


“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

December 17, 2010



Use this door hanger to express your wishes for "A Life-Giving Christmas" to someone special!

My Christmas List

HOPE:

PEACE:

JOY:

LOVE:

RETHINKCHURCH®

Rebirth & Rejuvenation

2 NYAC Churches Celebrate New Chapters

Although there are 104 miles between them, Sag Harbor UMC on Long Island and St. Stephen's UMC in the Bronx have had been united in celebrating their pasts and their futures this fall. Sag Harbor consecrated a brand new home; St. Stephens re-dedicated its structure after a major renovation. The tale of two churches starts below, and continues on Pages 10 and 11.

We are sitting in the middle of a true resurrection . . . a true miracle," Pastor Tom MacLeod declared in his opening remarks on November 14. "Our God is an awesome God."

The miracle of which he spoke was the new home of the Sag Harbor United Methodist Church—a structure that became a reality only after the amazingly quick sale of the congregation's former building that dated to 1853. "We are standing on the shoulders of those who came before us," MacLeod added.

So on a surprisingly warm November afternoon, some 60 members and friends of the Sag Harbor UMC gathered to celebrate the dedication of church's the new building, as well as the congregation's 200th anniversary. Bishop



PHOTO BY ALISSA AMBROSE

Kenneth Cline, a trustee of St. Stephen's UMC, rings the bell for the first time in many years during the rededication service.

Jeremiah J. Park and Long Island East District Superintendent Adrienne Brewington joined MacLeod in presiding over the consecration service.

Park congratulated the congregation on their 200th anniversary on behalf of the other 474 churches in the conference.

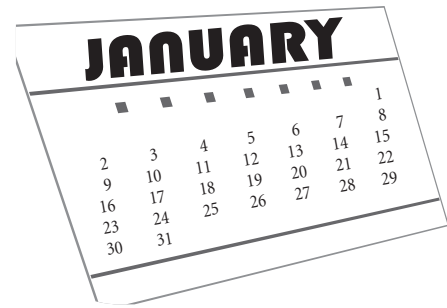
"What a glorious day it is," Park said. "I am

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Rev. Adrienne Brewington, from left, Bishop Park, and Pastor Tom MacLeod preside over the dedication of Sag Harbor UMC on November 14.

SAVE THE DATE



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. John-Thomas Crockett, youth minister at Westchester UMC, will be the featured speaker.

Clergy & Spouse Tax Seminars

A series of seminars will be offered from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the following locations. Register by contacting Lynda Gomi at learningcenter@nyac.com, or 914-615-2219.

January 7: Learning Center, New York 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

Emergency Response Team Training

January 8: ERT Workshop, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., St. John's UMC, 2105 Stuart Ave., Valley Stream, N.Y. 11580. Contact Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie, conference mission coordinator, at jewoodzie@gmail.com.

Safe Sanctuary Workshops

Register by contacting Lynda Gomi at learningcenter@nyac.com, or 914-615-2219.

January 8: Windham-Hensonville UMC. Check-in at noon; workshop from 12:30–3:30 p.m.

January 9: New Paltz UMC. Check-in at 12:45 p.m.; workshop from 1:30–4:30 p.m. Lunch provided.

January 22: Lucien UMC, Kings Park, N.Y. Check-in at 9 a.m.; workshop from 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

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>.

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.umcgiving.org.

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.

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' 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>.

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

Need to Speak, Act Against Hate Crimes

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY

Editor, The Vision

Beneath a stained glass window with a dove at its center, a daylong symposium unfolded on November 20 to explore how faithful people can confront and prevent hate crimes.

"Today marks the beginning of something much more important than mere discussion; today can be a catalyst for making change happen," event organizer Dorothee Benz, told the 150 people who gathered at Grace United Methodist Church in Manhattan. "My Brother's Keeper" provided a variety of ways to explore responses to hate crimes and speech including personal testimony, historical studies, music and worship, small group discussion, and a theatrical performance. Those in attendance—including Bishop Jeremiah Park—represented clergy, laity and youth from across the conference.

Josh Noblitt, an ordained UMC deacon, shared his own story of victimization. He and a friend were attacked in an Atlanta park—a gun put to his head—by a group of young men. When that happens, you're thrown into "a permanent relationship" with your attacker, Noblitt said, "you think about them every day."

When he found out the youngest attacker was 13 years old, he asked himself how it could be that someone so young would end up holding a gun on someone?

In reaction to the beating, Noblitt found himself at a turning point. He could take the wide, well-used path of fear, or chose the less traveled path of love. He said choosing fear justifies one's need for retaliation, while the path of love seeks common ground where both victim and perpetrator can be restored. "As a minister of the gospel . . . I chose to stand in a place of love not fear," Noblitt added.

A panel moderated by Rev. Dr. Traci West examined how hate is supported in church and society, and featured attorney Fred Brewington, attorney Rosario Quinones, and Drew University professor Dr. J. Terry Todd.

Todd's look at historical posters and political cartoons showed that hate crimes and speech are not new in this country. "The target changes; it depends on who's coming in," he said. People have been targeted out of economic fears, and religious, social or sexual differences.

He said that hate speech may be much more insidious than violence because it can be more difficult to detect. He suggested that the church's Book of Discipline includes hate speech in its language that states that homosexuals are of



Fred Brewington makes a point as moderator Rev. Dr. Traci West, and panelists Rosario Quinones and Dr. Terry Todd look on.



LEFT: Voices were loud and heated at times during Teatro Experimental Yerbabruja's, "What Killed Marcelo Lucero?" RIGHT: Rev. Josh Noblitt



sacred worth, "though we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." Brewington offered a similar sentiment, saying, "If it's not hate speech, it's very, very close."

Quinones empathized with Noblitt's quandary whether to respond in fear or love after the attack. "Scripture has been used as words of violence because of one's gender or sexuality," she said. Social, political, economic, and religious systems continue to breed

oppression around the world.

"Bullying of the LGBT community has become epidemic," Quinones said. "It's time to let the silenced voices speak out."

As an attorney who handles civil rights cases, Brewington said the day's conversation was important because we tend to shy away from it. "Even the good people can't talk about our differences," he said.

Brewington brought the reality of hate

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Hate Crimes: Silenced Voices Must Be Heard

Continued from page 3

crimes into the room with large graphic photos of injuries inflicted on a day laborer. He noted that we can't let decisions about hate crimes be left solely up to law enforcement. "It's up to society to ask that hate crimes be considered . . . It's the small things that turn into big things," he added.

In the performance by Teatro Experimental Yerbabruja from Central Islip, the question, "What Killed Marcelo Lucero?" is raised. Lucero was an Ecuadoran immigrant stabbed to death by a white teenager in Patchogue, N.Y., in November 2008. Six other young men took part in the attack. The play focused on the bias and misunderstanding that can occur between people of different cultures, and in more and more cases escalates to violence.

"My Brother's Keeper" was co-sponsored by the Conference Board of Church and Society, the Conference Immigration Task Force, the N.Y. chapter of the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA), Methodists in New Directions (MIND), the Conference Commission on Race and Religion, and the Conference Committee on the Status and Role of Women.

Resources from the symposium on



Small groups formed across age, gender, and race lines to discuss the theatrical performance.

counteracting hate speech, teaching tolerance, dealing with bullying and speaking up against hate crimes, can be found at: <http://www.mindny.org/mind-initiatives/hate-crimes-symposium/>.

The planning team included Dorothee Benz, Bridget Cabrera, Hermon Darden, Jayson

Dobney, Kristen Dunn, Alfida Fogueroa, Vicki Flippin, Sara Giron, Wongee Joh, Hector LaPorta, Jorge Lockward, Nehemiah Luckett, Kevin Nelson, Nelson Rojas, Siobhan Sargent, Liz Schoen, Michael Sullivan, Ximena Varas and Traci West.

Truth Can Comfort in Time of Greatest Need

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant on Older Adult Ministry

She was ready to deal with the news; her daughter was not. Both subsequently were unable to be of support to one another. One spent most of the time they were together attempting to appear relaxed and to believe the "good news" her daughter was constantly feeding her. The other spent their time together unable to see the deep psychic pain her mother was feeling, and therefore could not be the comforter she so much wanted to be, and adding to the pain.

Fortunately, but sadly, her mother, unable to pretend she believed her daughter's good news, asked her doctor to meet with them and discuss the diagnosis openly and honestly. At that meeting, with the support of the doctor, the mother told the doctor and her daughter that she had decided to seek hospice care.

It wasn't an instant change, but the change came. Today, as 'Mom' moves closer to death, her daughter is able to offer the comfort her mother needs. She is able to share her feelings honestly, which has freed her mother to do likewise.

'Mom' is now able to do the necessary work of saying goodbye to her family and friends. She



GOD'S GIFT OF LONG LIFE

is now able to skip therapy if she chooses. She is able to eat anything she feels like eating. In short, she is free to spend her days doing as she wishes. The quality of her days has vastly improved. It shows in her attitude and her interactions with those around her. The daughter, who prior to this change appeared standoffish, now engages the staff at the Wicke Health Center, speaks with other residents and their visitors, and physically looks relaxed. The truth does set people free!

The lesson is loud and clear for those of us engaged in ministry with older adults. "Protecting" someone from the truth usually makes things worse. It delays the grieving process, and therefore blocks the ability to reach acceptance and the peace that comes with it. My experience suggests that most individuals know, or strongly suspect, the truth before caregivers and loved ones share it with them. What a gift we offer when we care enough to dare being

honest. Being honest, by the way, does not mean barging in and forcing a discussion. It means assessing the relationship before engaging the conversation. It means asking oneself, "Am I the one to raise such an intimate discussion, or is someone else more appropriate?" If you are that appropriate person it means opening the door to such a discussion with gentleness and calmness, seeking clues that the person is ready to engage. I often find myself asking if the doctor has been by and if anything is new. Or I ask, "How are things going? Are you happy with your progress?" The answer often indicates a willingness to go further.

I have not found a perfect way to approach the terminally person with honesty, but I have discovered again and again that not allowing the person an opportunity to deal with the reality of the diagnosis is to deny them of the precious gift of saying goodbye and otherwise coming to terms with themselves, with their loved ones, and with God.

Encourage family members and friends to be honest! I hope my family tells me the truth if such a time comes for me. Who better to be with us at such a moment than those who have loved me my whole life?

Haiti Mission Extended for 3 Years

Editor's Note: The following is a letter from the NYAC's Rev. Tom Vencuss, the new volunteer management coordinator for the UMCOR Haiti Response Plan, working with, and coordinating the efforts of United Methodist response teams in Haiti for the next six months. Tom recently succeeded Rev. Mike Willis, the first to serve in this role, who returned to his home parish in Vestal, NY. Tom is working in Haiti with Assistant Coordinator Bethany Guy, a layperson from Church of the Resurrection (Kansas East Conference). Deanna Hawkins, a layperson from the Minnesota Conference joined the team in mid-November as the finance/hospitality coordinator.

This past summer the six month "anniversary" of the earthquake in Haiti saw a great many reports on the successes and failures of the relief and recovery efforts: the immediate response of the international community, the often heroic efforts of military and medical personnel, search and response teams, and the amazing resolve and courage of the Haitian people themselves.

Other "successes" included the absence of widespread looting and violence and any major outbreak of disease. The failures cited include the fact that some 1.5 million people were still living in tent cities; that abuses were taking place among women and children; that many humanitarian organizations had cut back on their presence in the country, and that only a small portion of the pledged international funds had actually been sent and used in the country.

We are now nine months out and while some things have changed and one can see improvements in some places, in many other areas things are the same. The challenges that face Haiti are monumental and will require more than the relocation of displaced persons, but



rather a complete review of its social, political and financial infrastructure.

The United Methodist Church, through UMCOR and Volunteers in Mission, has made a three-year commitment to the long-term recovery efforts in Haiti. Immediately following the earthquake, personnel from UMCOR and VIM were on the ground, meeting with leaders of the Methodist Church of Haiti to begin plans for relief and recovery.

In May, the first Early Response Teams were deployed and there are some 80 teams scheduled through the end of the year. Our annual conference has made a three-year commitment as well. To date we have sent four Early Response Teams and two teams through Mountains of Hope for Haiti. More teams (limited to ten members each) are scheduled for the winter and spring, working primarily in disaster-related areas. For dates in 2011, go to <http://www.nyac.com/pages/detail/1740>, for more details.

As an annual conference, we have raised nearly \$1 million for disaster relief in Haiti and are helping at 15 sites throughout the country—underscoring the commitment that our annual conference has made to mission, particularly disaster response. Through the Bishop's Partners

in Mission Fund, we are now able to provide funds that are matched by UMCOR, providing a total of \$7,000 for each team working in partnership with the Methodist Church of Haiti. The matching funds provide building materials and supplies and allow us to hire two Haitian workers for every team member—part of the UMCOR/VIM covenant. UMCOR funds are also used to provide for other teams, and for other emergency projects throughout the country.

Having traveled extensively throughout the country, I have had the opportunity to witness first hand the work being done by our church and teams. At the Guest House, where most teams begin and end their trip, I see the excitement and dedication that the volunteers bring to their efforts; I hear stories of Sunday School classes holding fundraisers, children saving their coins, and of one little girl who asked other children coming to her birthday party to bring something to be sent to the children of Haiti—all for the efforts of doing mission.

And I see the people of Haiti, struggling against great odds, worshipping together, worshipping with volunteers, knowing that together, through their shared faith and love, there is hope.

On behalf of the UMCOR/VIM program in Haiti, and on behalf of the people and churches of Haiti I wish to thank the people and congregations of the New York Annual Conference who are helping to make all of this possible.

O Lespri Sen desann sou nou; nou gen yon misyon pou Ayiti.

(O Holy Spirit descend upon us; we have a mission for Haiti).

Tom Vencuss

Volunteer Management Coordinator

Grants Available for Older Adults Ministries

Submissions for grants to support care-giving ministries for older adults are now being accepted by the Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries at the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship

Applications from local UM congregations, districts, annual conferences, central conferences and UM-related institutions may be submitted until Jan. 15, 2011.

Funding for the grants is provided by The United Methodist Committee on Older Adult Ministries, which is administratively related to GBOD. During the current quadrennium, the committee is making grants to support two

specific areas of older adult ministries—care-giving ministry and intergenerational ministry.

Earlier this year, 38 grants totaling \$75,000 were awarded for intergenerational ministries. These grants provided support for a variety of projects, including efforts to connect young and old through visual arts programs, youth-senior tutoring sessions, conversations at special dinner events and the structured sharing of stories about life experiences. In other ministries, widows and orphans are being linked in an adopt-a-grandparent program, and children and older adults

will come together for a community garden project.

For the current grant-making process, the project submitted for consideration must provide a care-giving ministry or address an issue of care-giving ministry with older adults. The ministry must be consistent with the doctrine and social principles of the church.

Grant applications are available online at www.aging-umc.org. For more information, contact project coordinator Teri Kline at the Center for Aging & Older Adult Ministries, toll free at 877-899-2780, ext. 7177, or by e-mail, tkline@gbod.org.

Helping Kids Who Are “Stuck,” Move On

The following is an excerpt from a sermon by Rev. Bill Townsend, director of Spiritual Life at the Children's Home.

What comes to mind when you hear the word, “graduation?” In your mind you might journey back to your high school or college days. Some of you might remember graduating from kindergarten or pre-school. Some of you will remember your graduations with a sense of wonder and accomplishment. Others will remember graduation with a tinge of sadness or maybe even regret. For some, graduation was simply a time to exclaim, “Thank God, that’s over.”

Did you ever think that when you finally made it to graduation you would have all the skills and knowledge needed to make it through the rest of your life? Some of you are far enough along in life to know how silly that notion is.

A young man hired by a supermarket reported for his first day of work. The manager greeted him with a warm handshake and a smile, gave him a broom and said, “Your first job will be to sweep out the store.”

“But I’m a college graduate,” the young man replied indignantly.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t know that,” said the manager. “Here, give me the broom. I’ll show you

how it’s done.”

Graduation, whether it be from kindergarten, high school, college, or the school of hard knocks, is not an ending but a transition—the end of one phase of life and learning, and the beginning of another.

Like a good book, each life is an unfolding story filled with many chapters. When a chapter ends, no matter how good that chapter has been, you have to turn the page to read on. If you stay in the former chapter, you will never know the end of the story.

That’s what happened in the Exodus story. Israel had grown comfortable in Egypt. Even though they were ready for a change when God delivered them, they weren’t quite ready to let go of the past. When things got a little tough, their first thought was, “Let’s go back to what we know.” They were unwilling to turn the page and begin a new chapter. They were unable to envision a better future. They were stuck in the past—a past that wasn’t as good as they remembered it to be.

It’s really kind of sad to watch people who get stuck in the past and are never able to turn the page and begin a new chapter.



Joey was like that. Joey was physically and sexually abused by several family members. When Joey would get angry and act out, he was deprived of food or forced to eat off the floor like a dog. When Joey would awaken at night and feel afraid, he often found that he was alone in the house, his parents having gone out to enjoy the nightlife they felt Joey was depriving them of.

When, for his own safety and wellbeing, Joey was placed at the Children’s Home, a new world of opportunity opened up for him. He had a warm bed to sleep in. Caring staff were always close by. He went to school clean and rested. Three good meals each day were a guarantee. But guess where Joey longed to be? Home! Despite all the good reasons to move on and embrace the future, Joey was stuck in the past. He couldn’t bring himself to turn the page and anticipate a new chapter in his life.

The good news is, Joey finally came to trust his new environment and began to trust the new people in his life. Two things helped him make the transition and “graduate” to a new phase of life.

Townsend’s complete sermon and other resources to have a “Children’s Home Sunday” in your congregation are available at www.chowc.org, or by calling Bill at, 607-772-6904 x128.

University Donates Funds for Haiti Relief

Rev. Huibing He, far left, and LIE District Superintendent Adrienne Brewington, center, accept a check on behalf of UMCOR from officials of the Health Sciences Center at Stony Brook University. The September 16 donation came after eight months of fundraising for the victims of the Haiti earthquake by employees and students of the university medical center. The more than \$11,000 raised was split between UMCOR and two other relief organizations. A member of He’s congregation at First UMC in Port Jefferson suggested the donation to the UM relief agency. Presenting the check are: Dr. Steven Strongwater, medical center CEO; Dr. Craig Lehmann, School of Health Technology and Management dean; and Paul Lombardo, chairman of the Haitian Short-Term Relief Taskforce.



Drop the I-Word: No Child of God is “Illegal”

The General Commission on Religion and Race is urging United Methodists to join a national campaign to eliminate the use of the word “illegal” as part of the conversation on immigration reform.

GCORR has signed on to endorse the “Drop the I-Word” public education campaign launched by ColorLines.com, and the Applied Research Center (ARC), a racial justice think tank urging media outlets and other organizations across the country to stop using the term “illegals” and its derivatives. GCORR is seeking 10,000 United Methodists to take the pledge.

GCORR endorses the “Drop The I-Word” campaign because it is “a tangible way to engage the United Methodist Church in moving from racism to relationships,” said GCORR General Secretary Erin M. Hawkins. “Immigration has proven to be a divisive issue across the country and even within our churches.

Proverbs 18:21 states that words can kill or words can give life. Who better than people of faith, to help lead a movement that believes we should communicate in ways that reflect God’s love for humanity.”

The campaign is designed to help communities understand and respond to the damaging and racist impact the term “illegal” has on the immigrant community. It divides and discriminates against immigrants and people of color. The i-word is shorthand for illegal alien, illegal immigrant, and other harmful and racially charged terms. Hawkins added, “We as United Methodists cannot tolerate any attempts to dehumanize or devalue immigrants or any racial ethnic community.” The commission suggests use of the term “undocumented” when referring to people who are currently out of immigration status.

The GCORR “Drop the I-Word” campaign is taking the national campaign directly to United



Methodists because it aligns with a commitment to racial justice outlined in the denomination’s Social Principles.

Part of the campaign will urge United Methodists to monitor the i-word’s use by their congregations and community media, and provides tools to change the conversation. “Ephesians 2:19 reminds us that in Christ we are no longer strangers, but sisters and brothers in the household of God. This is a campaign that starts with the pledge on the internet, but it quickly becomes interactive advocacy, said Victor Cyrus-Franklin, coordinator of Advocacy for GCORR. “We expect to see church members and students tweeting about this, sharing stories about the impact the i-word has had on them, their families and friends. It’s in the conversations about the word and its impact, that we can build relationships formed out of respect for and understanding of each other. And in the end, that moves us closer to our goal—moving the United Methodist Church from racism to relationships.”

On its website, www.gcorr.org, United Methodists can take the pledge and find resources including teaching tools and a Bible study designed to help churches start new conversations without using the i-word.

2011 Resolve To Push For Immigration Reform

The General Board of Church and Society and the Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC) urge people of faith to make a New Year’s resolution to stand with immigrants, mobilize their faith communities, and call on Congress to make its own New Year’s resolution to enact immigration reform in 2011.

- Sign a New Year’s Resolution pledge card and encourage others to do the same.
- Host a New Year’s Resolution for Immigration Reform party and engage the community.
- Post a brief (one to two minutes) video on YouTube and inspire others in their work to build welcoming communities and advocate for immigration reform. Then send an email with a link to the video to liza.lieberman@hias.org and have it added to IIC’s new YouTube channel.
- View videos posted by participants in the Resolution Campaign.

For more information on how to organize a campaign in your area, including a sample pledge card, download a toolkit from the First Monday newsletter site at, <http://new.gbgs-umc.org/umcor/work/immigration/jfon/firstmonday/>.

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC) is a partnership of faith-based organizations committed to enacting fair and humane immigration reform that reflects a mandate to welcome the stranger and treat all human beings with dignity and respect.

JFON Receives Advocacy Grant

WASHINGTON (UMNS)—The United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race has announced grants totaling \$296,000 to support nine projects aimed at services that advocate for the rights, human dignity, and inclusion of racial/ethnic groups, immigrants and refugees.

One of the nine one-year grants, ranging from \$10,000 to \$40,000, was awarded to the New York Annual Conference, Justice for Our Neighbors Project, Brooklyn. JFON-NYAC will host iknow-your-rights workshops for immigrants and increase training and outreach to conference church

leaders. Other programs receiving grants are: Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition, Austin, Texas; Justice for Our Neighbors Southeastern Michigan; Central Florida Justice for Our Neighbors, Orlando; Immigration, Asylum and Refugee Legal Clinics of Northern Illinois Conference, Elgin, Ill.; Rosewood United Methodist Church, Justice for Our Neighbors, Los Angeles; Staunton District United Methodist Church, Casa De Amistad, Waynesboro, Va.; Student Action with Farm Workers, Into the Fields Program, Durham, N.C.; and Valley Interfaith Project, Phoenix.

Bishop: Pray for Peace in Korea

They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

—Isaiah 2:4

December 2, 2010

Dear United Methodists:

Advent greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, the Prince of Peace, Healer of our brokenness and Hope of the world!

The most recent conflict in the Korean Peninsula is extremely serious with sufficient volatility that could lead to another war. As you may know, the Korean War waged between 1950 and 1953 resulted in millions of deaths and injuries. Now, with the world's largest concentration of military forces stationed along the Demilitarized Zone, and with a growing number of weapons including nuclear weapons in the peninsula, the current escalation of



hostilities poses an unprecedented threat to the world as well as to the Korean people. In light of the grave consequences of wrong choices, emotional responses should never replace rational ones. Another war must never be repeated.

Divided for over 65 years, Korea is the only country in the world that still remains the same after the end of the Cold War. Presently, animosity between South Korea and North

Korea is increasing. As Jesus lamented with tears over Jerusalem, the way to peace seems still to be hidden. We, too, weep as our hearts are broken over the death and destruction that has already occurred in the most recent hostilities, and over the horrible human tragedy that another war inevitably would create.

As peace-loving people, this is indeed the time to pray for God's mercy, wisdom and guidance. Our prayer should also entail our commitment to being an instrument of peace. We must encourage every means that may help ease the tension and enhance positive relations between South and North. We are called to be a peace-making people in whatever ways we can. Following the Prince of Peace and God's own vision of peace for the world, we shall never give up on the prospects of peace for such a time as this.

In Christ,

Jeremiah Park

Report: Accountability Top Church Priority

(UMNS)—The United Methodist Church needs to institute widespread reforms – from consolidating general church agencies to holding bishops and clergy accountable for church growth—to revitalize the denomination, a churchwide advisory group says.

The Call to Action Steering Team's recently released final report, says the status quo of a shrinking and aging U.S. church is "toxic" and unsustainable.

"We must reduce the perceived distance between the general Church (including the general agencies), the annual conferences, and local congregations," the report said. "We must refashion and strengthen our approaches in leadership development, deployment, and supervision. . . . In short, we must change our mindset so that our primary focus and commitment are on fostering and sustaining congregational vitality."

Among the group's recommendations:

- Starting in January 2011, make congregational vitality the church's "true first priority" for at least a decade.
- Dramatically reform clergy leadership development, deployment, evaluation and accountability. This would include dismissing ineffective clergy and sanctioning under-performing bishops.

- Collect statistical information in consistent and uniform ways for the denomination to measure attendance, growth and engagement. "We should passionately care about results," the group said.
- Reform the Council of Bishops, with the active bishops assuming responsibility for promoting congregational vitality and for establishing a new culture of accountability throughout the church.
- Consolidate general church agencies and align their work and resources with the priorities of the church and the decade-long commitment to build vital congregations. Some of the recommendations may require the approval of General Conference, the church's top legislative body.

The team based its recommendations on two studies it commissioned from independent researchers. One was an "Operational Assessment of the Connectional Church" that found the church was undergoing a "creeping crisis of relevance" and rated general agencies

below average in fulfilling the church's mission.

Another study, "The Vital Congregations Research Project," analyzed data from 32,228 UM churches in North America and classified 4,961 congregations, or 15 percent, as "high-vital" local churches. The study found that four key drivers of congregational vitality are effective pastoral leadership, multiple small groups, diverse worship styles and a high percentage of spiritually engaged laity in leadership roles.

A big part of that 10-year emphasis is holding church leaders accountable for church vitality. The report recommends the denomination create "prompt and humane ways" for under-performing clergy to exit or be declined entry into the professional ministry in the first place. The report also recommends sanctions for under-performing bishops.

The steering team's final report, the operational assessment report and the congregational vitality report are all available in their entirety at www.umc.org/calltoaction.

Volunteers Needed for Haiti Missions

February 3–10: There are two openings for this Haiti VIM trip. Applicants should go to <http://www.nyac.com/pages/detail/1740>, for more details. Other trips in 2011 are as follows: March 8–15, April 5–12, May 6–13, June 17–24, July 18–25, August 19–26, September 16–23, and October 21–28.

Day of Mindfulness Brings Christians, Buddhists Together

BY REV. MANDY IAHN

On November 11, 14 United Methodists from around the conference gathered at Bluecliff Monastery, a Buddhist community established by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in Pine Bush, N.Y. The Day of Mindfulness was organized by the Commission on Christian Unity and Interfaith Concerns to promote understanding and religious tolerance among Christians and Buddhists, as well as to offer a unique spiritual experience to Christian seekers. Not only were our hopes realized, but the day turned out to be a wonderful blessing to all who attended.

The day began with a recorded lecture by Thich Nhat Hanh. Thay, as Hanh's students call him, began the talk noting that Buddha himself was a teacher, and that all people—regardless of their religion—can learn from Buddha's instruction. This comment alone made the day at Bluecliff less threatening. There was no attempt to persuade one to adhere to any sort of belief or doctrine, simply to listen and learn. Thay explained the importance of full mindfulness of breathing, saying that it is our breath that connects us to the present moment, our bodies, our feelings, our minds and our hearts.

After the lecture, the 40 people in attendance, including Buddhist monks and nuns, as well as lay people, walked around the property of the monastery and through the woods. This walking meditation encouraged us to be mindful of our



The day included a walking meditation through the woods at the Bluecliff monastery.

walking, our breathing and the glories of nature.

Following the walk, we came together for a vegan meal, which was eaten in silence. Afterward, many of the Christians in attendance remarked how difficult it was to eat in silence, especially considering that mealtime

is a common time for fellowship and conversation in the Christian tradition.

After lunch, the United Methodists gathered together to reflect on our day and all that we had seen, heard, and felt. Many noted the simplicity and peacefulness of the people and traditions in Buddhism, and how often, the busyness of 21st century life prevented experiencing the presence of God in the moment. The beauty of mindfulness, which simply put is present moment awareness and attention, is that it establishes one in the here and now, uniting body, mind and spirit, and increasing clarity and focus. We decided that mindfulness leads to gratefulness, joy and a rich prayer life.

Afterwards, the United Methodists joined the others to again reflect on the power of mindfulness. It was a meaningful and deeply spiritual time of sharing. As we came to a close, one of the Buddhist brothers, a former Catholic, asked us if we would like to sing them a song. As our group began singing "Amazing Grace," others began to sing with us, including some of the Buddhist monks and nuns and laity in attendance. It was one of the most beautiful and harmonious

spiritual moments I have ever had, and it truly demonstrated that people of differing beliefs can come together in unity and peace. With tears in my eyes, I looked around the meditation hall at the many smiling faces and thanked God for this blessing.

OBITUARY

Rev. Frank A. Horbert

Rev. Frank A. Horbert died November 24, in Middletown, N.Y., at age 89. Horbert served NYAC churches in Branford, Conn., and Smithtown, Southold and Staten Island (Woodrow), N.Y., before retiring in 1990. After retirement, he served in the Wyoming Conference at First UMC, Deposit; Hancock; McClure and North Sanford, all in New York.

Horbert is survived by a daughter and three sons: Sandra (Ron) Heines of Montgomery, N.Y.; Frank A. (Joan) Horbert, Jr., of Baldwin, N.Y.; Paul R. (Deborah) Horbert of Dana, N.C.; Jeff

(Dale) Horbert of Sound Beach, N.Y. Nine grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren, and one great great-grandchild also survive. He was preceded in death by his wife of 67 years, Yolanda, in November 2009.

A Memorial service was held December 11, at the First Presbyterian Church, 137 Clinton St., Montgomery, N.Y.

Expressions of concern can be sent to: Ms. Sandra Heines, 70 Wallkill Ave., Montgomery, NY 12549. Memorial gifts may be given to: North Sanford UMC, c/o George Lang, 344 Melody Hill Road, Afton, NY 13730.

Times Story Focuses on Pleasantville Service

Pastor Steven Phillips and the United Methodist church of Pleasantville were mentioned in a *New York Times* column, published November 21, about a multi-faith Thanksgiving service in the community. Christians, Jews, Muslims and Buddhists all gathered for the service and fellowship at the Pleasantville Community Synagogue.

When asked by the Times about what change might come from the event, Phillips said, "My Buddhist friends say we can only begin by changing ourselves, and by changing yourself and those close to you, sooner or later the world changes."

The full story can be found at, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/22/nyregion/22towns.html?_r=2.

Sag Harbor Celebrates History, New Home

Continued from page 1

so excited to be a part of your journey. You have come this far by faith. You have come this far by grace.”

The bishop also applauded the work of MacLeod, and announced that the pastor had been approved for associate membership in the conference. “We need more pastors like your pastor,” Park added. MacLeod has grown the church from about 12 members to more than 45.

During the consecration, chairperson Bruce Stafford presented the building on behalf of the church’s board of trustees. Bishop Park also dedicated the communion table and baptismal font.

As light from the setting sun streamed in the windows, Park offered a message inspired by Psalm 127: *Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.* He suggested three signs that indicate if the Lord is truly in the house.

First, the place must be claimed as a house of prayer where people are intentional about creating an intense, intimate relationship with God. Secondly, the Lord is present if people become a temple of God. “The house of God must be built within us, or the house of God will not stand,” he said.

And lastly, God is in the house when the church becomes a bearer of Good News—“when you live into God’s vision of a new world . . . Your presence as a house of God makes a difference in the world,” Park said.

In closing, the bishop alluded to his recent 5k run at the ING Hartford Marathon as he commended the church for running the race so well for 200 years. “But now you are at a new starting line to run the race for the prize,” he said, “All to the glory of God for another 200 years.”

Musicians Bill Cooper and Bette Kron of Nightsong provided music for the event with a mixture of praise songs and hymns. Linda Bonaccorso, a member of the congregation, sang “He’s Been Faithful to Me,” as an offering was collected. The church matched the amount collected and donated all of the funds to the Bishop’s Partners in Mission Fund.

Clergy members from the Sag Harbor faith community and other UMC pastors and congregants from around the district joined in the celebration, which included a reception in the walk-out lower level of the church.

The 7,400-square-foot building, nestled in the woods just off the Bridgehampton-Sag Harbor Turnpike, sports a simple steeple with a cross at the top. Just off the main entrance are a fellowship space with a kitchenette, a Sunday School room, bathrooms, and the stairway and



ABOVE: The lower level offers a walkout entrance with a small patio and timber steps. **LEFT:** Church members welcomed visitors as they arrived for the dedication.



LEFT: Pastor Tom MacLeod and Superintendent Adrienne Brewington, right, chat with church members and visitors after the service. **BELOW:** Bishop Park speaks to the son of trustee Bruce Stafford.



Bill Cooper and Bette Kron, who perform as Nightsong, offered music for the celebration.

elevator to the lower level. The worship space fills the middle of the building, with a high row of windows on the side walls that flood the space with light. The center aisle leads to the communion table and pulpit, and looks out on the changing scenery framed by another large window. The lower level includes a full kitchen and a large open space for meetings and dinners.



St. Stephen's UMC Celebrates Restoration

BY ADAM WISNIESKI

Excerpted from The Riverdale Press

Years of fund-raising and months of construction has finally restored St. Stephen's United Methodist Church to its original glory, an accomplishment reflected in the joyous smiles of those gathered for its rededication on Sunday, Oct. 24.

After the ceremony, congregants met in the basement of the church to listen to Rev. Nathaniel Dixon's jazz group and talk with their neighbors.

Congregation member Chella Das dragged a reporter outside to look at what he called an "accidental joy." One of the newly installed ceiling lights at the front of the church could not be turned off for two days for lack of a light switch and shone through the stained glass window on the corner of the church. From the sidewalk on Marble Hill Avenue, Mr. Das pointed up to the window that was glowing.

Das, who has been attending St. Stephen's for 30 years, said the window—once covered in grime—had never looked so beautiful.

After the major restoration of the front and one side of St. Stephen's, the church once again looks like it did in 1898, the year the building, designed by Alexander McMillan Welch, was completed.

It was considered one of the most beautiful houses of worship in the area. For 50 years, the church deteriorated until it was given a

renovation in the 1950s. Some of the original intricacies of Welch's design were covered up or removed. Another 50-plus years saw the church beaten by the weather and slowly decaying.

Two years ago, Pastor Dixon and a group of dedicated individuals decided to do something about it. The restoration committee, as they called themselves, began a vigorous fund-raising campaign. The Park Avenue UMC Trust Fund and the United Methodist City Society donated \$150,000 each and the congregation itself far surpassed its original goal of \$50,000.

But unforeseen water damage needed to be fixed. So parishioners started a shingle campaign, selling old shingles and letting people sign the backs of the new ones that have now been installed. They aimed to raise \$5,000 and surpassed that goal, too.

On Sunday, Rev. Dr. William S. Shillady from the United Methodist City Society, gave an uplifting sermon before Dixon grabbed his saxophone and led his congregation outside. He played "When the Saints Go Marching In," and more than 70 people sang along as they marched out the front door.

The St. Stephen's community, consisting of both English language and Spanish language congregations stood on the corner of West 228th Street and Marble Hill Avenue as Dixon, Shillady, and Bishop F. Herbert Skeete rededicated the church they all take pride in.

The new bell in the tower rang



PHOTO BY KARSTEN MORAN

The restoration of the front and northwest sides of St. Stephen's UMC was celebrated on October 24.

out across Marble Hill, officially announcing St. Stephen's makeover to the neighborhood.

"It's really a pleasure to see the old place restored again" said Urban Ellis, a member of St. Stephen's since 1956, and the chairman of the restoration committee.

"I'm excited," said Dixon after the ceremony. "I like the way it looks like a community."

"It's like our dream came true," said Dorothy Shepherd, a member

of the restoration board. "We can relax, take a breather, but we have to start back up in January."

The job is not yet complete. It is hard to see, but the southeast side and back are still in disrepair. The committee plans to raise more money and will continue to improve the church.

The complete story can be found at www.riverdalepress.com/stories/St-Stephens-new-face-rejuvenates-old-faith,47139.

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>.

Rethinking Worship & Song Event

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.



LEFT: Guest speaker “Betty,” far left, talks with Kathleen Tan, Dr. Mahjabeen Hassan and Victor Fama. Tan and Fama are from the Many Branches Buddhist Sangha, and Hassan from the American Muslim Women’s Association. **RIGHT:** Young adults served as waiters to cover the cost of admission. All were deeply moved by the experience.

NYAC VIM Trip Inspires Anti-Human Trafficking Effort

BY REV. STEVE PHILLIPS
UMC Pleasantville, N.Y.

In January 2010, a group of nine members of the New York and New Jersey annual conferences embarked on a Volunteers in Mission trip to Thailand and Cambodia under the leadership of Rev. Laura Galbraith of Asbury UMC, Forestville, Conn. Of nine pastors, four had visited the region before. Rev. Carolyn Stapleton lived in Thailand as a child where her father served as a diplomat. Rev. Jay Kim and Rev. Gunshik Shim had visited the region as part of a reconnaissance trip for sending the first VIM teams to the area in almost a decade.

I had made several trips to both Thailand and Cambodia as an executive with an international chain of hotels in the 1990s. Like many commercial tourists to exotic lands, I had accompanied groups of businessmen on walks of streets in places named Patpong and Pattaya as a curious observer. Of course, what I saw there—young women and girls caught in the sex trade walking the streets—was deeply troubling, but life goes on. And after returning to my home in London, it was quickly a case of “out of sight, out of mind.”

What a different experience it is to visit a country as a member of a VIM team living and working closely with the people served by the United Methodist Church in countless poor regions of the world. This time when I returned to my home in aptly named Pleasantville, I could not forget the faces of the wonderful children with whom we had played and prayed, because I knew that the odds are that some of them will end up in the brothels of cities like Bangkok and Phnom Penh. The thought haunts me. As it turns out, Pastor Laura was having similar concerns and we started corresponding on how our churches might get involved in the fight against human trafficking.

Now enter two powerful books on the topic of human trafficking and other indignities endured by women in many parts of the world: *The Road of Lost Innocence*, *The Story of a Cambodian Heroine* by Somaly Mam, and *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by New York Times columnists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. These books grabbed my attention like a snapping turtle and just would not let go. After more soul-searching and correspondence with Pastor Laura, the idea of holding a benefit dinner at the church began to germinate.

For me, the effort was never really about raising money; it was about raising consciousness and entering into a spiritual journey. After all, if you look at countries where sex trafficking thrives—places like Thailand, Cambodia, Pakistan and, unfortunately, the United States—all are ostensibly religious countries. Sex trafficking seems to be an “equal opportunity” sin. Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and (I suspect but can’t substantiate) Jews all turn a blind eye to having young girls and children sold into the most horrific of circumstances imaginable. How is this possible?

So, from the very start, it was important that the effort arise out of a dialogue between people of several faiths. I contacted friends from two local religious groups, the American Muslim Women’s Association (AMWA) and the Many Branches Buddhist Sangha, and presented the idea of us working together on the project. After some false starts, the \$50 a person benefit dinner was scheduled for Saturday evening on October 16th.

Now enter the power of the Holy Spirit! Less than two weeks before the dinner, a woman (I’ll call her Betty) entered an exam room of Dr. Mahjabeen Hassan, who is AMWA’s chairperson.

In the course of giving her medical history,

she mentioned that as a child in western Massachusetts, her family turned her over to groups of male tourists from New York City coming to the Berkshires for golf and club meetings. Dr. Hassan could scarcely believe her ears. When she showed Betty the poster for our dinner, Betty said that although she had never spoken publicly about her childhood, she felt that God had sent her to our event so that she could at last tell her story.

When the time came for Betty to speak at the dinner, we prayed that God would help her get through the trauma of retelling her story. She was a tower of strength. For more than 20 minutes, the group of more than 80 people was completely mesmerized. No one could believe that such things could happen less than a two-hour’s drive from where we were sharing a sumptuous Thai meal together.

We also heard from Ken Franzblau who works fighting human trafficking with Equality Now, a highly effective champion for women around the world highlighted in *Half the Sky*. He spoke of the global scope of human trafficking that makes it the world’s third largest commercial enterprise behind narcotics and arms dealing.

Reflecting on the months leading up to our benefit dinner, I could not have imagined the event being a more resounding success. I had asked the local bookstore to provide copies of both *The Road of Lost Innocence* and *Half the Sky*. I warned the people in attendance not to read them unless they were prepared to have their lives transformed as mine had been. We sold out! Who can say where the journeys of those who attended the benefit will take them, but doing nothing is definitely not an option.

Rev. Steve Phillips is a member of the Conference Council on Christian Unity and Inter-religious Concerns.

NYAC Names New Archivist

Beth Patkus joined the C. Wesley Christman Archives in November as archivist for the New York Annual Conference. Patkus had been working as a private consultant specializing in archives and library preservation for the past 12 years.

Patkus views local church records

as a treasure trove of information for those researching their family and community histories. "I was attracted by the Archives' commitment to reaching out to local churches and others in the Conference—to share various aspects of Conference history, to encourage churches and others to locate and save old records, and to assist local churches in preserving the records they are creating today,"



Archivist Beth Patkus

she wrote in an email.

In the coming year, Patkus hopes to offer a series of workshops and exhibits highlighting the importance of historical documents in telling our collective story.

Churches can contact Patkus for help in identifying, organizing, and managing their historical records. "We are available not only as a repository of historical records for closed churches, but also as a resource for advice and assistance about current records," she noted.

Patkus earned her undergraduate degree from Wellesley College and her masters in information and library studies with a concentration in archival administration from the University of Michigan. She has also worked as assistant archivist at the Archives of the Archdiocese of Boston, and in the field service office at Northeast Document Conservation Center, a regional library and archives conservation center.

Patkus lives in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., with her husband, and two daughters.

CBS to Broadcast Christmas Service Taped at SPSA

"We hope that hearts will be warmed, that lives might be changed—and that we'll have a little fun, too."

That's the message that Rev. K Karpen, pastor of the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew, hopes will be conveyed from his sanctuary to a national audience via a Christmas Eve broadcast on CBS-TV. A service of lessons and carols entitled, "A Christmas for Everyone," will be taped at the Manhattan church on Sunday morning, Dec. 12, and will be shown by about 96 percent of the CBS affiliates on Friday, Dec. 24, from 11:35 p.m. to 12:35 a.m.

CBS approached Karpen through the National Council of Churches several months ago about staging a full production, complete with seven cameras. The pastor believes that the diversity of the faith community at SPSA played a significant role in the request. "We have people in the arts, people of other faiths, and people that are really struggling," said Karpen.

Diverse communities of faith know the church on the Upper West Side for its openness whenever they have a service, or when others need their help. The church houses a number of vital social programs, including an emergency food program, a shelter for homeless women, and a tutoring program for neighborhood children.

"We are thrilled to have a chance to share the message of Christmas in this way," said Karpen. "Church can be very different than most people picture it."

Bishop Jeremiah J. Park will read one of the scripture lessons along with members of the church's diverse congregation. Music will include selections from the children's choir and the 40-voice adult choir accompanied by harp and strings, and directed by Dr. Frank Glass. Tony Award winning actress Victoria Clark, an active member of the church, will offer a solo version of "O Holy Night."

Karpen will offer a short homily focusing on how the reincarnation of Christ is for everyone, not just for Christians, in keeping with the broadcast's theme. Pre-recorded footage of some of the church's outreach programs will be seen during his message. Karpen along with Rabbi Rolando Matalon of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, and Imam Talib-Rashid of the Mosque of the Islamic Brotherhood, will discuss opportunities for people of different faiths to come together in peace and love for the common good.

Call to Update Pension Beneficiaries

Dear friends,

In the last few months, you received a beneficiary update mailing sent by the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits. All participants were sent this mailing asking them to confirm or update their beneficiary information. Updating this information will help the General Board locate and make payments to the correct beneficiaries when needed.

The funny thing was, that I found that my father, who is deceased for 27 years as the listed beneficiary of my account from the early days of my ministerial career. I had no clue. So I immediately updated the information to my wife. Obviously, information for the three different pension plans which some of us are in, was not coordinated. So this is your chance to make things right.

Please review the beneficiaries currently on file with the General Board, and either sign and confirm the current beneficiary information, or update the information by completing a new beneficiary designation form. The necessary forms, instructions and pre-paid envelopes were included in the mailing.

The General Board has only received responses from 43 percent of the recipients; the NYAC response rate is even lower than that.

To save your board a great deal of money, please respond now to this mailing. In January, the General Board will begin sending notices to those who have not responded via certified mail. In the interest of good stewardship, your conference board asks you to respond as soon as possible. Each response to the first mailing will reduce expenses related to the certified mailing.

Please take the five minutes to save the board the \$5 it will cost in postage and the additional cost of staff time to update you information.

For additional information about beneficiary designations, please visit www.gbophb.org/retirement/articles/beneficiary.asp.

If you have questions about the General Board's beneficiary update efforts, please contact Debbie Reid at 1-847-866-4576 or dreid@gbophb.org.

I can try to answer your general questions about this or any health benefit or pension related matters

Merry Christmas to all of you!

Bill Shillady

Chairperson of the NYAC Board of Pensions and Health Benefits