

"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

February 18, 2011

Construction Ministry is Spirit Builder



Bill Burnside, Shannon Cobb, George Woodring, Jose DaCruz and Mark Konopka raise a wall to create a new foyer in the carriage house.

BY PETER SEIRUP

Spirit Builders member,
Jesse Lee Memorial UMC

Five years ago the members of Jesse Lee Memorial UMC were looking at a scary opportunity. Two empty and derelict buildings

across the parking lot, once part of the estate where the main church building was

constructed,

were up for sale.

While some

church leaders had dreamed for years of buying the buildings to expand our ministries, the chance to actually do so was frightening. Looking back, the decision to trust in God has turned out better than we dared to imagine.



Dackarie Bowes was ready to help.

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MINISTRY WITH THE POOR

Fighting for A Living Wage for All God's Children

**BY REV. JESSICA L. ANSCHUTZ
AND MARY ELLEN KRIS**

"Pass the bill ... right now" reverberated throughout the great sanctuary of Convent Avenue Baptist Church where as many as 1,400 people of faith, community leaders, labor leaders and large numbers of elected officials assembled on January

13 for an interfaith service and mass meeting for living wages.

"The bill"—the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act (Intro 251/Living Wage Bill) authored by Bronx City Council Member Oliver Koppel—is still pending before the New York City Council. It would require

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SAVE THE DATE

Clergy: Is It Time to Retire?

February 25: Representatives from the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits will explain the benefits and risks of retiring in this seminar from 9 a.m.–2:30 p.m., at the Conference Center, White Plains, N.Y. A representative of the Social Security administration will also be part of the day's program. Limited to 50 participants, including spouses. To reserve a space, call Pat Perruccio at 914-997-1570, ext 229, or email pperruccio@nyac.com.

From Hosanna to Alleluia!

February 25–26: Workshop will bring together pastors, musicians, and worship team members for a time of brainstorming and planning of this year's Holy Week services. Begins 10 a.m. Friday, and ends after lunch Saturday at Camp Epworth, High Falls, N.Y. Sessions led by Jorge Lockward, Rev. Valerie Bridgeman, Rev. Johnna Wheaton, and Debbi Tyree will focus on music, preaching and visual arts. Overnight reservation including four meals at Epworth is \$90; commuters (four meals) are \$50. Limited to 60; to register by Feb. 20, go to <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/3334>.

Safe Sanctuary Workshops

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

February 26: # White Plains Trinity UMC (MET). Check-in at 9 a.m.; workshop runs 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

March 12: Windham UMC (CH). Check-in at noon; workshop runs 12:30 p.m.–3:30 p.m.

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>.

Permaculture Design Course

March–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 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.

Summit on Children's Ministry

March 25–26: NYAC presents this first-ever event, "And a Child Shall Lead Us," featuring two nationally recognized leaders in children's ministry, Melanie Gordon from GBOD, and Leanne Hadley, founder of First Steps Spirituality Center. Begins at 6 p.m. Friday; ends at 3:30 p.m. Saturday at Renaissance Hotel, West Harrison, NY. Pastors, Christian educators, and parents are encouraged to attend with children in grades 2–5, who can sit through three 75-minute seminars. Cost is \$65 for adults, \$25 for children, not including housing. Register online at <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/3280>; questions to Lynda Gomi at 914-615-2219.

Workshop on Construction Ministry

April 1–3 or May 13–15: Members of Jesse Lee Memorial UMC in Ridgefield, Conn., will share their experiences in two weekend work/study retreats. The "Spirit Building At Your Church" weekends will be held at Camp Epworth, High Falls, N.Y. See the related stories on Pages 1, 4 and 5, or check out the new web site, www.thespiritbuilders.org. Details and registration info are also on the NYAC web site, <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/3325>.

Bishop's Convocation With Bishop Schnase

Opening to Grace, Cultivating Fruitfulness

The 61st Bishop's Convocation saw the return of Robert Schnase for a continuation of the dialogue about cultivating a fruitful witness for God. But rather than a congregational model, Bishop Schnase's new book examines how five practices—radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity—can be nurtured in our personal lives.

The convocation again took place at the Hudson Valley Resort and Spa in Kerhonksen, N.Y. Bishop Jeremiah Park opened the meeting by welcoming the group “in anticipation of what God has in store for us—to restore us, inspire, equip, and renew us.”

In the “Five Practices of Fruitful Living,” Schnase, who serves the Missouri Conference, stresses how our faith can be deepened when we receive God's love, love God in return, grow in Christ, serve others, and give of ourselves fully. Schnase reminded the gathering that Jesus' ministry was practice driven.

“Methodism began as a way of life,” he said. “John Wesley was intent on deepening certain practices that shape our relationship to God.”

But those practices can fall prey to what Schnase called “spiritual acquiescence; a sleepiness of spirit that causes us to miss what's right in front of us . . . to stop



Bishop Schnase stressed that when we care for one another, we experience the personal care of Christ.



LEFT: Tisha Jermin, Dale Ellen Krazmien, Rhonda Taylor and Cherie Philips prepare the table for Holy Communion. RIGHT: Music was plentiful thanks to Hector LaPorta on guitar and Patrick Perrin on keyboards.

seeing what God notices.” Instead, Christians need to be spiritually attentive, Schnase said. “If we lose the discerning eye, we lose the ability to see what God is putting before us.”

In our spiritual journey there can be “threshold moments,” Bishop Schnase said. “Moments when stepping across a threshold

changes all, turns people upside down.” He urged us to remain open to those threshold moments.

At the end of the day Tuesday, Glory Road, a praise band from the St. James UMC in Clinton, N.Y., provided a mix of performance and sing-along numbers. The band included Pastor David Jolly.

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Jesse Lee UMC Building Room to Serve

Continued from page 1

When we prayed, “Come, Holy Spirit,” our prayers were answered. It seemed as if the Holy Spirit flooded the new properties and all the activities supporting this church initiative. Whenever decisions needed to be made on how to proceed, we were able to press on with a peace that transcended all understanding.

Over the five years nearly the entire congregation has participated in the “Room to Serve” project. Led by a ragtag construction crew—lifted up by God—we have renovated nearly 8,000 square feet and built another 1,000 square feet of new space; work that has included a chapel, a meeting hall, breakout meeting rooms, seven new bathrooms, the renovation of four bathrooms and three kitchens, creating a new parsonage and renovating another. Only plumbing and electrical work was hired out. The church volunteers did the rest. And all the projects came in on time and on budget. Is this a miracle?

Yes, if God’s provision to those who fervently seek him is a miracle. Otherwise, it is just a lesson that we should be attentive to God’s timing in everything we do.

But sometimes in the moment, the path is not so

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Exterior renovations on the carriage house in October 2008 were the first work project.



Mark Konopka, left, paints the trim on the carriage house with Pastor Bill Pfohl.



Before and after photos of the bathroom renovation in the second parsonage.

Building Confidence In God

Rev. William Pfohl is senior pastor of Jesse Lee Memorial UMC, and offered these insights about the work of the Spirit Builders:

How has this ministry changed your congregation? Our need for more “room to serve” coupled with tight finances could have been extremely discouraging, but the “stone soup” approach has made the congregation much more

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Ministry Builds Room To Serve

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clear. We bought the buildings and then launched a capital campaign to pay for them. Fortunately, the congregation was moved to contribute as a gift to subsequent generations and as a gesture of thanksgiving to those who left us with such a nice church campus in the first place. It was our turn. We sought \$1.5 million to buy and renovate the buildings. We collected about \$1.2 million.

Was God testing us? Now we owned two derelict buildings without the funds to renovate them. But then our Appalachia Service Project volunteer ministry decided to have a four-day retreat to renovate the exteriors. We could afford that. The work would curtail the buildings' deterioration, and improve morale to spruce up the exteriors. Plus the congregation would feel more ownership having done the repair work themselves.

The retreat was an extravaganza. About 30 people stayed the whole time, and another 40 pitched in at some point during the long weekend. God supplied four days of sunny 70-degree weather on Columbus Day. The volunteer food service was as good as it gets. Evening fellowship grew more and more profound each day. The buildings were beautiful . . . outside.

So wait, maybe God never wanted us to raise the whole \$1.5



Thursday lunch group members included Andy and Carolyn Weuling, from left, Rev. Bill Pfohl, Bill Burnside, Glen Strothers, Peter Seirup, Bruce Kohl and Jack Seirup.

million. The time and talent offered at the repair retreat had a much more profound impact on the building of church relationships than the writing of checks had. Could we really marshal enough time and talent to renovate the insides of the buildings as well? Was this God's plan?

It was at this stage that we started to really experience what it means to be the Body of Christ. It seems that God had given us all that we needed—we just had to look for it. With the guidance of our resident Advocate, it turned out that we could plan, design, estimate, and do demolition, carpentry, masonry, insulation, sheetrock, mud, wood trim, paint, and tile.

It became like the story of "Stone Soup." In addition to the congregation, vendors in the community and officers of town agencies all contributed input to make our Holy stew.

The smaller of the two buildings had apparently been an old shed for the horses to service the larger carriage house. The mid-20th century renovations made to the building were well worn and dysfunctional. Some of us saw the building as a throwaway. After all, what good ever came out of a lowly stable? The building is now slightly

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Peter Seirup works on the cupola.

Ministry Builds Room To Serve

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bigger, and an absolute jewel of a little chapel.

As long as we prayed and met in Christian community and worked as the Body of Christ, our paths were made straight. The path became clearer, and we got better at walking it together. Our motto became: “We love working on a church,” every time something just worked out. It was—and is—one long God moment.

Along the way, the “Thursday Work Group” was born. Some of us are retired and could work during the week. Others would forgo income in the faith that God would provide in other ways; and God did not disappoint. Every Thursday at 12:30 is still potluck lunch in the carriage house—right after the communion service in the chapel.

The first Saturday of the month became a day to save; it was “Demolition Day” or “Sheetrock Day” or “Tiling Day.” You can do it! We will show you how.

After turning the carriage house’s apartment into a new parsonage by adding two bedrooms and a bathroom in the attic, we declared our new buildings

finished. But moved on to make major updates to the 1964 ranch house that had been the parsonage for the associate pastor. And in the main church building, we renovated bathrooms, creating a new handicap-accessible space there.

The increased space has allowed our ministries to expand: Both the children’s and youth programs have doubled, our prayer and healing ministry has its own dedicated space, we’ve added a third pastor and a fulltime music minister, and now offer four Sunday services instead of just two.

The Spirit Builders Council now feels called to sow the seeds of this volunteer construction ministry throughout the conference with two work/study weekend retreats at Camp Epworth on April 1–3 and May 13–15 called, “Spirit Building At Your Church.” In these seminars, we will share what we have learned so it might be used by other churches. We may also be available for some hands-on consulting. For more details and registration info, go to our new web site, www.thespiritbuilders.org, or the NYAC web site, <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/3325>.

Construction Ministry Renews Confidence in God

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confident that when we offer what we have, others will too and God brings about a result that is greater than what we dared expect. The community has witnessed the transformation of the buildings with great celebration, but more than that we have gained a reputation as a “hands on church” where everybody’s hands are appreciated.

What has surprised you the most? The laughter. We are working but it looks and feels like play most of the time. It is community puzzle-making and

there is a kind of childlike joy that comes from wondering when and then giving your piece and seeing that it fits.

What has been the biggest blessing? The faith-filled concept that we can in fact do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We just need to stay with the questions and honestly seek God’s will and the answers come in due time.

Anything other insights? If things had gone according to my original plan. We would have raised the money that we targeted,

and would not have built a chapel or a residence. Professionals would have done the work, and we would have no profession of how God works through our hands. The people connection and sense of God in our midst in “ordinary time” would not have been needed and so community member homes would not have been cared for, the town law which unintentionally made life harder for the less fortunate would not have been changed and . . . who knows how many churches would not have had a taste of this for themselves. Who can tell where the ripples of this splash will go? God is so amazing.

Clergy, Laity Press for NYC Living Wage

Continued from page 1

developers and major employers on city subsidized or financed projects to pay at least a “living wage,” defined as \$10/hr plus benefits, or \$11.50 per hour. The legislation also provides for an annual cost of living adjustment for the living wage.

The upper Manhattan event in support of the Fair Wages Act was organized by the Interfaith Coalition for the NYC Living Wage Campaign, and the Micah Institute at New York Theological Seminary. The gathering included representatives from several United Methodist Churches in the New York Annual Conference, along with clergy and laity from dozens of other Christian, Jewish and Muslim houses of worship; the choir of the First Corinthian Baptist Church in Manhattan; soloists; personal testimonies, prayers, preaching, and speeches from several elected officials.

Held just days before Martin Luther King Day, the call to action for this event, and for the overall NYC Living Wage Campaign, comes from the prophetic words of the Rev. Dr. King spoken in support of a living wage for striking Memphis Sanitation Workers, shortly before his death in 1968,

“Now is the time to make an adequate income a reality for all God’s Children. Now is the time for city hall to take a position for that which is just and honest.”



The sanctuary at Convent Ave. Baptist Church was filled beyond capacity for a multi-faith service in support of fair wages for New Yorkers.

King was assassinated while he was in Memphis supporting the sanitation strike, and on the eve of launching a nationwide economic justice campaign known as, the “Poor People’s Campaign.” In the words of the Living Wage NYC organizers, “In 1968, Dr. King gave his life supporting a living wage for Sanitation Workers in Memphis, Tenn. This MLK Day, join the fight for fair wages in NYC!”

Those who filled the Convent Avenue Baptist sanctuary—to standing room capacity—know that an adequate income is still not a reality for all of God’s children in New York City. In the city alone, 317,000 are low-wage workers and more than 63,000 of them are paid less than the legally required minimum wage. Many are also denied the overtime pay they rightly deserve.

The NYC Living Wage Campaign began as a grass roots movement of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition in response to the city’s plan to develop the historic Kingsbridge Armory into a retail mall. The city’s proposal promised only poverty wages—minimum wage jobs without benefits—for a community that urgently needs living wage jobs.

“Bloomberg (NYC Mayor Michael) says the economics of the living wage act don’t work for businesses and developers,” said Rev. Jeff Wells, senior pastor at Massapequa UMC and chair of the NYAC Board of Church and Society. “That’s what the rich always say to the poor and working people: Justice is not cost effective.”

When the mayor’s office refused

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Clergy, Laity Press for NYC Living Wage

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to negotiate on the wage issue, the City Council, in response to the community, blocked the Kingsbridge Armory project. What emerged is the broader-based interfaith coalition for a living wage, and the Fair Wages for New Yorkers bill. City Council

members who support the bill have said that increasing the spending power of the working poor will serve as a positive economic driver, as has been the case in other large cities such as Philadelphia and Los Angeles. (<http://www.craigslist.com/article/20110112/>

[FREE/110119940](http://www.craigslist.com/article/20110112/)).

Members and leaders of New Day UMC in the Bronx were among those who organized to try to persuade the city to require developers to pay a living wage to those employed at this massive Kingsbridge Armory project. New

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Bishop Urges Council to Pass Wage Bill

January 13, 2011

To Speaker Christine Quinn and the Members of the New York City Council:

I am writing to express my personal support and the support of the hundreds of churches and tens of thousands of United Methodists in the New York Annual Conference for the proposed "Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act." We adopted a resolution of support at our session in June 2010.

As people of faith, we ardently believe that God desires economic justice, as expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament, and other sacred writings. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, "Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers . . . Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke" (Isaiah 58:1-10). And the Letter from James to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations says, "Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts" (James 5:4).

Methodists in the U.S. have been advocating "a living wage in every industry" since 1908, and our legislative body, the General Conference, has repeatedly reaffirmed support for the living wage movement, calling "upon businesses and governments to adopt policies to ensure employees are paid sufficient wages to afford shelter, food,

clothing, health care and other basic expenses, according to local costs of living."

Every year, the City of New York subsidizes economic development projects with billions of taxpayer dollars. Yet, too often, the jobs created with these public subsidies pay poverty wages and provide no benefits. Other major cities across the U.S., such as Pittsburgh, Chicago, San Diego, and Los Angeles, require fair wages on many subsidized projects. These policies are not only equitable, but serve as economic drivers: they have led to the creation of good jobs for low-income families without hampering economic growth in those cities.

The Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act is an important step toward ensuring a living wage for New York City's low-wage workforce. It is a critical step in fighting poverty, providing a decent standard of living to working class individuals and families, and in fueling our economy.

Campaigning for economic justice over forty years ago, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King proclaimed, "Now is the time to make an adequate income a reality for all God's children." I urge you to support the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act and bring it to quick passage for a more just, fair, and vibrant New York City. Now is the Time!

Grace and Peace,

Jeremiah J. Park

Resident Bishop

Pressing for a Living Wage for NYC Workers

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Day is one of the newest churches in the conference.

“A lot of folks in our congregation in the Bronx can’t pay the rent on the low salaries they receive,” said Rev. Doug Cunningham, pastor of New Day who also serves on the steering committee of the Interfaith Coalition for a NYC Living Wage. “Many charity programs provide relief, but the people stay poor. A living wage helps people move out of poverty. We must insist that the city provide that path for working people in New York.”

The massive crowd at the January 13 meeting was moved to hear that Bishop Jeremiah Park had already spoken on this important economic justice issue. Bishop Park sent a strong letter to NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn, “to express [his] personal support and the support of hundreds of churches and tens of thousands of United Methodists in the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church for the proposed ‘Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act.’” (See the accompanying sidebar for the full text of the bishop’s letter.)

When Rev. Jessica L. Anschutz, associate pastor of Park Avenue UMC in Manhattan, was called upon to lead the “the challenge” portion of the interfaith service, she lifted up the Bishop’s letter of support and quoted his

exhortation: “I urge you to support the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act and bring it to quick passage for a more just, fair, and vibrant New York City. Now is the time!”

The bishop’s letter was prompted by a resolution passed at Annual Conference last June. Introduced by the NYAC Board of Church and Society, the resolution endorsed the efforts of the “Living Wage NYC” Campaign and urged the NYC Council to pass the legislation; urged all UM leaders, pastors and laypersons in NYC to contact their council members to support the living wage law; called upon the NYAC Board of Church and Society to assist the Living Wage Campaign “in whatever ways possible and . . . help publicize this effort throughout our Conference.”

As stated in the resolution, the Annual Conference passed this resolution because the “promotion of the living wage movement aligns with one of the four areas of ministry focus of the UMC this quadrennium: ‘Engaging in ministry with the poor.’”

“Ministry with the poor aspires to empower all persons, families, and communities to be economically self-sufficient, and remove structural impediments to achieving that goal,” said Rev. K Karpen, who is the ministry with the poor coordinator for the NYAC, as well as senior pastor

at St. Paul and St. Andrew UMC, explains that

As of this writing, 29 of the 51 NYC council members have signed on to co-sponsor the bill. The goal is to bring the bill to a vote by April 4, the anniversary of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination. The hope is to enlist the support of five more city council members before then, so as to be able to override a possible veto by Mayor Bloomberg.

City Council members who have not yet signed onto the bill include:

- Ruben Wills, Queens:
718-528-5712
- Leroy Comrie, Queens:
718-776-3700
- Erik Martin Dilan, Brooklyn:
718-963-3141
- Diana Reyna, Brooklyn:
718-931-1721
- James Vacca, Bronx:
718-931-1721
- Jessica Lapin, Manhattan:
212-980-1808

To learn more about the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act, or to become involved with NYC’s growing movement, visit www.livingwagenyc.com, or contact Ava Farkas at 212-684-5300, or via email livingwagenyc@gmail.com.

Anschutz is associate pastor at Park Avenue UMC, where Kris is lay leader; Kris also works for the General Board of Global Ministries.

Call for Nominees to 2 UMC Conferences

General and Jurisdictional Conferences take place every four years, and are important in the life of the United Methodist Church. That is the time when the direction for the church is set for the ensuing four years and beyond.

At General Conference, the Book of Discipline and the Book of Resolutions are revised, and the budget and church wide plans are approved. Bishops are elected at Jurisdictional Conferences. The 2012 General Conference will be held in Tampa, Fla., from April 24 to May 4; and Jurisdictional Conference for the Northeast Jurisdiction is July 18–20, 2012, in Charleston, W.Va.

Our delegates to both of these conferences will be elected during this year's annual conference at Hofstra University from June 8–11.

Lay members of the conference will elect the lay delegates. Prospective delegates are required to have been a member of a United Methodist Church for at least two years, and active participants for at least four years in a church in the New York Annual Conference. The 2008 Book of Discipline, paragraph 36, Article V outlines the laity requirements. They can also be found in the 2010 conference journal on page 383, section K.

Eligible laypersons should submit a signed



nomination statement to the conference secretary by April 1, 2011. The statement, on one side of an 8½ x 11" sheet of paper, should include a brief biographical sketch with name, contact information, local church, district and/or conference involvement, as well as other relevant information. Inclusion of a digital photograph is recommended.

One does not have to be a lay member of Annual Conference to be nominated. However, nominations from such persons should be accompanied by certification from the nominee's administrative board or church council chairperson, stating that the nominee meets the requirements laid out in the conference rules found on page 384 of the conference journal. (The Journal is also on the Conference web site, <http://www.nyac.com/pages/detail/1756>.)

Prospective lay delegates are encouraged to enter this process prayerfully, with full awareness of the responsibilities of being a delegate. It requires attendance and full participation in the General and Jurisdictional Conference sessions, as well as the monthly preconference meetings prior to the conferences for a year.

Prospective lay delegates will be introduced to the lay members of Annual Conference during the laity session on Wednesday, June 8.

Schnase: Opening to Grace, Cultivating Fruitfulness

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And when the "professional" comedian cancelled due to the snow on Wednesday night, a few not-so-shy souls stepped in. With Rev. Gertude Nation serving as emcee, the joke tellers included Eddie Duroseau, and pastors Jim Moore, Marian Hubbard, Cherie Philipps, Godfrey Uche, Matthew Schaeffer, T. Anne Daniel, John Capen, Carmen Margarita Ortiz, and Elizabeth Williams. Revs. Gabriel Akinbode, Patrick Perrin, and Hector LaPorta provided music.

During the convocation, Bishop Park announced:

- The conference has paid its full apportionments for the seventh year in a row.
- Two new district superintendents will be named

soon as Jeannette Bassinger-Ishii is retiring, and Noel Chin will be leaving the cabinet.

- Bob Miller is resigning as conference secretary at the end of annual conference in June.
- He is "preparing" for annual conference, and challenged every church to donate \$1 per pushup. The bishop plans to top the 120 he did last year.



Marion Hubbard gets some joke-telling support from Cherie Philipps.

Worship & Fun Fill Youth Ignite Weekend

BY ANNA BOSCO

Church of St. Peter &
St. Andrew

I've been to Ignite before and this has been the best so far.

It was held at an outdoors conference center. The place was covered in snow and one of the most beautiful places I have ever been. It was a perfect place to hold the retreat. There were four worships throughout the weekend full of youth preachers, guest speakers and much praise.

What made me think the most was a workshop called Mirror of Faith. It was about discrimination and bullying, and made me think about how I do or say things that can be harmful to other people without even realizing it.

My favorite part of the retreat was Saturday afternoon when we went sledding, which I love to do! Most people fell off part way down the hill, but I made it down the hill all four times! It was great to zip down the hill

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The singing was joyful, above, and the discussions thought-provoking, below, for the 336 participants at Ignite.



The youth bundled up against the bitter cold for some outdoor fun.

Pushup Challenge For Bishop Park

BY CHRISTIE R. HOUSE
NYAC Council on Youth
Ministry

Despite temperatures that dropped below zero most mornings, the 336 youth who attended the IGNITE retreat were not deterred from their weekend schedule of workshops,

tobogganing, and worship. This year's CCYM-sponsored youth event—held in a new venue—was sold-out.

During the weekend, Bishop Jeremiah Park reprised his push-up demonstration from Annual Conference, but this time the

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Ignite Teen: Faith Comes in Many Ways

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at high speeds hearing everybody chant, Moose! Moose! Moose!—because I was wearing a moose hat.

Ignite was a fun-filled retreat that the youth group had the pleasure of going on. There were challenges and difference of worship styles, but all in all, I will remember Ignite 2011!



The snow offered great sledding for Anna Bosco and friends.

Here is a poem that I wrote at Ignite:

*Don't know how many people have given me dirty looks
like I'm in my own little nook
i feel pressured to be up
—on my feet-
jumping and fist pumping
but i have my own faith
I wanna be in charge of my own fate
sitting here is enough for me.*

*You think you know the truth
that you are right and i am wrong
but I'll tell you right now the truth is football
don't know why i feel this way
don't even like to play
tomorrow night when I'm on my own
tired of studying deep in each and every bone
truth will still be the same
and God's message will remain
so to everyone who's hyped up tonight
just remember God's message in your life
as this service continues around me*

*God's word is spread
the love is enough to wake the dead
and may this always be.*

Pushup Challenge For Bishop Park

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bishop was challenged by Jayoo “Ryan” Lee, a youth from Hicksville UMC on Long Island.

Bishop Park began his demonstration by encouraging those gathered at the Taconic Retreat Center in Milan, N.Y., to care for their bodies—the vessel of God—over the course of their whole lives.

Park then declared that he would try to do more than 120 push-ups if the youth would count for him. When Lee said that he could do more pushups, the bishop welcomed him to the stage.

Park made it to 120 by the youth count, when Lee gave up the effort. But Bishop Park kept going to set a new bar of 150 push-ups. It is this reporter's opinion, however, that if Ryan Lee worked on his technique a bit, he could definitely give the bishop a run for his title at the 2011 New York Annual Conference.

House is the editor of New World Outlook magazine, General Board of Global Ministries, and an adult coordinator of NYAC's Council on Youth Ministries.

Grants Available for VBS, Summer Camp

The United Methodist City Society is requesting proposals for grants to local churches that operate summer day camps or Vacation Bible School programs. The funds are awarded through an application process; maximum request is \$3,000. All summer programs must be at least four weeks in length.

Applications—due by 4 p.m. March 1—must include a cover sheet, a written four-page proposal and a budget. Churches will be notified of awards by April 5. For more information or to receive an application package, please contact Aisha Campbell at acampbell@umcitysociety.org, or 212-870-3084, option 6.

In 2010, the City Society awarded \$30,000 to 20 UM churches for their summer programming. Some 1,800 children attended the programs.

Standing Up Against Bullying So No One Needs to Die

The song, “Nobody Died,” performed by The Wilkinsons*, affirms the fact that there have always been bullies in our schools and on our streets. A kid might be forced to give up his lunch money, or a girl might be called a mean name, but “nobody died.” Maybe someone brought a snake to school, but the thought that someone might bring a gun to school never even entered our minds.

We don’t excuse the bullying that took place when we were young, or make light of the emotional toll that name calling and intimidation takes on the victim. Physical damage is surely not the only measure of harm, but now guns, knives and fists have replaced intimidation and hurtful words as weapons of choice. Too many kids are being hurt and killed, often at the hands of classmates and peers. This has to stop!

There are no easy answers. The quote, “What you permit you promote,” rings true. Bullying and violence will continue as long as good people stand by and do nothing. Our silence says to the bully, “It is okay to do what you are doing.” Parents, teachers, students, or innocent bystanders, must be willing to become an advocate for those being put down, made fun of, and beat up on.

We are called to love God, to love each other, and to love ourselves. May we suggest a few things that can be done in the face of bullying and violence:

- Step in. If it is safe to do so, confront the bully and come to the aid of the victim.
- Be a friend to the victim. Don’t give in to peer



pressure to join in the bullying.

- Talk with the bully. Let them know how their actions may be affecting their target.
- Tell someone. Find a trusted person that you know will take action.
- Become an advocate for peace. Work to replace anger with kindness and pain with forgiveness.
- Make sure your school, church, and community have plans in place to deal with acts of bullying and violence; be proactive rather than reactive.

People will always disagree. People will always get angry. But nobody has to die. Let’s step up and say to the bullies, “enough is enough.” Let’s begin to take back our schools and our communities. Thanks for your help. The innocent victims of bullying and violence are counting on you.

*To listen to a video of The Wilkinsons’ “Nobody Died,” go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41GDtjpUXOw>.

For more information on the Children’s Home, call toll free, 800-772-6904, ext. 131, or visit the web site at www.chowc.org. Donations may be sent via the New York Conference advance number, 60-0588.

Retired Bishops Seek End to Gay Clergy Ban

UMNS REPORT

Thirty-three retired United Methodist bishops have released a statement calling on The United Methodist Church to remove its ban on homosexual clergy.

The bishops noted that the church has lifted other restrictions on clergy before.

“Our United Methodist Church, ashamed and repentant in the past, ended official and unofficial restrictions on candidacy, ordination and appointment for reason of race, gender and ethnicity,” says the “Statement of Counsel to the Church—2011”. “We believe the God we know in Jesus is leading us to issue this counsel and call—a call to transform our church life and our world.”

Nearly 40 percent of the denomination’s 85 retired bishops have signed the statement, released Jan. 31. Most signers live and serve in the United States. But they also include two retired leaders from the denomination’s central conferences—Bishops Joseph C. Humper of Sierra Leone and Franz W. Schäfer of Switzerland.

Retired Bishops Sharon Z. Rader and Donald A. Ott said they felt led to circulate the statement to their fellow retirees after studying Advent texts that emphasized the need of people not to be afraid.

The statement is the result of a prayerful consideration of the Bible, the church’s Wesleyan



UMNS PHOTO

Supporters of full inclusion for gays and lesbians in The United Methodist Church share a time of witness at the 2008 United Methodist General Conference.

heritage and the bishops’ experience and “conviction of God’s intention for a world transformed,” the document says.

The Book of Discipline, the denomination’s law book, for 39 years has stated that “the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”

The subject of homosexuality has surfaced every four years at the gathering of The United Methodist Church’s General Conference, the denomination’s top lawmaking body. Only General Conference can change the Book

of Discipline, and delegates consistently have voted to keep the restriction.

“This statement tells of a widespread concern that episcopal leaders have,” Ott said, “and I hope that the church and the world see this as an opportunity to once again (look at this) and maybe this time take the step of removing this. Once upon a time, it wasn’t there, and it doesn’t have to be there.”

However, the denomination’s current policy on ordination has many supporters in both church and lay leadership.

Florida Area Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker said he supports the denomination’s basic position.

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“It’s in agreement with Scripture and ecumenical Christian tradition in the broadest sense,” he said. “We have the Church—with a capital C—in many different cultural settings, and in those different cultural settings, there are different understandings of human sexuality. I think in making its decisions, the Church must be mindful of its responsibility to its members in all its cultural settings and not just select ones.”

Significant statement

Retired Bishop Neil L. Irons, the executive secretary of the Council of Bishops, said this is the first time in his memory when this many retired bishops have released a public statement such as this.

“The significance of this is that these are all bishops who have abided by the law of the church since it was instituted in this particular matter,” Irons said.

At the 1996 General Conference in Denver, 15 bishops signed a statement that advocated gays and lesbians be welcomed into ordained ministry. Irons said that, unlike the 2011 document, not every bishop who signed the 1996 statement was aware it would be made public.

At this point, neither the Council of Bishops nor the council’s executive committee has discussed the statement. Irons

said he does not know what the response will be.

Bishop Larry M. Goodpaster, the president of the Council of Bishops, is in the Holy Land and could not immediately respond to phone calls or e-mails.

Based on experience

Rader and Ott both stressed that the statement is based on their experience as church leaders.

For more than five years after her retirement, Rader was the bishop in residence at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill. In that capacity, she said, she met with many seminary students who had the gifts and calling for ministry but were gay or lesbian.

“Those conversations were very convicting for me,” Rader said.

The statement said that “laity and clergy, gay and straight, (are) withdrawing membership” and

bishops are “being drained of energy” because of a stance that contradicts their convictions.

“I believe our mission to make disciples is in jeopardy by the current stance we have, and that’s a driving force for me,” Ott said. “When the church has a position that many people do not hold, and those people are in leadership or desire to be in leadership, they have to make compromises with their own integrity.”

Bishop Whitaker said he might change the Book of Discipline’s current wording to take less a tone of condemnation and emphasize the need for all clergy’s celibacy in singleness.

But, he said, the change urged in the retired bishops’ statement “would create a lot of problems in the life of the church.”

Neither supporters nor opponents expect the debate on ordination or same-sex unions to end any time soon.

Camps Offer Clergy Free Retreat Space

The Camping and Retreat Ministry Program is offering pastors, clergy and staff a chance to “do nothing” at one of the NYAC’s three facilities during the off-season. The accommodations at Camp Quinipet, Kingswood Campsite and Epworth Center are offered free of charge as a time for personal renewal or family retreat from December 15 to May 15.

Accommodations include the renovated Sessions Lodge at Epworth, and the apartment in the new Klein Welcome Center at Quinipet. Contact Terry Cianci at Epworth at 845-687-0215, or info@epworthcenter.com; at Quinipet, contact Lauren Ruiz at 631-749-0430, ext. 10, or Lauren@quinipet.org; for Kingswood, call 646-894-0803, or go to the web site, www.kingswoodcampsite.org.

Listening, Respect Integral In Ministry to Older Adults

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant on Older Adult Ministries

More than eight years ago, Ann Pearson (director of Connectional Ministries) asked me if I would write a regular column for The Vision dealing with issues in ministry to and with older adults. With reluctance, the answer was yes, but it came with a caveat. "The first time I can't think of something to write, I'm done!"

It came time for submitting an article this month and, horror of horrors, the pastor in me ran out of words, or so I thought. Ann was going to get a phone call telling her to find someone else. As I was mulling over the planned conversation, a resident of Wesley Heights came by and sat down in my office. No explanation, no "are you busy," no "can we talk?" Just walked in and sat down!

"May I help you?"

A hesitant response: "I'm not sure."

"Well, why don't you simply tell me what made you stop by?"

And then it happened!

"I feel like I don't matter anymore. No one listens to me.



GOD'S GIFT OF LONG LIFE

They hear my words, but they don't really listen. I guess because I'm 90 plus, they assume I don't know what I'm talking about, so they politely let me speak, but then move on to their own thoughts and plans."

I had something to say to her and to anyone who cares for or about an older adult. I had my article.

I told my friend I thought she had a lot to say and that I valued her opinions and that I suspected others did as well; or that they would come to appreciate those opinions if she shared her feelings with them.

"Too many well meaning people," I told her, "assume because age often brings diminished bodies and diminished minds that it brings it to every one, even if the truth is very different. Many people age with mind and body in tact.

Some lose some mental abilities and their bodies stay strong, and some of their bodies fail even as their minds stay strong. Some are blessed with good minds and strong bodies all of their life. Ask them not to make assumptions about you based simply on your age."

The message came loud and clear: I wasn't done writing articles just yet. There is still more to be said. Our culture is continuing to grow older and, as it does, variations of what it means to age will continue to change. Assumptions of the past, which often guided our ministry to and with older adults, will prove to be less true than ever.

Stereotypes have always been a source of prejudice in regards to race and ethnicity. It has always been wrong in those areas and in any other area of judging others. It is equally wrong in the area of aging! In our ministries of caring for and about older adults, we owe them the same respect we ask for ourselves and for others. Not to respect them is to shortchange them, and to risk forgoing important life-giving relationships.

Scholarships Available For Urban Ministry

The United Methodist City Society is accepting applications for the Urban Ministry Scholarship for those persons who have demonstrated experience and interest in urban ministry, along with some level of financial need.

All candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Membership in a church in the New York Annual Conference; and
- Enrollment in a program at a college or university approved by the scholarship committee of the United Methodist City Society.
- Full or part time student for the academic year 2011–2012
- Provide proof of financial need

Priority in the awards will be given to persons who desire to enter full time ordained ministry in the UMC in an urban setting. The application can be downloaded at http://umcitysociety.org/?page_id=112.

The deadline is May 3 at 12 noon—sent by email, fax or hand delivered. All reference letters must come by separate cover. Your application will not be denied if we do not receive a reference letter from your pastor, district superintendent, and/or candidacy mentor by the May 3 deadline. The scholarship committee of UMCS will meet mid-May.

Scholarship awards will be announced at the New York Annual Conference Session during the UM City Society report, usually Friday morning.)

If you have questions or need any further information concerning the scholarship, please contact Bill Shillady by email at bshillady@umcitysociety.org, or by phone, 212-870-3094.

Global AIDS Fund Launches “20/20” campaign

The United Methodist Global AIDS Fund has launched a new campaign: “20/20: Visioning an AIDS-Free World.” Twenty dollars can make a big difference in the fight against AIDS:

- \$20 can stop the transmission of HIV from a mother to child.
- \$20 can teach young people and adults how to prevent HIV.
- \$20 can be used for church workshops to fight stigma and discrimination.
- \$20 can feed an HIV+ person for a month or more, enabling them to take their medicine and lead productive lives.

To become part of this campaign:

- Promote the 20/20 campaign in your local church and annual conference.
- Encourage your family and friends to become involved.
- Identify ways you can assist local AIDS projects or explore how your church can meet unmet needs of those persons living with AIDS.
- Teach comprehensive sex education in your local church as an effort to prevent the spread of AIDS.

Contributions of \$20 or more can be made online to the Advance Special UMC Global AIDS Fund (#982345) or, write a check made payable to your local church with the Advance number in the memo line. Or mail contributions directly to UMCOR, PO Box 9068, New York, NY 20087. More information can be found at: <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umcor/work/health/hiv aids/aids-fund/>.

Kingswood Fills Need With New Accessible Campsite

By the end of the summer, Kingswood Camp will have its first “fully-equipped access-friendly site,” thanks to a group of dedicated volunteers.

Kingswood in the Catskill Mountains, is one of three camps owned by the New York Annual Conference, and provides equipped sites for tent and trailer camping amid forests, open fields, and rolling hills. The 766-acre facility in Hancock, N.Y., has long been governed by an all-volunteer site committee, currently lead by Cheryl Winship, who is a member of Warwick UMC.

The new site will allow those with mobility issues to continue to enjoy this beautiful, pristine natural setting. Geri Mariano, who serves on the site committee, has been thinking about this site for years because of her own physical limitations and her work in therapeutic recreation.

“It was becoming apparent over the past several years that as longtime campers



The roof goes up over the “access-friendly” tent platform at Kingswood.



Participants in the Woodsmoke program work on the tent platform, above, and pour concrete for the platform footings, at left.

were getting older some were having trouble maneuvering over the roots at the campsites,” Mariano, who is a member of Armonk UMC, wrote in an email. Holly Moore, who runs the summer family camp program, had heard campers lament that

they wished they could still bring their elderly parents to Kingswood since the camp has been a family vacation/reunion spot for several generations. The need for wheelchairs makes it nearly impossible to navigate the uneven terrain of the campsites.

Construction on the “access-friendly” site began in fall 2009,

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Kingswood Fills Need With New Accessible Campsite

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with the land being cleared and leveled by Paul Swanson. Swanson has been coming to Kingswood with his family all of his life, and now brings his own young son. Another longtime volunteer, Bob Porter, drew up the plans for the site, which is tucked in the trees with a beautiful view of the Kingswood farmhouse and barn across the valley.

In the summer of 2010, some of the participants at Woodsmoke Camp constructed a 14-by-16 foot tent platform and a dining

shelter, under the supervision of Mike Weinlein. Kingswood offers Woodsmoke Camp during the last two weeks of July for youth from around the conference and beyond, who range in age from fifth to 12th grade.

In an email, Weinlein said that the project would continue this summer with the Woodsmoke youth helping build six beds and storage shelving for the tent. Two of the beds will be specially designed for those who may have mobility issues. In addition, the campers will add a kitchen to

the dining shelter, build a fire pit, install a latrine, and complete some landscaping work.

The \$12,000 cost of constructing the site has been partially financed through donations, and grant monies may be available to cover part of the tab.

If you would like to donate specifically to the “access friendly” site, send a check made out to Kingswood, with “access-friendly site” in the memo field to: Kingswood, c/o Stidworthy, 430 County Rt. 1, Warwick NY 10990.

Apply Now for NYM Health Clinic For Pastors

Applications are being accepted for the annual health clinics provided by New York Methodist Hospital for United Methodist clergy and/or their spouses. The clinics for all districts in the New York Annual Conference are May 9–13, and October 31–November 4.

In the stay of four days and nights—Monday evening through Friday afternoon—participants will receive a thorough physical examination and any follow-up tests that may be indicated. There will also be hospital tours to view our mission hospital at work and seminars on recent developments in health care.

Clergy and/or their spouses are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis; space is limited. Applications should be mailed, with registration fee, to Barbara Atchison at the Long Island East District office. Registration will be forwarded to Rev. Richard Parker, the coordinator of pastors’ clinics. Parker can be reached for any questions at 631-321-5564. Those who apply should not have attended a clinic within the last six years.



Each participant will pay a registration fee of \$50. Room, board, lab fees, examinations, x-rays and consultations are covered by the hospital. The hospital will bill your insurance and waive any co-payment costs. Participants will room at the hospital and eat in the cafeteria.

An informational brochure and application can be found at, <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/3327>.

Miller Resigning as Conf. Secretary

Conference Secretary Bob Miller will be stepping down from his position at the close of this year's annual conference in June due to health reasons.

In his resignation letter to Bishop Jeremiah Park, Miller stated, "It has been an honor, privilege, and a joy to hold the position of conference secretary for the last few years."

The bishop wrote in a letter to the conference, "To know Bob is to be blessed. He epitomizes Christian faith and faithfulness. His love for the United Methodist Church and the New York Conference continues to be demonstrated tirelessly." And he added, "Please



Conference Secretary Bob Miller consults Bishop Park during the 2010 annual meeting.

join me in offering thanks to God for God's wonderful gift to us in Bob Miller, and for his four years of tireless, volunteer service as conference secretary."

Rev. Dennis Winkleblack, assistant to the bishop, will serve as assistant secretary and perform Miller's duties with his help in the interim. A new secretary will be nominated and elected by annual conference. Please direct all communications to the

Conference Secretary to: confsecy@nyac.com, or 20 Soundview Ave., White Plains, NY 10606. Telephone is 888-696-6922, Ext. 231.

2011 Effort Targets Hunger, Global Health

In large and small ways, people are doing what they can knowing that changed lives can change the world.

Change the World, scheduled for May 14-15, is an annual global event of persons doing what they can locally to make an impact globally. In 2011, 500,000 people, in churches and communities worldwide, will focus on hunger relief or global health concerns or initiatives to relieve the burdens of those living in poverty.

Last year, churches in the NYAC participated in home repairs, street and cemetery clean-ups, nursing home visits, planting flowers and learning about malaria. How will your

congregation get involved this year? Here are some possibilities from the Rethink Church web site:

- Feed the hungry
- Clean up community work day
- Day of service to low income retirement homes, seniors, homeless shelters & others
- Clean water projects
- Free health screenings
- Improvement projects through public school system
- Raise money for imagine no malaria
- Habitat for humanity projects
- Clothing drive
- Paint community center or playground
- Disaster relief



To find resources, register your church's event, or find an event in your area, go to: <http://www.rethinkchurch.org/changetheworld>. And don't forget to send the details and photos from your church's events to thevision@nyac.com.

LENTEN RESOURCES

Fearless: The Courage to Question

Rethink Church invites you to experience one of life's greatest mysteries — God's radical breaking through with a Love that could not be destroyed. Rediscover your curiosity and meet God in the questions . . . not just the answers.

This lectionary-based study, "Fearless: The Courage to Question," provides ideas for worship and for living the faith beyond the sanctuary walls. Sample questions are included for personal and congregational reflection, and for social media engagement. By creating an environment where questioning is acceptable, local churches can strengthen ties to those unfamiliar with spiritual disciplines, and deepen existing faith.

"Fearless" begins with Ash

Wednesday and concludes with Palm/Passion Sunday. The church study series is free for download.

In addition, the companion multimedia series is available for \$25 and includes:

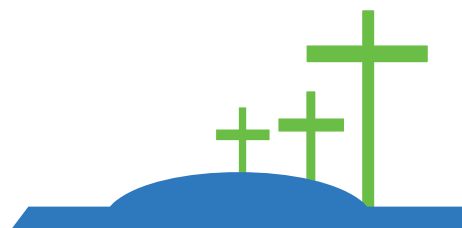
- Worship slides, bulletin graphics and FaithLink Café banner
- Trailer video, scripture animations with and without voiceovers
- Newspaper ad, direct mail and invitation card

An introduction to the "FaithLink Café" model is included in the package, and will be further supported through a special Lenten online Bible study through www.rethinkchurch.org. For more information, go to www.umcom.org/fearless.

We've a Story to Tell

The Society of St. Andrew is offering a daily devotional booklet, "We've a Story to Tell," for Lent. The devotions were contributed by a variety of writers from different denominations who share how their personal walk with Jesus impacts their lives.

The Lenten materials are free, but participants are asked to consider giving sacrificially. A donation of \$1 a day during the season of Lent—\$47—would enable the Society of St. Andrew



to salvage more than 2,000 servings of fresh produce. Last year's Lenten Devotions program was responsible for providing more than 2 million servings of food to families in need in the United States. Order materials at: <http://www.endhunger.org/lent.htm?tr=y&aud=7702709>.

Exploring Cross-Racial Ministry

May 16–18: "Facing the Future: Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Appointments in a Global Church," is planned for May 16–18 in Los Angeles. The General Commission on Religion and Race, and the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry are sponsoring the event featuring special learning tracks designed for bishops and cabinets, boards of Ordained Ministries, clergy and laity. Former NYAC Bishop Ernest S. Lyght is a key presenter. Early registration, at a cost of \$250, ends February 28. Regular registration from March 1 to April 15 is \$300. For basic information about the schedule, event presenters, and pre-event activities, go to www.gcorr.org/crccevent.

Rethinking Worship & Song Event

March 1–3: National introductory event for the new GBOD-UMPH Worship & Song collections and web site, Nashville, Tenn. Limited to 550. 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.