

"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

August 2016

Just Call Me Jane—Again

I left the New York Annual Conference (formally) exactly 12 years ago. When I was elected a bishop in July of 2004, I had a first name. Those of you who knew me then called me Jane. I had been a member of the conference since my ordination as a deacon in 1977 and had served the conference in many capacities.

My home church was Summerfield UMC in New Haven—now First and Summerfield. In addition to serving the Simsbury, Naugatuck and New Canaan churches, I was on the conference staff to direct spiritual life programming for four years, and served as a district superintendent of the then Connecticut/New York District. I was also privileged to chair the Board of Ordained Ministry, the

Council on Ministries and was a member of many task forces and boards.

I had been deeply moved when Bishop Forrest Stith said at the clergy session in 1993, "For clergy, the annual conference is your home." This described my experience of the New York Conference.

I spent the first night after my election as bishop grieving the reality that I would probably be leaving my home. I prayed that I might be assigned to New York, but God and the Jurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy had other ideas. So I was blessed to spend eight years as bishop of the Central Pennsylvania Conference that became the Susquehanna Conference.

Continued on page 6



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE PARSONS

Bishop Jane Allen Middleton returns to retirement on September 1.

Talking About Race: UM Pastor's Tips



Ferguson, Mo., Pastor Willis Johnson

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from a forthcoming book and video study, Holding Up Your Corner: Talking About Race in Your Community by the Rev. F. Willis Johnson (Abingdon Press, Dec. 2016). Johnson is the senior minister at Wellspring Church in Ferguson, Mo.

BY REV. F. WILLIS JOHNSON

I am a pastor in Ferguson, Missouri. And, like my colleagues and clergy friends, I know incidents of shootings and racial tension can leave us all frustrated and fearful. We want to talk, and then preach, but many of us don't know what to say.

Here's some of what I've been hearing:

- "I feel helpless and lost in all this, like I'm far removed, but I don't want to be."
- "I want to be part of making change, not to just sit idle."
- "As a white pastor, what are my boundaries? What is off limits and what is not?"
- "How do we know if our 'constructive conversations' are helpful, or just more noise?"
- "I serve a small church in a rural, white community. I'm feeling called to do something here, but I need guidance to

Continued on page 3



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

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 of 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.

9/25 Welcome for Bishop Bickerton

All are invited to join in the 3 p.m. [celebration](#) to welcome our new bishop, Thomas J. Bickerton, at the Salem UMC, 2190 Adam Clayton Powell Blvd., New York. Volunteers are needed to serve as ushers and greeters. If interested please contact Rev. Marvin Moss at mross@salem-harlem.org by August 21.

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.

9/27–28 & 9/28–29 Tri-District Bishop's Retreat

The Catskill Hudson, New York/CT, Connecticut districts will meet on Monday and Tuesday; the Metropolitan and Long Island East and West districts will gather on Tuesday and Wednesday at the Stony Point Center, Stony Point, N.Y. Additional [details](#) will be available on the conference web site.

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 5 p.m. at Grace UMC, 125 104th St, N.Y., N.Y. There will be a full day of panels, 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](#) details and a schedule are available on the conference web site. Questions can be sent to: churchandsociety@nyac-umc.com

10/16 Installation of DS Julia Yim

Details are still being finalized for this afternoon event planned for Bible Korean UMC in Dix Hills, N.Y.

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: Sept. 2, Oct. 7, Nov. 4, and Dec. 2. Please send any stories, photos, ideas, or questions directly to vision@nyac.com.

 <p>The News of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church</p>
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Talking About Race: UM Pastor's Tips

Continued from page 1

know where to start.”

- “I’m concerned about the reality of fear and mistrust that my students are growing up into.” (from a youth pastor)
- “I’m struggling with how to make this real for my people. They shake their heads and feel empathy, but they see no real need for action or change.”

My preacher friends are asking, “What can I—should I—tell our people?” It’s a hard question. And not just for preachers. Truth is, we all have ‘people,’ those in our sphere of influence—neighbors, co-workers, friends, our children. What can we say to them?

Take a look at Chapter 4 in the Book of Esther. The entire Jewish community is in a perilous place. People fear for their lives. Leaders are in disagreement and disarray. Finally, one leader, Mordecai, tells another, Esther, this is not the time to quibble, be quiet, or quit. “Maybe it was for a moment like this that you came to be part of the royal family” (Esther 4:14 CEB). Before we consider what to do, it’s helpful to know what not to do.

Don’t Quibble

In the biblical story, Esther was going back and forth, not accomplishing anything. In a moment of crisis we realize that we no longer have time for debates, for arguing over slogans, over whose lives matter, over perceived failures in media coverage. We can no longer spend time disputing the fact that racism is in us, and is killing black men, women, and children. We can no longer ‘other’ each other to death, over more than just race. We don’t have time to spend critiquing the individual lives and motives of victims or police officers or public officials. We have been “majoring in the minors,” as Martin Luther King Jr. said.

Don’t be Quiet

Esther scurries around, hoping to silently manipulate an outcome. It doesn’t work. Our prayer vigils and moments of silence have become shallow, easy alternatives to actually using our voices as God calls us to do. We can no longer merely host and organize prayer vigils for reconciling that which we have never experienced. We can’t keep preying on each other and then pray for forgiveness. We can’t pray for God to do what we are unwilling to do ourselves. Quiet is safer, sure. A pastor friend in Nashville told me, “I’m learning to better engage in conversations about race. I know I will make blunders, but I won’t be quiet any longer.”

Don’t Quit

“For a moment like this” translates as now. We can’t sit around in our ashes, thinking the time to act has passed, or not yet arrived. It is not a singular time. It is always, every time. Anne Frank wrote, “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” So, the pressure is off! We no longer need to find the right time. It is always now.

It is helpful to know what to do. Acknowledge that everything is not right, with ourselves first, and then with our systems and our world. Affirm one another’s pain, understanding that it is real, and that the other’s pain is also our own pain. Act in ways that bring healing and hope to those places of pain. Acknowledge that all is not right, and do it truthfully.

Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know”

The Bible shows us how to get through life, but it rarely if ever answers why. Be transparent. If you don’t know something for sure, say so. Don’t make things up. Don’t say things that sound good but have nothing behind them. Affirm that the pain—yours and mine—is real, and that it is connected.

There’s a scientific theory that illustrates this idea: quantum entanglement. “At the simplest level, the idea of entanglement is just the idea that two things that are separated in space can still be the same thing,” says National Public Radio science reporter Geoff Brumfiel. “You can have an object that exists in two different spaces and is still the same object.”

What has newly been discovered is that these particles within objects still remain connected even though they are physically apart—when one particle becomes excited, so does the other. What moves me, moves you. What hurts me, hurts you. What inspires me, inspires you. In affirming another’s pain, we affirm that we are entangled in it. When we become entangled, we are changed.

Don’t fail to listen

In order to affirm we must listen, and model listening for our people. Affirm that others’ experiences are real, even if they are unreal to you. Emanuel Cleaver III, a pastor in Kansas City, expresses the conundrum of black parental and pastoral counseling. “If you are a black man and you are stopped by the police,” he says, “here is what you do: Comply with everything they tell you and then pray they don’t shoot you anyway.” This is reality for millions of people. Make space,

time, and place for listening and affirmation in your community.

Pastor Traci Blackmon says “we must hold open a space for grief” for people to process their pain as part of community. I don’t know what that will look like for you, but I believe you can figure it out. We are to ACT in ways that bring healing and hope. There is no escaping our responsibility. None of us are exempt, no matter our political bent or church setting or social location. No matter that we feel helpless and lost. Not knowing what to say or do is a shared experience, from pulpit to pew to parking lot.

When a man asked Jesus to heal his son, he said, “I have faith,” and then “help my lack of faith.” (Mark 9:24 CEB) You can have faith and still wonder why or when. What’s never in question is who. It is clear who needs to help, who will be the source of help and hope. That’s Jesus, through us, by our action.

What to do, exactly?

1. Get out of the micro. Move to the macro. Preach grace. What can you do in your community to get everybody under the canopy of grace? What steps can you take to realign yourself and those in your influence with the fact that grace is real, unmerited, for all, for always?
2. Be relational, move in, get closer to the points of pain. Talk with people you don’t know. Get to know them and their reality. Now is not the time to sit back.
3. Find ways to bind people together, to facilitate quantum entanglement in your community.
4. Examine the civic structures and policies and systems that need to change. Work cooperatively and productively with others to change them. Examine the structures and policies and systems in your denominational connection that need to change. Work cooperatively and productively with others to change them. Invite others—your people—to join you in this work.
5. Speak out and work proactively to change gun laws. No more quibbling, no more.
6. Bring light and life. Every day, do things in your personal and public spaces to lift yourself and others up. Enjoy creation. Love life. Make joy. Don’t stay in the heavy. Turn off the TV.

Wherever we are, I pray we are holding up our corners, lifting hurting people to Jesus, lifting the hope of Jesus for others to see. Like the old hymn says, “If I be lifted up I’ll draw all people unto me.”

Shillady Offers Benediction After Clinton Acceptance

On July 28, following Hillary Clinton's historic speech accepting the Democratic nomination for president, Rev. William S. Shillady gave the benediction to close the convention.

After batting away some of the balloons and confetti falling to the stage in Philadelphia, Shillady, offered these words:

"Please hold the hands of the persons next to you! Let us pray:

O God of many names, we know that you call us to work hard to bring people together.

To build bridges of hope for the future, we reach out to our neighbors, no matter their race, creed, sexual orientation, or color. We hold hands together for healing the pain and grief from violence and death. Lord, we allow Your love to overcome our fears as we learn to respect the "other" and to treat the most vulnerable of our Society just as we do our friends. Help us to become the loving children you want us to be!

We ask You to open our minds to discern the complex issues of our communities, our nation, and our world. Lord, open our hearts to your Spirit and to your teaching to love our neighbors as ourselves. Help us to open our doors with radical hospitality to all our neighbors, seeking both conversation and civic actions as we work together to end discrimination in all forms—and to solve our communities' problems together.

Lord, you have spoken through your prophets and teachers throughout history. They have taught us that we must not demonize individuals, groups, or peoples of other faiths as a response to perceived threats. They have challenged us to tear down the walls of fear and hatred so that we can be stronger together. They have called us to love others as we love you—and to treat others as we wish to be treated.

Lord, as we hold hands right now, we are reminded that together, we can transform the world for good.

Lord God, give us the courage to leave this convention with determination and fortitude to move onward and upward to become a



Rev. Bill Shillady offers a benediction to close the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia.

better nation, one that can solve our many problems together, and not apart. Help the world to see our nation as a shining lamp on a hill.

Be with our sister Hillary and our brother Tim. Give them courage, strength and stamina for the 102 days left ahead, and then to lead our country.

Great God of the Universe, may we as the founder of Methodism taught: "Do all the good we can. By all the means we can. In all the ways we can. In all the places we can. At all the times we can. To all the people we can. As long as ever we can."

Amen.

Shillady is an elder in the NYAC and serves as the executive director of the United Methodist City Society. Read more about his [relationship](#) with the Clinton family on the NYAC web site.

Embracing Life Fully—However It Comes

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant on Older Adult Ministries

"Sitting full in the moment, I practiced on the God-awful difficulty of just paying attention. It's a contention of Heat Moon's—believing as he does any traveler who misses the journey misses all he's going to get—that a man becomes his attentions."

This is from a delightful book, "Blue Highways" by William Least Heat-Moon, published in 1983. The book details his observations of people and places as he travels the perimeter of the United States, always on the back roads, almost never on an interstate. It is filled with poignant observations of the human scene, up close and personal.

It was suggested by a parishioner Paul, who is in his 90s and still creatively living his life. He paints, make signs for our church, and like most people his age deals with the sometime difficult realities of aging, praying and reflecting. He, it seems to me, is still on a journey intending to learn as he goes and to experience life no matter the situation.

He, and so many others like him, women and men alike, lead me to believe the secret to full life lies in faithfully embracing living it fully, paying attention (as it were) to all that is there. The good and the bad, the



ups and the downs, the joys and the sorrows, all have much to teach. And we miss so much of the journey when we neglect the art of "sitting full in the moment"—knowing that the journey, wherever it is leading us, is all important.

I am still slowly and deliberately reading this book, so as not to miss any of the insights it is offering. Already I see solid implications for navigating my aging process, as well as in how to more effectively minister with those who, in their waning years, seem to be missing so much of their own journeys. Often there is a preoccupation with things that are going wrong, as the body becomes less efficient than it was once, as the memory becomes less sharp and so on. Often I see them dwell in the past rather than sit full in the moment.

Our ministry, lay and clergy, enriches others when we encourage in ways that help process the necessary care for what is not working as it once did, even while always bringing us back to a focus on the "what is" and what role we may still play in it. We need to help others find the fullness of life to which we, and they, have been called.

How we do that varies from place to place, and time to time, but it's not optional if older adult ministry is to happen on the deepest level. If they, if we, miss the journey, the promise of fullness is less than fulfilled.

New Program Director Onboard at Quinipet

BY JANE WAKEMAN
Camping & Retreat Ministries

Meet Kate Akerman. As the new program services director at Quinipet, Akerman has just completed her first summer season in that position. Attending and working at Christian camps is nothing new to this North Carolina native.



Akerman attributes much of her personal and spiritual growth to early camping experiences within her Episcopalian tradition. She notes that she discovered herself and her view of the world through these childhood experiences. As a result of those experiences, she sought out a career in recreation management; Akerman is a recent graduate of Appalachian State University.

Akerman hopes to provide opportunities for more children and youth to explore their spirituality and discover who they really are.

In her position at Quinipet, Akerman is responsible for overseeing all of the summer programs, including the overnight camps, the day camp and any special program weekends initiated by Quinipet.

When asked what a typical day is like during the height of the season, she explained that she begins early—about an hour before the campers are up—so that she can get organized and catch up on paperwork. She then joins the campers for chapel and breakfast.

Then it's back to the office to respond to emails and contact parents as needed while the campers are involved in their activities. She estimated that her time is about evenly split between being out and around the camp and working in the office.

Looking back at the season, she said that it has been great to get

to know the Quinipet camp as a community and as a “family.” She is tired, but she describes it as a “good tired.”

Akerman said that she was most surprised at how similar the United Methodist camping programs were to her experiences in the Episcopal tradition. She found that both denominations have similar ways of showing Christ's love to all. More challenging was finding her place amid an established community that is close knit and full of cherished traditions. She hopes that she will be able to put her background and education into practice by striking a balance of tradition with growth.

And her favorite feature of Quinipet so far? The spectacular sunsets that occur almost daily.

Previously Akerman had served as a children's minister in Austin, but said she's glad to be back in the camping world. She believes that there is a need for leadership among the laity in any denomination and sees her position as a vocation. Akerman lives at Quinipet with her dog, Bishop.

She said she's not sure what to expect during the much quieter winter season at Quinipet. Perhaps we should ask her when we see her again next summer!

For all things about NYAC camping, visit www.nyaccamps.org.



Kate Akerman

Call for All ERTs to be Recertified

Dear Friends,

As we all know, in disaster recovery work the phrase often used is, “not if, but when.” While a disaster event might not directly affect us (although we've had our share) we may be called upon to assist others in their initial response and long-term recovery. A key to an effective response is preparation.

A first step is to maintain a current list and active group of early response teams (ERTs). Toward this, we will be offering recertification classes throughout the annual conference in the coming months. It is my hope to provide opportunities in all districts for those whose badges have expired, and within reasonable access to all persons. I will be working with district committees and disaster coordinators to put these in place. We will also be offering training events for new ERTs, for long-term disaster response, and for disaster emotional and spiritual care.

If you are no longer able, or desire, to serve in this ministry, please let me know and I will remove your name from our list. If you know of persons who have been through the training and for whatever reason are not on our list, please let me know as well so they can be added.

The cost for the recertification class is \$10—to cover the background check. We also have an okay from UMCOR to issue temporary badges until the permanent ones are received from them. This should cut down on wait

time considerably.

Refresher/recertification classes have been scheduled for the following locations. Please contact the team leader to reserve your place:

- **August 30:** Hyde Park UMC, 1 Church Street, Hyde Park, N.Y. 6 to 9 p.m. Leader: Terry Temple ttemple25@gmail.com
- **September 10:** Bellmore UMC, 2640 Royle Street, Bellmore, N.Y. 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Leader: Tom Vencuss tvencuss@nyac.com

Information on other dates and locations will be sent as they are secured.

West Virginia update

To date we have not received a formal request for ERT help. However, a request has been put out for persons trained in disaster emotional and spiritual care (DESC) to assist. Wendy Vencuss, the conference DESC coordinator, has been in contact with those in our conference who are DESC trained. We should also start thinking about persons to lead long-term recovery teams. If you are interested please contact Tom Vencuss at tvencuss@nyac.com.

Thanking you for your service, and for our continued ministry together.

Rev. Tom Vencuss

Coordinator of Disaster Recovery Ministries

Just Call Me Jane—Again

Continued from page 1

In God's amazing way, as you know I was called back to serve the New York Conference on January 1, 2015. I came at a very difficult time in the life of the conference, perhaps one of the most difficult ever.

In 2012, you had welcomed a wonderful bishop who came with great enthusiasm, great vision, and great faith: Bishop Martin D. McLee. His unexpected and premature death left a terrible void. Added to that was the reality that in just over two years, you had five bishops. It was immediately obvious that our beloved conference needed healing—and that process continues.

This has also been a period of moving forward on the renovation of the conference center to correct serious structural issues, the purchase of a new episcopal residence, the establishment of a strategy to assist pastors toward excellence, the completion of the Imagine No Malaria campaign achieving more than 83 percent of our goal, a strong movement to become an open and inclusive conference, 12 years of full payment of all apportionments, and a special gift of more than \$40,000 for the Bishop Jane Middleton school in Sierra Leone. I am deeply grateful for your generosity.

What a privilege it has been for me to come home. It has been a joy to reconnect with beloved friends and colleagues and to come to know many hundreds of others. Jack and I have both appreciated the opportunity to greet longtime friends and to make new ones.



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE PARSONS

Members of the cabinet surround Bishop Middleton and her husband, Jack, in prayer during the 2016 New York Annual Conference.

When I returned to you as bishop, I asked that you address me with the title. I asked that you show respect for this office, especially because I am the first woman to serve as bishop (albeit interim resident bishop) of the New York Conference. It seemed important to me that you would use the title that was used for previous bishops.

But on September 1, I will retire again and I will be Jane again. I am deeply grateful for this extraordinary opportunity to serve God and God's people, the people called Methodist in the New York Area. Thank you.

† *Jane Allen Middleton*

Amityville Columbarium: Do Methodists Do This?

BY THOMAS W. GOODHUE

Congregations often face challenges in putting their aging buildings to use in mission and ministry—and in paying for their maintenance. First United Methodist Church in Amityville on Long Island has found one such way to re-purpose and repair an unused part of their building.

The church had a little-used church school chapel that needed some serious and expensive work. The trustees suggested installing a 64-niche modular columbarium in one wall of the small chapel.

While more and more Americans are choosing cremation, the cost of placing ashes in a cemetery can be considerable. The Amityville trustees suggested that the project could save parishioners money, create a wonderful space for cremated remains, and cover costs to repair the chapel, all at once. Since memorial funds could be used appropriately for this purpose, the renovations would not affect the current budget. And should future needs require move niches, there would be room to install additional modular units.

Some members of the congregation questioned whether it was appropriate to keep remains of the Church Triumphant in a building used by the Church Militant. Others voiced the opinion that United Methodists just don't do this sort of thing.

I shared with some of the members of the church a story I first heard from my District Superintendent Earl Kernahan, when I was a young pastor in Hawaii in the mid-70s. Back in the early 1960s, Harris United

Methodist Church, a predominantly Japanese-American congregation in Honolulu, was planning a new sanctuary. Some members of the congregation, particularly *Nissei* (second generation Americans) and those who were first-generation Christians, proposed creating a columbarium: they wanted a space where they worshiped for the ashes of parents that they had been keeping, somewhat uncomfortably, in their homes. Their culture asked eldest sons to guard these ashes, they explained, and they wished to honor their parents, but to do so in a setting that was Christian, rather than Buddhist or Shinto.

Hawaii was still a "mission district" in those days, so the construction plans needed to be approved by mission executives in Manhattan. Some objected that this smacked of ancestor worship until one of them noted that when he vacationed in Europe, he had seen all sorts of crypts and columbaria in the churches there. Harris got their new building, completed in 1962, with 54 niches for ashes.

Amityville First ended up with a beautiful, intimate worship space and a wonderful place to remember those who have gone on before us. They dedicated it on All Saints Sunday, a fitting way to celebrate the lives of "all the saints who from their labors rest."

Goodhue, a retired member of the NYAC, is completing a biography of the Hawaiian queen, Kaahumanu, and another book about getting along with our neighbors in a multi-cultural, multi-faith world.

Pastors: Get All the Info You Need

All pastors in the New York Conference need to check the following six categories of information to ensure that everything is accurate, and/or functioning correctly.

Conference email

All pastors serving churches will receive emails from the conference office *only* via their nyac-umc.com address. The nyac-umc.com addresses are the default in the conference's main email contact address list, including the one used by the episcopal office. These are also the addresses used in the church and clergy locators on the conference [web site](#).

If you haven't received information about your nyac-umc.com address, or have lost your credentials, please email Barbara Eastman at website@nyac.com.

Email subscriptions

Many departments and committees within the conference and some of the district offices use our centralized email system. In order to receive the important communications we send, you'll need to check to be sure you are on the correct subscription lists (messages from the bishop's office; let us remember; information from finance, etc.).

Please click the [link](#) in the right column of the conference [homepage](#) called "Subscribe to Our Emails" to update the types of messages you receive. Fill in your email and first and last

names. The system will send you an email with a link to update your subscription preferences.

Clergy locator

In order to help folks contact you, please review your [contact information](#) for accuracy. If your photo is not appearing on this page, we don't have one in our database. Please send one along to website@nyac.com. When we receive the photos taken at conference this year, we will add them all to the database.

Church locator

You should be listed on the page for the church(es) where you are appointed/assigned. Please check the information on your [church page](#) to ensure its accuracy. You can make most changes to this information yourself via the church dashboard.

Church dashboard

This is where the charge conference [summary form](#) resides—you will need to access this dashboard to submit your form after your charge conference later this year.

You can also update information about your church including service times, phone numbers and mailing address in the dashboard. Please consider uploading a photo of your church. The only thing that can't be changed is the physical address—please send that to website@nyac.com.

The username and password are typically

the GCFA number without the first zero. Please email archives@nyac.com to have the credentials reset. For churches that merged in 2016, use the GCFA number of the church whose building is being used by the newly merged congregation. New GCFA numbers will be issued and communicated to you soon.

VitalSigns

[VitalSigns](#) is a tool that allows you to track your weekly worship attendance, professions of faith, small group participation, missional participation and financial giving for your congregation. It is designed to help congregations follow their progress against the goals they set for each year via the Vital Congregations [web site](#).

VitalSigns sends an email each Monday morning to the address on record for your church with a link to your VitalSigns input form. You can also log in whenever you wish using your church's credentials.

To change your VitalSigns email address, or get your login credentials, please email Carol Merante in Connectional Ministries, at cmerante@nyac.com.

Questions? Contact the NYAC information technology team:

- Barbara Eastman (website@nyac.com, 860-633-9721)
- Beth Patkus (archives@nyac.com, 914-615-2241)

Bishops Approve Plan for Sexuality Panel

UMNS | Amid growing concerns for the denomination's future, United Methodist bishops approved a plan for establishing a commission dealing with church teachings on homosexuality.

The bishops' executive committee also took a step toward a special session of General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking body, in early 2018.

The Council of Bishops executive committee met July 19–20 in Chicago behind closed doors to discuss creating the Commission on a Way Forward, [which General Conference authorized in May](#). The full council has charged its 17-member executive committee with developing a framework for the new commission.

Many United Methodists see the panel as a last-ditch effort to keep the multinational denomination from splintering.

Church members have long debated the denomination's bans on same-gender weddings and "self-avowed practicing" gay

clergy. However, the bishops acknowledged that the denomination's landscape has changed dramatically since the most recent General Conference, and they face mounting pressure.

In the past two months, a number of conferences [voted not to conform](#) with church restrictions related to ministry with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning individuals.

Meanwhile, a group of United Methodists announced the formation of the Wesleyan Covenant Association, a member-based network for congregations that regard [the church's teachings on homosexuality as part of Christian orthodoxy](#).

[Most recently, the Western Jurisdiction elected](#) Bishop Karen Oliveto, who is openly gay and married to a deaconess.

These moves "have opened deep wounds and fissures within The United Methodist Church and fanned fears of schism," said Dakotas-Minnesota Area Bishop Bruce R. Ough, Council

of Bishops president, in [a detailed statement](#). "The church finds itself in an extremely fragile, highly contested season."

The South Central Jurisdiction had already asked the Judicial Council, the church's high court, to review Oliveto's election. The bishops' executive committee urged "respectfully" that the court put the matter on the docket for its next meeting, October 25–28.

Nevertheless, Ough told United Methodist News Service he believes bishops and others remain committed to the unity and mission of the denomination. He said that includes even church members frustrated by church restrictions.

"I think many, if not most, in the church right now really want the commission to succeed, without defining what that success looks like," he said. "I think they really want a space, apart from all these actions and reactions, for the commission to work."

Continued on page 8

Lesbian Pastor to Take Involuntary Leave

UMNS | A complaint against the Rev. Cynthia Meyer, a lesbian pastor in Kansas, has ended with her taking an involuntary leave of absence at least until the conclusion of the next General Conference.

[The resolution](#), announced Aug. 3, averts a church trial which was set to begin August 24 in Concordia, Kansas.

Under the agreement, Meyer will go on leave starting September 1 and no longer serve as pastor of Edgerton (Kansas) United Methodist Church. She cannot receive an appointment or perform the duties of a United Methodist elder, such as administering the sacraments. In short, she will be out of a job.

However, a church or other United Methodist entity can hire her for functions equivalent to that of a layperson. She also will receive \$37,000—about a year's pay in her current appointment.

She officially will retain her clergy credentials at least until 90 days following the next General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking assembly. Depending on what the legislative body does, she may:

- See her full elder status restored immediately and receive a new appointment
- Take advantage of another provision the body approves
- See the trial process begin again.

Meyer faced a charge that she is a “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy member, a violation of the *Book of Discipline*, the church's governing document.

The agreement came August 1 after more than 12 hours of closed-door discussions among Meyer, Great Plains Area Bishop Scott Jones, four counsels involved in the case, and two facilitators from the denomination's [JustPeace Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation](#).

The resolution also comes as United Methodist bishops [are preparing to appoint a commission](#), charged with reviewing the denomination's policies

related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning individuals.

The bishops also are considering calling a special General Conference in 2018 to consider any of the commission's proposals. Meyer's leave will last at least through a special General Conference. Yet, if a special session is not called it will last until the next regularly scheduled General Conference in 2020.



Rev. Cynthia Meyer

Thoughts on resolution

Jones, whose current area encompasses the states of Kansas and Nebraska, is a member of the Council of Bishops executive committee that is planning the Commission on a Way Forward. He will become the bishop of the Houston Area, starting September 1.

“The agreement we reached upholds the *Book of Discipline* and yet recognizes that the larger denomination is in a time of discernment about a way forward,” Jones told United Methodist News Service. “So this agreement recognizes that accountability was necessary and yet holds open possibilities for whatever the general church is going to decide.”

Meyer said in a statement that she recognizes the agreement as a complaint resolution but not a just response. Nevertheless, she said she moves ahead in hope.

“I hope that The United Methodist Church, through a fully representative, inclusive commission, then a focused General Conference, will intentionally, prayerfully remove all discriminatory language and practice from its *Book of Discipline*,” Meyer said [in a statement](#).

Bishops Approve Plan for Sexuality Panel

Continued from page 7

Plan for the commission

At its meeting, the bishops' executive committee set out [the mission, vision and scope](#) of the new commission.

The commission will have 20 to 25 members. The aim is to bring together people who are deeply committed to the future of The United Methodist Church with an openness to developing new relationships with each other.

The executive committee is asking all bishops to nominate up to five potential members. Individuals already suggested to Ough and retired Bishop Peter Weaver, the bishops' executive secretary, will be included in the pool of nominees.

The plan is for the commission's membership to be announced August 31 and for the group to hold its first meeting in October, if any needed visas can be obtained by then. The first Council of Bishops meeting with newly elected bishops is set to start October 30.

The executive committee named as commission moderators Florida Area Bishop

Ken Carter, West Virginia Area Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball and Central Congo Area Bishop David Yemba. Carter is set to succeed Ough in 2018 as Council of Bishops president.

“We wanted folks who we thought would reflect some of the values that we would like to see in all members of the commission,” Ough told UMNS. Specifically, he said, the committee sought people “who are able to listen well and respectfully and have a demonstrated ability of helping diverse groups come to common decisions.”

Ough said the executive committee also wanted to have a moderator from a central conference, church regions in Africa, Asia and Europe. Yemba, who has led the Council of Bishops work on faith and order, will soon be retiring.

The Council of Bishops also will be hiring a professional facilitator to work with the commission. The council is looking for someone with proven international and multicultural mediation skills. Whether the commission's meetings are open to the public will largely be up to the facilitator.

Scope of work

More than just discussions about human sexuality will be on the commission's agenda.

“The matters of human sexuality and unity are the presenting issues for a deeper conversation that surfaces different ways of interpreting Scripture and theological tradition,” said Ough's statement.

The commission will examine new ways to be in relationship across cultures and church structures. The body also will look at ways to redefine what it means to be a connectional denomination.

“This unity will not be grounded in our conceptions of human sexuality, but in our affirmation of the Triune God who calls us to be a grace-filled and holy people in the Wesleyan tradition,” Ough's statement said.

Ultimately, any changes the commission recommends will need approval from General Conference.

The executive committee also began the process for calling a special session of General Conference. It will be up to the full Council of Bishops to call such a session.

Where's Right Home for Christian Unity Work?

BY REV. DR. JACOB DHARMARAJ
President, National Federation of
Asian American United Methodists

We, as a denomination, are traversing through the zone of all probability. Many of our constituents are not surprised when the improbable happens. The last two general conferences have put the denomination in a holding pattern with no uplift, no crash. We were simply circling above an airport going nowhere. At least, it is better than trying to land into a river because of a bird hit or booming into a marsh because of a deer crossing. The closest parallel to the indecision on some of the key issues during the 2016 General Conference is the movie, "All Is Lost," a survival drama with few spoken words starring Robert Redford as a man lost at sea.

While the plans to restructure the general boards and agencies were moved to the back burner, few paid attention to the decision of the Council of Bishops (COB) to overhaul the office that relates to ecumenism and interreligious affairs. Ever since the General Commission of Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns morphed into an office of the COB following GC-2012, it has failed to become a meaningful and relevant resource.

It is encouraging to know that the Council of Bishops is in the process of moving the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships (OCUIR) to Washington, D.C., and hiring six new staff. COB's tacit acknowledgment that the old model was "Procrustean" and needed restructuring is indeed admirable. Unquestionably, our denomination needs clarity in our understanding of Christology, missiology, and ecclesiology in the context of interfaith or multi-faith relations, which the COB strives to address. Just like great apps such as "WhatsApp" or "Yelp" and others enhance our daily social interactions with our peers, a great missional and theological app can enhance, inspire, and illuminate our ministry of witness.

Since the emerging new world is remarkably similar to the Greco-Roman pluralistic domain, it offers new challenges every day in our struggle to witness our faith in Jesus Christ. With the questioning of traditional religions by modern scientific, philological, and archaeological discoveries, and by application of various theoretical apparatuses such as deconstructionism, phenomenism and etc., the foundational beliefs of Christianity have been challenged to the core. Christianity's relationship with people of other faiths and the Body of Christ has to be clearly defined in today's

COMMENTARY

context. We sincerely hope the creation of this office will lead us to a higher level.

Nonetheless, I had a question while I was reading on-line the purpose of the office and the responsibilities of the staff. The program responsibility of this office in Washington, D.C., at least theoretically, comes close to the very purpose of the mission board. Let me clarify.

Anyone who is committed to Christian mission will undeniably agree that mission and evangelism are two sides of the same coin. Mission lays out the road map and evangelism connects all of us with the Author and Creator of all. I believe that the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) has the expertise, experience, and potential resources to work with ecumenical groups and interfaith communities.

By any definition of mission, the function, role, and responsibilities of the OCUIR come close to the mandate of Global Ministries. If we house the OCUIR under Global Ministries, our denomination will reduce the replication of missional tasks.

Let me submit one historic reference. The global ecumenical mission conference held in Jerusalem 1928 was dominated by debate between Hendrick Kraemer and William Hocking about ministry with people of other living faiths. This debate spilled over to the ecumenical conference held in Tambaram, India, in 1938 where Karl Barth, E. Stanley Jones, and others continued the conversation. These and all subsequent ecumenical mission conferences in the 20th century have discussed and deliberated the church's interaction with people of other faiths under the umbrella of mission and evangelism, but never as an isolated task. This office in Washington, D.C., can be justified to function apart from Global Ministries only, I submit, only if it were to be established to function as a "think tank."

As a think tank and under the governance of the bishops, this office would be able to produce quality resources that will equip our constituents to know what they believe and why they believe. It will help us overcome the sophomoric spasm of multiculturalism and ecumenism, and nurture an informed religious community that is equipped to rethink in knowledgeable ways. Most importantly, this office would help all of us focus on the challenges we face as a denomination rather than the progress we have made; it will take us from the present-day

corrosive culture of consultancy to the primary goal of finding answers. Lastly, it will be multi-disciplinary, and where appropriate, it will be multi-theological.

On the other hand, if it is to function as a program office, it will look for answers outside the problem and will continue to impose externally formulated ripostes. The think tank model will also help us come to grips with the problems we face, identify the questions and assumptions we have, and most importantly, enrich us to articulate theology from the core of our Christian convictions.

If we want people to join the United Methodist movement in the transformation of the world, we need to be intentional about developing intellectual leadership and put together a team that would better communicate what and who we are. It is not enough to minister with the poor and marginalized. We must develop and cultivate scholars and intellectuals who can minister to the movers and shakers of our society that include the intellectuals and affluent from all religious backgrounds.

As COB strives to re-ignite the engine of the denomination's mission with people of other living faiths and create a public theology, and as it is committed to move past education for maintenance to education for mission, we request the leadership not overlook the rich resources readily available within the diasporic community among us. They will be an asset and strength in our missional engagement, as they know many languages, several cultures, and various sacred scriptures of major world religions.

Our sacred history itself corroborates the necessity of engaging the diasporic faith community as our society becomes multi-contextual and pluralistic. For example, the Septuagint, commonly known as LXX or the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, was translated from Hebrew to Greek for the scattered Hellenistic Jews. They recruited and engaged 70 scholars from the diasporic community. Can our beloved United Methodist Church and COB have such a grand vision for our larger society and tap the rich resources that are readily available among us?

In the final analysis, the unanswered question is this: Is the Office of the Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships envisioned as a programmatic office or a research institute? The answer determines where it should be housed: with the GBGM or the COB.

OBITUARIES

Rev. Frederick M. Moore

The Reverend Frederick M. Moore, 84, a resident of Moriches, N.Y., died Aug. 3, 2016 at Peconic Bay Medical Center in Riverhead, N.Y.

Rev. Moore was born Nov. 22, 1931 in Port Jefferson, N.Y., to Karl F. and Mildred (McClure) Moore. He was an Army veteran and a former member of the Riverhead Fire Department, Washington Engine Company.

After serving in the former Peninsula Conference from 1963 to 1966, Moore became a member of the New York Conference. He served Lake Ronkonkoma UMC in Lake Grove, N.Y.; Riverhead UMC in Riverhead, N.Y., and Orient UMC in Orient, N.Y. He retired in 1997 and continued to serve at Orient UMC for the next 10 years.

Moore also served the New York Conference as executive director of the UM Retirement Community Development Corporation from 1979 to 1983, and as president of the Peconic UM Housing Development Fund from 1983 to 1990. He was the founder of John Wesley Village senior citizen community in Riverhead.

Predeceased by his first wife, Lois Jones Moore, in 2003, Moore is survived by his second wife, Sharon; sons, Thomas, William and James; sister, Mary Ellen DeBacco and eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

A service of remembrance was held August 12 at Tuthill-Mangano Funeral Home, Riverhead.

Memorial donations may be made to Peconic Bay Medical Center, 1300 Roanoke Avenue, Riverhead, N.Y. 11901, or North Fork UMC, P.O. Box 1286, Cutchogue, N.Y. 11935.

Sandra Piccirillo

Sandra Piccirillo died on July 31, 2016, at age 63. She was the wife of Rev. Joseph Piccirillo, who currently serves the Avon Memorial United Methodist Church in Connecticut. He previously served at Nichols United Methodist Church from 2002 to 2014.

Born January 3, 1953, in Bridgeport, she was the daughter of Sally and William Everett Sr. She earned a bachelor's degree in special education and a master's in art education at Southern Connecticut State University. Piccirillo taught art at Kolbe Cathedral High School, Bridgeport and The Lorraine D. FASTER School, Hamden.

In addition to art, she enjoyed dancing and was once a dance instructor at Arthur Murray's in the Fairfield and West Haven studios. She put her creative spirit to work in ministry as a member of the vocal and bell choirs, performing in church musicals, painting murals, and hosting dinner dances and bakery fundraisers.

In addition to her husband and her parents, she is survived by a brother William Everett Jr. of Milford; father and mother-in-law, Joseph and Phyllis Piccirillo of Trumbull; brother-in-law, David (Francesca Marini) Piccirillo of Trumbull; sister-in-law, Susan (Lina Mitchell) Rotunda of Milford, along with several nieces and nephews.

A funeral was held on August 6 at the Nichols UMC in Trumbull. Memorial donations may be made to the First UMC of Shelton, 188 Rocky Rest Road, Shelton, CT 06484; Nichols UMC, 35 Shelton Road, Trumbull, CT 06611; the Memorial UMC, 867 West Avon Road, Avon, CT 06001, or Masonicare Hospice, 111 Founders Plaza, East Hartford, CT 06108.

Notes and remembrances may be sent to Rev. Joseph Piccirillo at 867 West Avon Road, Avon, CT 06001.

Rev. Joseph N. Ary

Rev. Joseph N. Ary, 88, of Copake, N.Y., died at the Greer Nursing and Rehabilitation Residence in Canaan, Conn., on July 10, 2016.

Ary, who was born on the family farm in Greene County, Ohio, on May 19, 1928, attended a one-room schoolhouse through eighth grade. He grad-

uated from Xenia Central School in 1946. After graduation from Ohio State University in 1950, Ary taught vocational agriculture in Lost Creek, Ohio.

During the Korean War, Ary served with the United States Army as a corporal from 1952 to 1954. Upon his discharge, he entered Drew Theological School and graduated with a master of divinity degree in 1957.

His first appointment was to the Copake and Craryville United Methodist churches. Ary later served churches in Ossining, Red Hook, and Milan, N.Y. His last appointment was to First UMC in Walton, N.Y.

Following his retirement in 1990, Ary moved back to Copake, where he often helped his son doing carpentry work—just as he had helped his father when he was a boy. He also continued his ministry by assisting longtime friend, Rev. Gerry Pollock, in serving churches in Pawling and Poughquag, N.Y. Ary was also a member of the former Hillsdale Lodge #612 of Free and Accepted Masons.

Ary is survived by wife, Faye, whom he married in September 1952. In addition, he leaves a son, Joe (Dru) Ary of Hillsdale, N.Y.; two granddaughters, April Jo (Dave) Whalen Millerton, N.Y., and Hollie (Bryan VanTassel) Ary of Claverack, N.Y.; and two great-grandsons, Riley and Parker Whalen. He was pre-deceased by daughter, Lynn Rachel Ary and a sister, Marcella Shaw.

Funeral services were held on July 15 at the Copake UMC with Rev. David Rogers officiating. Interment was in the Copake Cemetery.

Memorials in Ary's name may be made to Copake and Craryville UMC churches, P.O. Box 127, Copake N.Y. 12516; The Roe Jan Food Pantry, P.O. Box 343, Hillsdale NY 12529; or the Double H Ranch, 97 Hidden Valley Rd, Lake Luzerne N.Y. 12846. Cards and notes may be sent to the family at 1635 County Route 7A, Copake, N.Y. 12516.

Church & Society Sets Priorities

The Conference Board of Church & Society (CBCS) held its annual planning meeting on July 9 to discuss the priorities for the coming year. Haunted by a week of shootings and national outcry, the assembled group felt that we needed to help our conference churches focus on human and civil rights in some way. We will be exploring education and action that will include, but not be limited to, Black Lives Matter issues, gun violence and racism. We hope to collaborate with various other conference agencies, like the Commission on Race and Religion and Black Methodists for Church Renewal, in order to engage our congregations effectively during the coming year.

CBCS will also continue to focus on mass incarceration. Our prison ministry symposium, "I Was in Prison and You..." on Saturday, October 1, will introduce myriad opportunities for both ministry and advocacy, which we will implement throughout 2017. [Registration](#) for this symposium is now open.

Another priority issue will be climate change and the environment. In the fall, we will follow up with our conference financial investors about commitments to divest from fossil fuel corporations. In the spring, we will introduce a Lenten study on climate change that will enable congregations to engage in thoughtful discussion, based on Christian principles, about the environment, our world and our place within it. This study will be prepared for Ash Wednesday 2017.

JOB OPENING: Social Justice Coordinator

The Conference Board of Church & Society is seeking an energetic and committed activist in the New York City metropolitan area who can assist local congregations throughout the conference in becoming involved with "Black Lives Matter" and other racial justice issues as well as initiatives to reduce gun violence. Please forward a resume and cover letter to Rev. Paul Fleck, CBCS Chair, at paul.fleck@nyac-umc.com.