21)

Abundant resources including orders of worship, prayers, music, posters and the like are available on the web site of Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute, www.geii.org/wpcu. Most are free; some have a small cost.

Ecumenism—the movement promoting unity among Christian churches—is sadly on the back burner for most denominations. Nevertheless, ecumenism is alive and well in many of our cities, towns and rural areas. There are wonderful stories of churches working together to proclaim the gospel and to witness to the compassion and justice of Jesus Christ.

One of the ways to both celebrate unity among churches, as well as to nurture future cooperation



and vision, is by the observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Whether it is a week full of study, a joint mission endeavor or a single worship service with participation by area clergy and laity, this annual event is an opportunity we shouldn't let slip away. Graymoor is a ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, so expect your Roman Catholic neighbors to know about it and be enthusiastic about working with you.

And don't forget: whenever you do something with another church or other faith tradition, please send me information at dwinkleblack@nyac.com, so we can pass it along to others.

Trio of Retreats at Oratory

The Oratory of the Little Way, Gaylordsville, Conn., is offering the following one-day workshops in December:

December 4: “Minimizing More Stress” with Bishop Alex McCullough. Registration at 9 a.m.; workshop from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Learn and role play stress minimizing principles.

December 14: “Observing Holidays” with Bishop Alex McCullough, from 10:00am–12:00 pm at The Oratory. What does the Bible tell us about

holidays? Are your holidays holy days? How shall we celebrate? Come and bring life to holidays.

December 16: Coping with Chronic Diseases, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with Dr. Tony Borrelli, Bishop Alex McCullough, and Kathleen Masek. This one-day retreat is for those who want to learn how to deal with chronic diseases spiritually.

The Oratory is located at 8 Oratory Lane, Gaylordsville, CT, 06755. To register for the workshops, call 860-354-8294.

Turning Endings Into New Beginnings

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant on Older Adult Ministries

Endings Before Beginnings. That is the subtitle of an essay written by David Powell, His essay, "Living in the In-Between," is in the Fall 2010 issue of *Center Sage*, a resource for people working in older adult ministries.

Almost daily, I become aware of someone at Wesley Village who is struggling with some powerful endings in their lives. Leaving a home they love; seeking to recover from the loss of a loved one—a spouse, a child, a good friend; leaving friends behind; and receiving a difficult diagnosis from the doctor are but a few of these experiences shared by many as we age.

David Powell says something profoundly true, but which many in the midst of change will find difficult to believe. At first blush, it sounds trite and easy. Yet experience has taught me that it is absolutely the truth for those



who dare to believe, and act on it. What he says is: "We need to let go of 'what is' so something new can be born." It is the same sentiment expressed in the classic play and movie, "The Sound of Music." As Maria prepares to leave the convent, the Mother Superior tells her, "Wherever God closes a door, somewhere He opens a window."

Both David Powell and Mother Superior speak to each of us as we confront the closing of doors in our lives. It is so easy to see endings as final. Yet if we use the gift of memory to reflect on other endings in our lives, we can discover how we moved on from them and found beginnings. Somehow we found ways to cope with situations that once seemed impossible. Somehow we are still here, living the life we have.

I believe that the best way to move from an ending is to believe we have the capability of finding and claiming hope in even the worst of circumstances. It is in knowing that we all have been gifted with the ability to do the best we can at any given moment, and in so doing, to live in that moment—letting go of fear and despair, and thus finding our way to a new beginning. The hymn, "Amazing Grace," says it best: *Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come; 'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.*"

My insight? Anyone doing ministry with Older Adults needs to be comfortable dealing with endings. Anyone doing ministry in the name of Jesus needs to be comfortable sharing the faith that seemingly began with the ultimate ending; but which, in fact, began with a beginning. People facing endings need to be reminded that every ending can be a beginning.

NY Methodist Hospital Consumer's Choice

New York Methodist Hospital is this year's Consumer's Choice Award winner for the borough of Brooklyn. It's the fifth year in a row that the hospital has received the award, and the first time it was named the sole winner for Brooklyn. The award, given by the National Research Corporation, recognizes hospitals with outstanding service and quality in 300 markets

across the country.

Mark J. Mundy, president and CEO, expressed pride in the hospital's accomplishment. "This award recognizes that consumers these days do have a choice. It's good to see confirmation that we are getting things right and, as a result, our Hospital is the first choice of Brooklynites throughout the borough."

Joining Forces to Help in Mt. Vernon

The day after the election, many politicians could be heard talking about addressing the needs of the middle class. On the same day, at First UMC of Mt. Vernon, members of the community and volunteers from the AARP group, Create The Good, came together to discuss how to better serve the needs of poor and working class residents. Rev. Hermon Darden; Jean Williams, coordinator of Livable Community Connections in Mt. Vernon; Lauren Weaver of Family Services of Westchester, and Michael Olender, associate state director for AARP, brought

together participants from congregations including Grace Baptist, Greater Centennial AME Zion, and Sacred Heart Roman Catholic churches.

Livable Community Connections is a neighborhood empowerment program that works to assess needs and create communities where people (especially seniors) can stay healthy and connected to friends and family, and remain actively engaged in their communities. AARP's Create the Good workers are available to help in efforts to enhance community life for seniors, youth, and



Rev. Hermon Darden, seated second from right, hosted a gathering of Mt. Vernon volunteers focused on improving conditions for the poor and elderly in their community at his church, First UMC.

struggling families.

In addition to affirming the need for cooperative ministry, the participants helped prepare bags for the food pantry distribution at

First UMC. Rev. Darden noted that food pantry needs had doubled in the previous two weeks. The need is especially acute for families with children.

Share Anchor House Mission With Your Church

BY B.J. EDWARDS
Chairperson, Anchor House
Board of Directors

We share the same dreams.

We live where you live.

Anchor House Inc. was founded in 1967 as a Christ-centered drug-free rehabilitation facility. Just as an anchor provides stability for a ship to wait out a storm, Anchor House provides a safe port for clients until the storms of drug and alcohol addiction die, and then readies them for a new life.

Of course, the anchor can only

be effective if the chain remains strong and hooked together with Jesus Christ. The program is multicultural and open to all, regardless of religion, race and or ethnic origin.

Anchor House offers hope through Jesus Christ where there was none. Confidence and a strong sense of purpose replace self-doubt and desperation. Residents leave the program with a cleansed spirit and a renewed will. Our graduates are ready to take their place as responsible

workers, family members and neighbors.

The Anchor House program is effective because it provides a reliable stable foundation in which substance abusers find support and experience community. Those who come to Anchor House for treatment do so via many different paths—some are referred by the courts, others by friends, family, or the church connection. Some homeless individuals walk in off the

Continued on page 19

Share Anchor House Mission With Your Church

Continued from page 18

street, and program graduates recommend others. All are seeking help for their addiction. Many clients need our assistance for problems that go far beyond drug and alcohol abuse.

During these difficult economic times, the need for this service and ministry is essential. Pooling our resources together in order to help some of God's people not only fulfills the scripture, but also puts you right with God's word.

"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what the master is doing, but I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in my name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another."
(John 15: 15-17)

Often I think about the words of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, who said, "I look upon the whole world as my parish." Wesley reminds us that we are to reach out beyond the walls of the church.

We encourage your youth task force, women's and men's ministries or your congregation to invite members of the Anchor House community to your church for service and fellowship. Develop an Anchor House mission day to highlight what the Lord is doing in our lives.

We have been truly blessed.

We have gone out into the vineyard and are reaping a bountiful harvest. Who says a few dollars don't go far today? When hundreds and or thousands of people of faith give prayerfully amazing things happen!

Giving together, we can make

miracles happen.

Please contact Anchor House at 718-771-0760 for information or to schedule a date for mission fellowship. Donations can be made payable to Anchor House, and sent to 1041 Bergen St, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11216-3307.

New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church 2010 Journal & Yearbook



*For Such A Time As This:
We Are Building Up a Healthy Body of Christ*

Conference Journal Online

The annual conference journal and yearbook for 2010 is up and available online while it's out to the printer. You can find it at: <http://nyac.com/pages/detail/1756>.