

"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

July 2016

Bickertons "All In" for Ministry in NYAC

"We welcome you and are knit together with you in the ministry and mission God requires of us now."

—Delegates response during the assignment of NEJ bishops

Shortly after the announcement that he had been assigned as the episcopal leader for the New York Conference, Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton and his wife, Sally, met with the delegation at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in Lancaster, Penn.



Bickerton, who was elected to the episcopacy in 2004, has served the Western Pennsylvania Conference for the last 12 years.

Rev. Bill Shillady and Fred Brewington—members of the NEJ Episcopacy Committee that determines the assignments—presented the couple with a few gifts. Shillady gave the bishop, who is a big baseball fan, three hats covering the fan bases across the conference—the Yankees, Mets and Red Sox.

Brewington offered a tote bag filled with information about the conference and the territory it covers in New York and Connecticut.

In noting the challenging times ahead for the United Methodist Church, Bickerton said, "I have no idea what's going to happen in our church, but I am hopeful to work with you."

"The Bickertons trust first . . .

Continued on page 7



Roena Littlejohn, Rev. Tim Riss and Fred Brewington, above from left, listen to Bishop Thomas Bickerton during his first meeting with NYAC members. Sally Bickerton is at right. Below, Bishop Middleton offers communion bread to Bishop Bickerton during the NEJ memorial service.



PHOTOS BY JOANNE S. UTLEY

Welcome To Bishop Tom Bickerton

We are thrilled by the workings of the wondrous power of God, and it is with exhilaration that we receive Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton as the new resident Bishop for the New York Annual Conference. He is a visionary leader who we believe God has sent to us for such a time as this. His arrival, along with his wife, Sally Bickerton, will continue the momentum toward excellence, full inclusiveness and disciple making that will mark God's legacy in the New York Annual Conference for the coming days.

Continued on page 6



For a full lineup of events, go to: www.nyac.com/conferencecalendar.

7/30 Orientation to Ministry

The Board of Ordained Ministry is inviting high school students, young adults and adults to an **“Orientation to Ministry”** event at First MC, 227 East Lincoln Ave., Mount Vernon, N.Y. The event runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Attendance at an Orientation to Ministry event is a requirement for any person seeking to become certified for either licensed or ordained ministry (2012 *Book of Discipline*). Please [register](#) in advance to be included in the lunch count.

8/1–4 Festival of Wisdom & Grace

Tony Campolo and Mickey Efrid will speak at 2016 Festival of Wisdom and Grace Conference at Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center in Lake Junaluska, N.C. The gathering, sponsored by the Southeastern Jurisdictional Association of Older Adults, has the theme “Come to the Water.” To register and for more details go to the [Lake Junaluska web site](#).

8/27–28 HopeFest 2016

HopeFest 2016: Building Hope for Humanity, a Christian music fest to benefit Habitat for Humanity, hosted by Milford UMC, 327 North River Road, Milford, N.H. Overnight wooded camping sites are available. Performers include Mark Schultz, Jonas Woods, Epic Season, Ryan Stevenson and Rock My Soul. \$50 for adults. Children under 12 are free. Tickets and details are available [online](#).

8/29–31 Global UM Clergywomen Gathering 2016

Under the theme: “ONE: Birthing a Worldwide Church,” United Methodist clergywomen will gather at the World Methodist Conference at the Hilton-Americas Hotel and Conference Center in Houston. This gathering will serve as the culmination of regional gatherings of United Methodist clergywomen that have taken place throughout the connection. Go to the [registration page](#) for additional information. If you have any questions please contact clergy lifelonglearning@gbhem.org.

9/8–10 Local Pastors’ Licensing School

The Board of Ordained Ministry of the New York Conference will hold its 3rd local pastors’ licensing school (LPLS) on September

8–10, October 6–8, November 3–5, and December 1–3 at St. Thomas Seminary, Bloomfield, Conn. The school will contain four modules about one month apart, and is directed by Revs. Eileen M. Daunt and Gene Ott. Clergy instructors will train soon-to-be pastors in a firm foundation for local church pastoral ministry. Attending all four modules is necessary to complete the LPLS. This LPLS is intended for persons who will begin an appointment July 1, 2017. If you need further information about the LPLS, please contact Daunt, who is the local pastor registrar for the NYAC Board Ordained Ministry, at Eileen.Daunt@nyac-umc.com, or the LPLS’s direct email address LPLS@nyac-umc.com.

Registration information and applications are available from the Daunt and your district superintendent.

9/16–18 The Elijah Challenge

The spirituality committee of the Long Island West District is sponsoring a free in-house retreat, The Elijah Challenge, led by William Lau. The three-day event will be held at Grace UMC in St. Albans, N.Y. For more [information](#), contact Grace pastor, Rev. Alpher Sylvester, at 718-465-5621. The event promises to deliver ideas to grow and transform church ministries and congregations.

9/20–22 New Church Leadership Institute

The Susquehanna Conference of the UMC is sponsoring a workshop for those considering creating new churches in the next couple of years. Come and learn what it takes to lead a new church from experienced trainers Jim and Kim Griffith. The program begins at 1 p.m. September 20 and concludes at 12:30 p.m. September 22. The host church is CrossPoint UMC, 430 Colonial Rd, Harrisburg, Penn. The [registration](#) fee of \$299 includes an electronic manual and snacks. Spouses may attend for free.

9/30–10/2 IGNITE: Let There Be Light

From September 30 to October 2, more than 1,000 students in grades 6-12 from around the region are expected to gather at the Wildwoods Convention Center in Wildwood, N.J., to learn about God’s calling on their lives and go deeper in their journey of faith in what’s sure to be the most inspiring and thrilling event of the year. Find out more about the speakers, performers, lodging, schedule and much more at www.ignitenj.org. The event is sponsored by the Greater New Jersey Conference.

10/1 Prison Ministry Symposium

The Conference Board of Church & Society will present a conference-wide symposium entitled, “I Was In Prison And You . . .” from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Grace UMC, 125 104th St, N.Y., N.Y. There will be panels,

Continued on page 11



The **Vision**

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

Bishop: **Jane Allen Middleton**
 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: vision@nyac.com

Bishop's Prayer for Unity in Time of Crisis

My Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

I am reminded of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. Surely he weeps with us today.

Following the tragic shooting deaths of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, which further undermined any sense of trust in the fairness of treatment of blacks and other persons of color, we are now stunned by the wanton act of ambush in Dallas last night resulting in the deaths of five police officers and wounding of others as well as other officers who have been subsequently shot in other communities since this incident.

We want to believe that we live in a country where there is freedom, where respect for the dignity of all is valued, where each person can realize his or her potential, where we can count on the rule of law.

And yet the issues are overwhelming: a

politically deeply divided country, increasing disparity between those with unlimited wealth and children who are starving, a drop in life expectancy in a country with the most advanced medical care available anywhere, those who are risking their lives to keep the peace are themselves victims of violence. We also must acknowledge that we who are a nation of immigrants struggle with pervasive racism which began with the founding of the country and continues today and also with a criminal justice system which incarcerates a higher percentage of people than almost any nation on earth.

As Christians, we proclaim the power of God's love in all circumstances, in all times. Truly these heartbreaking tragedies cause us to ask, "What does the Lord require of us?" Can we be those who seek justice, love kindness and desire to walk humbly with God? Can we use this time of crisis to renew our commitment to

do everything possible to promote unity and justice in our communities? Can this be a time for those of us in the church to be the catalyst for healing and hope?

I pray that each of us will be guided and empowered to be those who bring the possibility of a new future. I ask each of you to pray for all those who are victims of injustice, for those who are at risk because of the color of their skin, for those brave officers who are willing to put themselves in harm's way in order to protect others, and for the families and loved ones of all those involved. Lord have mercy.

In Christ's love,

† *Jane Allen Middleton*

Bishop Jane Allen Middleton

(Editor's note: Also see the statement on combatting racism from the NEJ College of Bishops on Page 8.)

—Final 2016 Appointments—

Bishop Jane Allen Middleton has made the following appointments effective July 1:

Kent Terchunian to Hampton Bays UMC (LFT); Terchunian currently serves Flanders UMC.

Jung Ung Moon to The Shepherd UMC, Bayside, NY, effective 1/10/2016. Moon was previously appointed to BrokenBuilders UMC.

David Henry (RE) to First UMC of Jamaica; Henry currently serves St. Paul's UMC in Brooklyn.

Michael Gebhard to the North Blenheim and West Fulton UM churches in the Mountain Valley Parish (LFT); Gebhard is currently unappointed.

Peter Brown to Gaylordsville UMC (LFT); Brown currently serves Canaan UMC (LFT).

Lisa Bosworth (CLM, DH) to Seymour UMC (LFT); she is currently unappointed.

James Midgley to Derby UMC (LFT); he will continue to serve Ansonia (LFT) for a total of full-time service.

Fern Blair Hart (CLM, DH) to Canaan UMC (LFT); she is currently unappointed.

Jeanette C. Hicks (OE) to the United Churches of Durham (LFT); she is currently unappointed.

Catherine Schuyler (OF) to Catskill, Simpson Memorial (Palenville, N.Y.), and Quarryville UM churches; she is currently serving the Duluth (Minnesota)

Congregational Church.

Eugene Knoth (CLM) to Catskill, Simpson Memorial (Palenville, N.Y.), and Quarryville UM churches (Associate) (DH, LFT); he is currently unappointed.

Deborah Judisky (CLM) to the Upper Catskills Larger Parish (Associate) (DH, LFT); she is currently unappointed.

Paul Moller to the Delaware Headwaters Parish (Associate) (DH, LFT). He is currently serving the Andes UMC in the Upper Catskills Larger Parish (DH, LFT).

Enock Yatri to the NOW Larger Cooperative Parish (LFT); he is currently serving the Hudson Highlands Cooperative Parish (LFT).

Ross Topliff to the Hudson Highlands Cooperative Parish (LFT); he is currently unappointed.

Maria-Pia Seirup to Jesse Lee Memorial UMC (Associate); she Seirup is currently unappointed.

D.K. (Dong Kyu) Kim (OF) to Ban Suk UMC; he is currently unappointed.

Elyse Ambrose to the UMC of the Village (Associate)(LFT); she is currently unappointed.

Jane Kim to Vail's Gate UMC (LFT); she is currently serving the same church as a district hire (LFT).

Sun Joo Lee to the cooperative

parish of Pawling, Poughquag, Verbank, Dover Plains & Wingdale: South Dover UM churches (LFT). Lee is currently serving the Verbank on the Green UMC and South Dover UMC of Wingdale (LFT).

Lea Matthews to the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew United Methodist (Associate) (LFT); she is currently unappointed.

Parker Prout to the UMC of Mount Kisco (LFT); he is currently serving the same church as a district hire (LFT).

Paul Smith to Shady UMC. His appointment to Overlook UMC was previously announced.

Kathryn Dickinson to the Park Slope UMC (Associate); she is currently unappointed.

Marcia White-Smith is appointed as school psychologist, New York City Board of Education; Clergy/Pastoral Palliative Care Volunteer, Community Action Program of New Rochelle, Montefiore New Rochelle Hospital. She is currently appointed to Aldersgate UMC (LFT).

Sabrina Johnson Chandler appointed as chief human resources officer, SUNY/Westchester Community College, Valhalla, N.Y. Chandler is currently appointed to Woodycrest UMC (LFT).

G. Plains Sets Date, Location For Meyer Trial

Bishop Scott J. Jones of the Great Plains Conference has announced that the church trial for the Rev. Cynthia Meyer, scheduled to begin Aug. 24, will be conducted at the Brown Grand Theatre, in Concordia, Kansas.

Meyer stated in a letter to her district superintendent earlier this year that she was in a committed homosexual relationship. The conference's Committee on Investigation, which serves the role of a grand jury, decided in June that there was enough evidence to move the proceedings to a church trial. Under the *Book of Discipline*, the denomination's book of law and procedure, The United Methodist Church does not allow self-avowed, practicing homosexuals to serve as ordained clergy. The case could be resolved with what is defined in the Discipline as a "just resolution" at any point prior to the trial. The counsels for Rev. Meyer and for the church are scheduled to meet in mediation early next month.

"We are all aware that conversations about a just resolution agreement are continuing," Bishop Jones said in a letter to the interested parties. "If such an agreement is reached, the complaint will be resolved and all trial preparations will be cancelled. We all agree that a church trial is 'to be regarded as an expedient of last resort.' However, it is also the respondent's right to have one. Thus, these preparations will continue in case no just resolution agreement is reached."

JOB OPENING

Assistant Pastor

An assistant pastor is wanted for a busy mission church in Kingston, N.Y., with a soup kitchen, community garden, and ministries dealing with substance abuse and alcoholism. Candidate must be available on Sundays for worship and two to three additional part-time days per week.

The pay is good, and housing is possible. This is a great opportunity for the right person. A strong lay servant who is in discernment may be considered. Send inquiries to Rev. Darlene Kelley at clintonavenueumc@yahoo.com.

Supreme Court Tie Leaves Millions to Suffer

(Editor's note: On July 18, the Obama administration asked the Supreme Court to reconsider their 4-4 ruling on United States v. Texas when a full nine-member court was in place.)

Millions of people will face untold suffering and hardship because of one statement issued by the U.S. Supreme Court on June 23.

"The judgment is affirmed by an equally divided court" referred to a challenge to President Barack Obama's immigration policy, that sought to shield more than 4 million people—mostly Latinos—from deportation.

It is not an exaggeration when those directly affected number in the millions. But everyone is affected by the horrible decision issued by the court.

The mayor of New York City, Bill DiBlasio, said, "New York City stood to gain an estimated \$35 million in income tax revenue per year from just 220,000 undocumented New Yorkers who would have benefitted as a result of the president's executive actions on immigration."

U.S. citizen children are crying in school because they don't know if Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will pick up their parents and deport them. Each and every day families are living in fear.

When President Obama announced that he was taking executive action to create a program in which certain undocumented immigrants would be eligible to apply for work authorization and be protected from deportation, many immigrants breathed a sigh of relief. Although not even close to what immigrant communities and advocates had hoped to accomplish through legislative change—where unauthorized immigrants would be able to apply for permanent status—the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) and extended Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) programs would have given a respite from the deep fears of deportation that have taken hold. But even the hopes for those limited programs have been dashed after the Supreme Court upheld a preliminary injunction issued by a lower court that stopped the programs from moving

forward.

After President Obama announced the programs, 26 states came together and brought a lawsuit challenging the his authority to create the programs, notwithstanding a long history of executive actions taken by prior administrations that created similar opportunities.

The states chose a conservative court in which to file their lawsuit, and their efforts were successful. Although the lower court did not actually rule on the merits of the lawsuit, the issuance of the injunction and the Supreme Court's ruling have effectively made the program impossible to carry out in the remaining months of the Obama administration.

The implications of this for the estimated five million immigrants who would have been eligible for these programs are myriad, but the primary impact is the deep sadness and frustration expressed around the country. That it has been nearly impossible to pass fair and humane immigration laws is a testament to the divisiveness and pervasive anti-immigrant sentiment that surround us.

The immigrant rights movement has struggled to reach a point where the dignity of all immigrants is recognized and respected, yet we continue to exist in a world where millions of people cannot access documentation. Instead they live with the persistent fear that they may end up in the hands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, in detention, and deported, exiled from their homes and their loved ones.

Our communities of faith can stand up to the hateful rhetoric by opening our doors to the immigrant communities and welcoming them. We can accompany them whenever they have to interact with immigration officials. How many of us are ready to offer protection if a member of our beloved community is in a crisis?

The New Sanctuary Coalition envisions a world in which all immigrants are able to live in this country with full permanent residence and the benefits that come with that. We also envision a world in which the profit-driven and cruel twin systems of detention and deportation are abolished, and that people have the right to remain with their families.





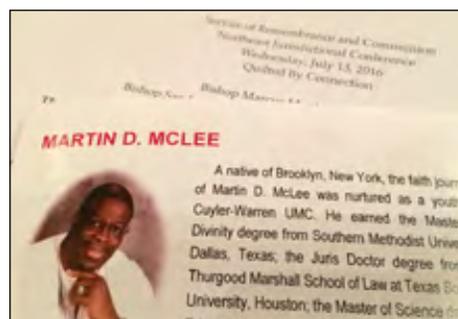
The NEJ delegation, above, and other members of the NYAC surround Bishop Jane Allen Middleton during the July 11-15 conference in Lancaster, Penn. Below, Bishop Martin D. McLee was remembered in the memorial service.

Resolution Seeks to Allow Regional Bodies to Adapt Discipline

UMNS—The Northeastern Jurisdiction approved a restructuring resolution recommending the bishops’ study commission on sexuality include a plan to allow regional bodies—such as jurisdictions—to decide for themselves to adapt the *Book of Discipline* within their own ministry context.

Delegates approved that and two other resolutions to show disagreement with church law on sexuality issues. One of those, a petition for “non-conformity” to denominational church law, was later ruled out of order by the presiding bishop.

The third resolution, a proposal to have annual conference councils on finance and administration agree that there is “no money” for church trials, was eventually ruled in order



after it was amended by deleting the title. The restructuring resolution, brought by Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, from the Baltimore-Washington Conference, [called for a recommendation to the bishops’ “Way Forward” commission](#) that is expected to review all church law related to sexuality.

Creed Pogue, from Greater New Jersey, argued that moving in this direction would create a more independent, non-connectional

church. He urged delegates to vote no.

Rev. Charles Parker, Baltimore-Washington, disagreed. “I would respectfully suggest that the point of this resolution is to create a space for people who are in different theological places and ministry contexts to be at the same table together,” he said. “What this resolution does is to lift up a model. The purpose is to create a wider table... and model it for the denomination.”

After further debate, an amendment to add the words, “and with expanded power to make contextual based adaptation of the *Book of Discipline* to ensure full inclusiveness” was passed. The full motion passed 109 to 56.

Resolution on church trials

The resolution calling for the NEJ College of Bishops to stop church trials was deemed out of order before debate began by Bishop Thomas

Continued on page 6

Resolution on Non-Conformity Ruled Out of Order

Continued from page 5

Bickerton, who was chairing the session. But he said he would allow the debate to continue, along with possible amendments. Rev. Vicki Flippin of the NYAC presented the resolution to the body.

Bickerton explained that the college had reviewed the resolution and that it needed to be more “aspirational” in nature. As printed, he said, it called for bishops to violate the *Book of Discipline*.

Rev. L. Fitzgerald “Gere” Reist II, Susquehanna

Conference, offered an amendment, which was adopted 96-64. The final paragraph requested that councils on finance and administration of the jurisdiction’s annual conferences “state that there are no funds available for initiating and processing of complaints and initiating of investigations and trials based upon the sexual orientation or marital status of faith United Methodists or involving clergy for conducting same-sex weddings.”

Opposition to the amendment centered on the interpretation that this amendment was asking those councils to lie.

After the final vote to approve the “Stop the Trials” resolution, Bickerton declared the motion out of order. “I can’t remember having a conversation at Jurisdictional Conference on this level,” he said.

“The college felt it important not to squelch this conversation. We recognize that there is pain around the issue. We acknowledge that in this room there are a variety of opinions. All of our hearts ache as we struggle. Regrettably, I must call this petition out of order, and we’ll move on.”

But after a discussion on the non-conformity resolution, the “Stop the Trials” petition was re-visited. Bickerton said the



college of bishops was aware that the United Methodist Judicial Council reviews petitions in their entirety. “We have looked at the ‘Stop the Trials’ resolution as it was amended,” he said. “Our finding is that the title is not compatible with the content of the petition, and that if a motion is made to amend the title, the petition is properly in order.”

A motion to “strike the title” was made and approved, 111-53, allowing the final version of the resolution to be adopted.

Be ‘out of order’ with us

Bishop Peggy Johnson, sitting with Bishop John Schol, initially ruled the petition on “non-conformity” out of order because it was calling for the jurisdiction’s annual conferences to not conform or comply with provisions of Discipline that discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual persons. It also asked the jurisdiction not to participate in or conduct judicial procedures related to those prohibitions.

When Johnson ruled the resolution out of order after it passed, as amended 91-74, some delegates invited the bishops to consider being out of order with them.

Rev. Vicki Flippin rose to thank the college for allowing the time of sacred conversation, and then she urged the bishops to take a bold stance and join in non-conformity.

Johnson replied that the College of Bishops would, in fact, receive the invitation and have a conversation. She said that they would get back to the full body before the end of the conference.

When Bishops Johnson and Schol returned to the stage following the dinner break, the college had not accepted the conference’s



Rev. Vicki Flippin invited the College of Bishops to join in the action of non-conformity to the *Book of Discipline*.

invitation. “We know that we are all not of one mind,” said Johnson. “We honor the work of the body, where 60 percent were in favor of this,” said Schol. “And, we also honor the 40 percent who disagreed.”

Dorothee Benz, New York Conference, then issued an appeal of the chair, seeking to have the resolution declared “in order.”

To help understand the parliamentary situation the jurisdiction found itself in, Schol spoke off-the-cuff from the podium.

“We are all struggling,” he said. “We recognize that there are annual conferences and individuals who have very different views of the *Book of Discipline*.”

Noting that the vote to maintain the current disciplinary language at General Conference is about the reverse of what it is in the Northeastern Jurisdiction, Schol said that the bishops are charged at looking at this issue from both places.

The vote to uphold the decision of the chair was affirmed by a vote of 94 to 73, which meant the non-conformity resolution remained out of order.

Bickerton Brings Challenge to Love Christ Boldly

Continued from page 1

With Bishop Bickerton as our episcopal leader, we will grow together as we celebrate the rich diversity and variety of cultural experiences that New York and Connecticut have to offer.

He will be the shepherd who will spiritually guide us in the work to be done to help heal a hurting world and prepare the United Methodist Church, including the New York Annual Conference, for its future on the world platform. With the benefit of his experience, New York and Connecticut will enhance our international ministries as we live into the worldwide nature of our beloved United Methodist Church.

Bishop Bickerton’s proven abilities in fund-raising, fiscal management and inspired leadership will fortify the New York Annual Conference as it grows into a new reality. A reality that will usher in celebration of

diversity along with the deep love that God has for all Peoples. Opening hearts, opening minds and flinging open the doors of our churches to new people in new places is what Bishop Bickerton’s leadership is poised to do. Tearing down those human labels that tend to divide us, his opposition to discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or any other systemic barrier,

Bishop Bickerton comes to the New York Annual Conference to challenge us all. A challenge we embrace in these days of conflict, fear and doubt. A challenge that exhorts us to be bold energized lovers of Jesus Christ, who dare to embody the calling of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

—Fred Brewington and Rev. Bill Shillady,
members of the NEJ Episcopacy Committee

2 African-American Women Elected as Bishop

Compiled from UMNS stories and local reporting

The Northeastern Jurisdiction made history this year by electing two women of color to serve among the nine episcopal leaders in the region. Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi of the Baltimore-Washington Conference was elected on the 11th ballot; and then it took another six ballots for Rev. LaTrelle Easterling of the New England Conference to garner enough support.

The two departing bishops are Marcus Matthews of the Baltimore-Washington Conference who is retiring, and Jane Allen Middleton, who had been serving as interim leader of the New York Conference.

Both newly-elected women are currently serving as district superintendents in their conferences, and both are married to fellow clergy. They were consecrated as bishops during a joy-filled service at First United Methodist Church in Lancaster, Penn., on the morning of July 15.

“My heart is so full,” said Moore-Koikoi as she stood at the podium following her election. “I don’t have the words. All I can say is glory, hallelujah!”

The bishop-elect said that she knows being selected is a sacred trust.

“I’m gonna need your prayers so that I can fulfill that trust,” she said. “I give each of you permission to pull me aside when I might be going astray. God spoke through you tonight, and that’s gonna continue.”

Moore-Koikoi said that as a bishop, her job will be to point out places where she sees God at work.

“We need to show the world that God is more than just a good and beautiful God; God is a spectacular God.”

Moore-Koikoi said she sees the work of bishops as “overseeing the work of the church, working prophetically, evangelically and apostolically with all as they cooperate with the grace of God.” She played a pivotal spiritual role in Baltimore following the unrest in 2015 after the death of Freddie Gray in police custody.

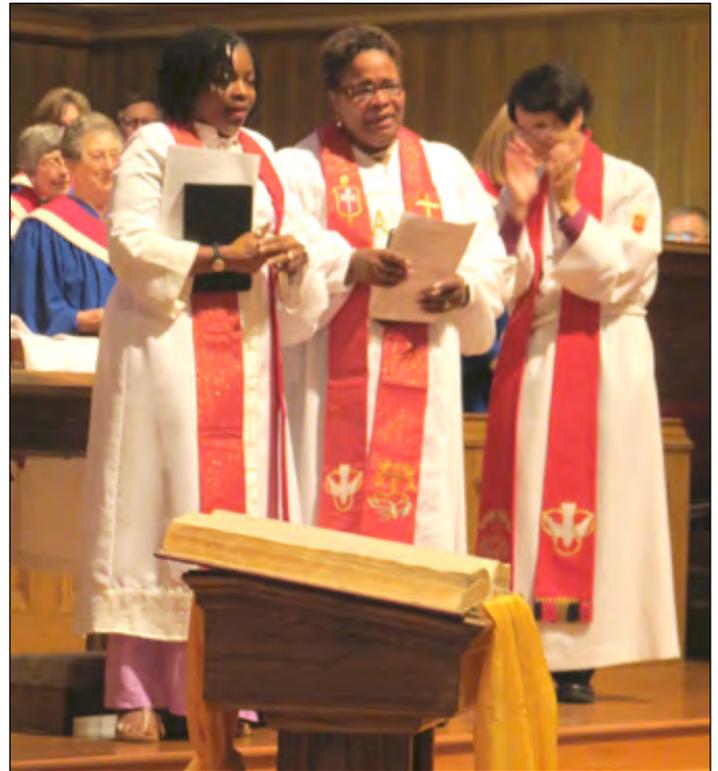
Moore-Koikoi sees herself, she said, “as a bridge-builder,” clear and confident about what she believes, while also respecting others who might not believe the same way.

“As a woman of color, I have learned the gift of perseverance,” she said, “being able to hold onto hope in the midst of oppression.

“Our denomination needs that,” said Moore-Koikoi. “As our pews become more empty, as we experience more financial difficulties, we have to hold out hope. I’ve had to use my spiritual eyes.” Her vision is one of a diverse church that embraces justice and the life-saving love of Christ.

Immediately following her election, Easterling told the conferences of the NEJ that no matter where it is, “If God sends me there, I will never look back.”

“I always, always, always stand on the side of justice,” she said, “but I



Bishop Jeremiah Park applauds Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, left, and Bishop LaTrelle Easterling following their consecration on the final day of the NEJ Conference in Lancaster, Penn.

draw the circle wide enough for all of us to be there—and when I say all, I mean all.”

She became district superintendent in 2012, succeeding the late Martin D. McLee, who was elected bishop that year and assigned to the New York Area. She has followed Bishop McLee’s path to the episcopacy having served as pastor of Union UMC in Boston and then as superintendent of the same district he had served.

When asked in later interviews about inclusivity, Easterling said, “I know what it feels like to be excluded. I know what it feels like to be present but ignored.”

But getting to know one another can change that, she said.

“Once we get to know each other, it’s almost impossible to hate, it’s almost impossible to continue excluding, it’s almost impossible to remain where you were. We are changed when we hear one another’s story.”

Bickertons “All In” for Ministry in NYAC

Continued from page 1

we will love you with our whole hearts. When we come to New York, we’re all yours. We’re all in.”

Bickerton said that although some might like to switch the cross and flame symbol for the image of Winnie the Pooh’s perpetually pessimistic friend Eeyore, he has a different vision.

“I’m a glass half full kind of guy,” he said in expressing his optimism for the denomination.

“I’ve never had a hand in where I’m going, but God has,” Bickerton said. “I know that God is putting us together for a reason . . . I look forward to discovering why.”

In addition to his duties as bishop in the Pittsburgh Area, Bickerton serves as the chairperson of the UMC’s Global Health

Initiative dealing with the church’s response to the killer diseases of HIV/Aids, tuberculosis and malaria. This effort, through the church’s Imagine NO Malaria campaign, has raised more than \$53 million dollars within the denomination to eliminate malaria-related death across the world.

The Bickertons have four grown children; their son T.J. lives in New York City.

NEJ Bishops Urge Action as Peacemakers

As the NEJ Conference officially opened on July 13, Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, president of the NEJ College of Bishops, read the following statement as a commitment to continue to combat racism:

“As we gather for this Jurisdictional Conference many persons have been confronted and consumed with the overwhelming reports of shootings and violence. Life taken! Trust broken! Anger and fear growing. Frustration and despair looming.

We believe that God’s heart breaks as our hearts break with these acts of violence—fed and complicated by fear, prejudice, racism, and privilege. We pray for each family and each community affected by profound loss and grief. We pray for the ripple effect of these acts of violence that strip away certainty of safety, sanctuary, value, and trust.

The death of young black males in encounters with white law enforcement officers calls for response. The loss of life within our Hispanic/Latino community and among our brothers and sisters identifying with the LGBTQ community in Orlando, calls for response. The death of police officers protecting the rights of persons to peaceably protest, points to a destructive cycle of violence and retribution, and calls for response.

We, the College of Bishops of the Northeastern Jurisdiction stand together to respond, and our response is not just for the moment. Our response is a commitment to acknowledge our participation in the sin of institutional racism and to have ongoing conversations within the College about racism, privilege, and oppression. Our response is to give leadership and develop plans to continue these conversations within and among the Jurisdiction and with the leadership of the annual conferences to which we are assigned. The purpose of these dialogues will be talk about our own racism and prejudices, to heal the wounds that have been caused by racism, privilege, and oppression, to train our leadership and churches in intercultural competency; and lead them to celebrate diversity. We will lead and offer training for leaders in the craft of building bridges across cultures and ethnicity so that all those whom we profess to acknowledge as created in the image of God and persons of sacred worth, will truly feel welcome and find the safety, sanctuary, value and trust these recent and ongoing acts



Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, at podium, offers a statement on behalf of the NEJ College of Bishops about the recent spate of violence and shootings.

of violence have robbed from them. We in the college will hold one another accountable for this action, reporting to our Conferences at their annual sessions and providing a report to the 2020 Jurisdictional conference. At the Jurisdictional level we will partner with both the Multi-ethnic center and the Vision Table in our on-going response.

Together, we claim the need to listen more deeply and to seek greater understanding for those who cry out for justice. We commit ourselves to seeking justice, supporting faithful law enforcement officers, and empowering the movement of people toward more healthy community engagement within the areas we serve.

Because we believe that all persons are created in God’s image, from our United Methodist faith perspective, all people matter, all are valuable. In these particularly violent and life taking incidents and times, however, we need to intentionally lift up that black lives really do matter and the lives of all persons of color really do matter. The lives of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters really do matter. The NEJ College of Bishops believes that in the midst of the chaos, fear, and violence, there is a rich opportunity for the church to be the church. We seek to be the leaders of this church. We seek justice, repentance and reconciliation. We seek not just to love peace, but to be peacemakers. God’s people need us to be bearers of peace.

At the beginning of this Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference, we ask you to join us. Join us as we make this response not just for

the moment, but affecting the future. Our hope is that, together, Bishops, clergy, and laity, we might be quilted together more strongly in our work of allowing God to transform us, so that we might go out with God’s great transforming love—to bring healing, hope, and peace to the world.

As a beginning, we would ask that you think and reflect with us on these questions? How will you be a peacemaker in the midst of the storms of violence and destruction? How can you be a peacemaker and at the same time work for justice? What can you do to help develop a sense of well being and harmony in your life, in the lives of neighbors, strangers, friends, and communities? What social problems move you to want to make a difference by building bridges, making connections, valuing people? Blessed are the peacemakers! Blessed are the peacemakers! Blessed are the peacemakers! In the midst of all the storms encountered and perpetuated in this life, please think on these things! This work begins with each one of us—first individually and then collectively. We your bishops, will not only be thinking on these things, but are moving in response. We seek your prayers and support as we take this action.

‘But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the Head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.’ (Ephesians 4:15–16)”



The long and short of the NYAC delegation, above: Rev. Constance Pak and Steve Allen. At right, Jaewon Kim listens to Rev. Ken Kieffer talk about his long day of episcopal interviews.



Rev. Luonne Rouse, and his wife, Marie, walked with Rev. Adrienne Brewington, center, throughout her episcopal interviews.



Quilted
by Connection
NEJ 2016 Conference
Lancaster PA



Dorlimar Lebron, at far left, did double duty as a member of the worship band and the NYAC delegation. Bishops Middleton and Bickerton offer blessings over newly consecrated bishops, Cynthia Moore Koikoi, left, and LaTrelle Easterling.

Consecration of Bishop Oliveto Draws Cheers, Inquiries

By **Kathy L. Gilbert**

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (UMNS)—The first time she stood and faced a packed church as the newest bishop of the Western Jurisdiction, Karen Phyllis Oliveto was blessed with a resounding standing ovation.

On July 16, the pews at Paradise Valley United Methodist Church were filled with family, friends and supporters who cheered and danced with her to the recessional hymn, “Somos el Cuerpo de Christo, We Are the Body of Christ.”

As the first out lesbian to be elected a bishop, she is not receiving the same affirmation from across the denomination.

Her day started with a press conference where she and Greater Northwest Episcopal Area Bishop Grant Hagiya answered questions about what her election as bishop means, since the denomination forbids [ordaining practicing, self-avowed homosexuals](#). Oliveto has been legally married to Robin Ridenour for more than two years, and they have been in a relationship since they met at a junior-high camp as counselors 17 years ago. Oliveto, who grew up on Long Island, served as a pastor in the New York Conference before moving to California.

Following her election, Oliveto, 58, said, “Today we took a step closer to embody beloved community and while we may be moving there, we are not there yet. We are moving on to perfection.”

Hagiya said the election of Oliveto was led by the Holy Spirit.

“We understand there may be some political implications, but in our mind this was the best person. It was not a question of (sexual) orientation, it was a question of who was the best spiritual leader. The body spoke and said ‘Yes, this is the one.’”

He added this election will not derail the [General Conference 2016’s decision to support the Council of Bishops’ plan to appoint a special commission](#) that would address all aspects of human sexuality currently covered in church law. General Conference is the top lawmaking body of the church.

On the heels of her election, members of the South Central Jurisdiction voted 109-84 late on July 15 to ask the Judicial Council for a declaratory decision regarding gay and lesbian church leaders. The Judicial Council is the denomination’s supreme court.

In a July 16 phone interview, Bishop Bruce Ough, president of the Council of Bishops,



Bishops Grant Hagiya, left, and Karen Oliveto face questions about her election as the first openly gay bishop in the UMC.

agreed with Hagiya that Oliveto’s election does not negate the commission’s purpose.

“I think in the short run there will be significant anxiety and negative reaction in many parts of the church,” he said. “And there will be great celebration in other parts of the church. The election reflects an expression of the division we currently have over matters of human sexuality.”

Ough said Oliveto’s election would likely be a main topic of conversation during the Council of Bishops executive committee meeting July 19–20 in Chicago.

Oliveto was one of 15 clergy elected as United Methodist bishops during U.S. jurisdictional conferences this week.

Tensions among bishops

Oliveto’s election might intensify tensions within the council, said the Rev. William Lawrence, a Perkins School of Theology professor of church history and former president of the denomination’s Judicial Council.

“There will be members of the Council of Bishops, active bishops who have voice and vote, who find themselves in a position where their own theology and their own ecclesial leadership in the church would find Bishop Oliveto’s presence intolerable,” Lawrence said.

To Lawrence, Oliveto’s election “has changed the dynamic” and created a situation unlike any the denomination has faced.

“I don’t think schism is inevitable but I think it is more likely now than it was yesterday,” Lawrence said.

Reactions across the connection

The Rev. Ed Tomlinson, pastor of Lanier UMC in the North Georgia Conference, said he is disappointed that the Western Jurisdiction did not wait to see what the bishops’ commission would do.

“It seems they rushed to judgment without really caring whether all voices are heard or not,” said Tomlinson, a retired district superintendent and veteran General Conference delegate.

The Rev. Beth LaRocca-Pitts, a Southeastern Jurisdiction delegate, is the senior pastor of Atlanta’s Saint Mark UMC where a majority of members are LGBTQ individuals.

“We’re ecstatic (about Oliveto’s election),” she said. “It means a lot to that population that one of their number has been lifted up as a bishop of the church.”

Oliveto’s election, she said, also means the voice of gay people will be represented in the work of the bishops’ commission.

The Rev. Frank Schaefer, a clergyman in the California-Pacific Conference who went through a church trial for officiating at the same-gender wedding of his son, said Oliveto’s election is good news for the LGBTQ community and strengthens the LGBTQ rights movement.

Continued on page 11

Consecration of Bishop Oliveto Draws Cheers, Inquiries

Continued from page 10

“It’s a seismic shift towards LGBTQ inclusion in The United Methodist Church. It is bound to propel the dialogue within the church to a higher and more urgent level,” he said.

He added he hoped this election will not be used as an excuse to force schism similar to what happened following the election of Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson.

Many of the United Methodists in Africa will have serious problems with this decision, said the Rev. Jerry Kulah, dean of Gbarnga School of Theology, a United Methodist seminary in Liberia.

“We are in prayers here in Africa as we trust God to continue to lead us on the ancient path (the holy, undiluted Word of God) Jeremiah

6:16. We shall not be moved. We will continue to remain obedient to the teaching of Scripture and loyal to Jesus Christ,” he said.

The Bible is the primary authority, supported by the United Methodist *Book of Discipline*, he said.

“Those violating the Bible and *Book of Discipline* of the UMC are saying to the global UMC community that they are taking their exit and transferring their loyalty somewhere else,” Kulah said.

Groups that support the current church position against ordaining gay clergy said they are considering what to do.

Both the Confessing Movement and Good News said in statements after the election that evangelicals and traditionalists within the

church will be conferring in the next few days to agree upon responses.

The Confessing Movement invited those who want to defend current church doctrine to meet in Chicago on Oct. 7 to form the Wesleyan Covenant Association.

“There is no agenda for this meeting other than to seek God’s will for those who are evangelicals in The United Methodist Church,” the group said.

The statement said the group supports the work of the bishops’ commission and in the meantime calls upon the bishops and leaders of the church to “follow the Discipline” even if that brings them into conflict with those who are not following it.

OBITUARIES

Rev. Robert E. Kanthak

The Reverend Robert Emmett Kanthak, 91, died at The Grand at Pawling, N.Y., on July 9.

Kanthak was born in Chicago, on May 9, 1925. He grew up there and worked part-time at his father’s bakery, helping make the bread early in the morning before he went to school.

He enlisted in the Navy in 1943 and served as a radar-man on the USS Barton, Vincennes and Vicksburg. Before his discharge in 1946, Kanthak received eight bronze stars.

He met his wife, Lois Irene Kime, while she and her sister were attending the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and living at Bob’s parents’ boarding house. He married Lois in Canton, Ohio, on June 26, 1948. She died on May 30, 2007.

Kanthak worked as a chemist for a rubber products company in Chicago and Indiana. While in Indiana, he entered the ministry and preached in several small towns, including Goblesville, Green Center, Liberty Mills, and Roanoke. In 1967, his work as a chemist brought Kanthak and his family to Pawling, N.Y.

After his retirement from the rubber company, he began preaching in the New York Conference, serving congregations in Holmes, Bangall, Milan, Chatham, Kenoza Lake, Jeffersonville, Fosterdale, Cochection Center, West Sullivan Parish, Margaretville, Malden, Palenville, Quarryville, Phoenicia, Lanesville, Shandaken and High Hill. Kanthak retired in 1992, having served 24 of his 33 years in parish ministry in the New York Conference.

Ceramics was a passion for Kanthak, who gave ceramic lessons and operated a shop called Lo-Bob Ceramics. He was also member of the American Legion Hasler-Kamp Post and a former member of the Masons and Eastern Star.

In addition to his wife, Lois, he was predeceased by his brother, Herbert Kanthak. Survivors include a son Robert Douglas (Jane) Kanthak of Spring Hill, Fla., and Poughquag, N.Y.; a daughter, Deborah (John) Thomes of Pawling; six grandchildren: Sara (Mike) Guilbeault of Brookfield, Conn., Robert Kanthak Jr. of Wappingers Falls, N.Y., Angela (Dan) Thomes-Klug of New Hope, Penn., Timothy (Michele) Kanthak of Wappingers Falls, N.Y., Shaun Thomes of Pawling, and Thomas (Angela) Kanthak of Poughquag; and 10 great-grandchildren.

A funeral service was held July 16 at Horn & Thomes Funeral Home, Pawling; burial followed in Quaker Hill Cemetery, Pawling.

Memorial donations may be made to Wounded Warrior Project, PO Box 75817, Topeka, KS 66675, or the Dutchess County SPCA, 636 Violet Avenue, Hyde Park, NY 12538.



Continued from page 2

workshops, worship, and a wide range of presentations on all aspects of ministry with incarcerated and their families and advocacy for criminal justice reform. Registration opens August 1 on the [event page](#). Questions can be sent to: churchandsociety@nyac-umc.com

11/7-9 Revitup! For Young Clergy

The “revitup for a Lifetime of Ministry” gathering will help young clergy strengthen personal, financial and leadership skills to improve their lives and sustain their ministries. The event, sponsored by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, is planned for the B Resort & Spa in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Continuing education credits are available. More details are available on the [registration](#) site.

Vision Deadlines for 2016

The Vision is a monthly online publication of the New York Conference. Deadlines are always the first Friday of the month, with posting to the web site about 10 days later. The deadlines for 2016 are as follows: Aug. 5, Sept. 2, Oct. 7, Nov. 4, and Dec. 2. Please send any stories, photos, ideas, or questions directly to vision@nyac.com.