LEGISLATIVE SECTION 3

BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Jeff Wells, Chairperson

101. In 2006, the Conference Board of Church and Society (CBCS) added some new members, which helped to reinvigorate the work of the Board. In addition, we began organizing our work through monthly teleconference calls, rather than trying to have face-to-face meetings. This increased our attendance and our effectiveness.

102. We succeeded in holding three forums on the death penalty in the fall, raising the profile of CBCS in the conference. While these forums did not have a huge turnout, publicity and information reached a much wider audience and demonstrated the will and ability of the Board to organize effectively and carry out education and advocacy around issues related to the Social Principles of the UMC.

103. The Board arranged with Don Collier to have a monthly column in The Vision entitled “Living Our Social Principles,” which has become a way to promote events the Board is organizing, as well as to disseminate information about important issues such as the death penalty, environmental racism, the “Billion Tree Campaign,” and comprehensive sex education, among others.

104. At the 2007 Annual Conference, for the first time in several years, CBCS will have a display table as well as a dinner open not only to Board members, but also to anyone in the Conference interested in “church and society” work and issues.

105. The Board is currently organizing four training events on the Social Principles to be held at four locations around the conference in order to make them as accessible as possible to a wide audience in our conference. The aim of these events is to promote a greater knowledge of and ability to talk about the Social Principles among clergy and lay members of our conference.

106. CBCS is also proposing three petitions to the 2007 Annual Conference. The Board also decided recently to make immigrant concerns and immigration issues a high priority for 2007-08. We also plan to proceed with a long-planned project to survey local congregations about their current work around social issues/social justice in order to help determine Conference priorities in education and advocacy and to assist local churches in finding and effectively employing resources around the Conference in their ministries.
BISHOP’S TASK FORCE ON HOMOSEXUALITY
Rev. Sara E. Goold, Chairperson

101. In response to the June 2005 petition #2005-301 of the New York Annual Conference, the Bishop appointed a special task force to plan and program a Conference-wide study on homosexuality, using the existing resource: the United Methodist Church Studies Homosexuality.

102. Beginning in February 2006, we met monthly at the conference Center in White Plains. We discussed several strategies for implementing the Conference-wide study on homosexuality and decided on the following plan of action.

103. Orientation sessions for the purpose of familiarizing leaders with the material and teaching some group process fundamentals were offered in several locations throughout the Annual Conference. Representatives from approximately 35+ churches in four locations attended these sessions in September, 2006. Leaders were recruited from within and beyond the task force membership.

Long Island: leaders: Ms. Carolyn Hardin Engelhardt and Rev. Lynda Bates-Stepe
Manhattan: leaders: Ms. Margaret Ince and Ms. Marlene Jones
Manhattan: leaders: Rev. Hector Laporta and Mr. Jorge Lockward
Catskill Hudson: leaders: Rev. Ernie VanderKruik and Rev. Karen Monk
Connecticut: leaders: Rev. Roy Jacobsen and Ms. Carolyn Hardin Engelhardt

104. We publicized these sessions through an update at Annual Conference 2006, through the Vision, and through the Superintendents’ Offices.

105. In addition, Mr. Jorge Lockward translated the official study into Spanish, as the publishing house had not already done it. It was our hope to expand the reach of this study to Spanish speaking congregations. Although The Church of the Village hosted the event for English speakers and Spanish speakers, no one attended the wonderful program prepared by Rev. Hector Laporta and Jorge Lockward for the Spanish-speaking congregations. This was very disappointing to the church members who had prepared a lovely meal. Mr. Lockward’s translation is a tremendous resource and it is our recommendation that there be an effort by the Cabinet to reach out to the Spanish-speaking congregations to expand the study.

106. After successful orientation sessions we turned to the task of planning the Conference-wide event for individuals who have participated in the study sometime between January, 2006-April, 2007. Although many people in many churches have done this study over the past two decades, it was necessary to establish a uniform point of reference for all participants in this mandated study, whether they were new to it or repeating it.
107. We considered many speakers knowledgeable and active on the issue and decided that it was essential that our speakers be United Methodists committed to peace and unity in the United Methodist Church and representing varying perspectives on the issue. Our speakers, both New Testament scholars, were Rev. Dr. David Lull of Wartburg Seminary, Iowa, and Rev. Dr. Ben Witherington of Asbury Seminary, KY. As of the writing of this report, the event was scheduled for April 28, 2007, at Memorial UMC in White Plains, NY.

Publicity for the study and the April event appeared in the Vision and the Connectional Ministries email. The superintendents also publicized the study at their charge conferences.

108. A lot of resources—time and money—have been invested in this study. And yet it is only one step on the longer journey of finding a way to live together in love while we faithfully disagree on this issue. We approached our task with hope amidst a gathering storm of conflict, anger and mistrust. Too often our brief encounters around the church’s struggle with policy on homosexuality at Annual Conference and other gatherings are acrimonious, with little regard for the personhood of those considered our adversaries. We hope that this April event and the studies in local churches will facilitate relationships and ongoing conversations between people who rarely talk to one another about homosexuality and the church. We need to be discerning together how we “shall offer ministry to and with persons whose sexual orientation differs from the heterosexual majority.”

109. As of this writing, the April 28 event has not yet happened. An addendum report will be provided at that time summarizing our event.

110. After the April 28 event, the work of the Task Force will be finished. Perhaps some recommendations will emerge from our conversations on April 28 for more events around this topic so that we might move beyond our current impasse.

111. I have truly enjoyed the fellowship of those serving on the task force with me. They have all worked hard and with dedication. May God’s grace bring these efforts to fruition.

MEMBERS
CT District
Rev. Sara E. Goold
Mrs. Carolyn Hardin Engelhardt

New York/Connecticut District
Rev. Kim Bosley
Ms. Emily Evina-Ze

Long Island East District
Rev. Lynda Bates-Stepe
Ms. Kit Mace

Long Island West District
Rev. John Parker
Mr. Ulric Grand
JUSTICE FOR OUR NEIGHBORS IMMIGRATION PROJECT
Pauline Wardell-Sankoh, Chairperson

101. **History**
“Justice For Our Neighbors” (JFON) was founded as a result of the United Methodist Church’s General Board of Global Ministries’ acute awareness of the tremendous need for immigration assistance. The General Board of Global Ministries funded this project through the United Methodist Committee On Relief (UMCOR). Each Justice for Our Neighbors legal clinic is an opportunity for local congregations to “open their doors” with a warm and hospitable welcome for newcomers in their midst. JFON provides a place for community gathering and table fellowship where parishioners and newcomers may come together to seek peace and transformation in a troubled world.

102. **Church Based, Volunteer Led**
JFON provides free, professional and confidential legal services to immigrants in monthly clinics. This UMCOR program connects a national network of church-based, volunteer-led immigration clinics to asylum seekers and immigrants who need a helping hand to navigate the maze of rules and laws that affect their lives in the United States.

103. **JFON represents the response of the United Methodist Church and its local congregations to the needs of immigrants seeking to reunify their families, secure immigration status, and enjoy the right to work. The JFON model embraces the mandate of biblical hospitality. The program relies on United Methodist connectional relationships to bring together resources and commitment from local churches, districts, conferences, and UMCOR.**

104. **Trained and resourced by UMCOR’s national office, JFON volunteers advocate for just and compassionate immigration laws and public policy, networking with other advocacy groups where possible. The JFON network is coordinated by a national staff in Silver Spring, MD. Some 20 clinic sites in nine annual conferences participate. JFON services are provided by qualified immigration attorneys. The New York Region attorney is Thomas J. Mills, Esquire.**

105. **Background**
The plight of immigrants made vulnerable by passage of harsh immigration laws led to JFON’s creation in 1999, to facilitate the immigration ministries of local United Methodist congregations. The program initially was a response
to the immigration reform act of 1996. Later it also focused on the stricter laws passed in the aftermath of 9/11. JFON continues the long legacy of UMCOR’s implementation of the United Methodist Church’s resettlement assistance to refugees. The free clinic network extends the support and welcome of the church to marginalized immigrants living in the shadows among us.

106. **It is Part of Our United Methodist Faith!**

“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so, some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13:1-2)

When we welcome sojourners, it is as if we are receiving Christ, and our doing so becomes a sign of our faithfulness. In the words of the 1986 United Methodist Bishops’ Statement on Refugees and Immigration, “God comes to us in the form of the vulnerable person who lacks the benefit of status and protection in an alien land. In the flesh of Jesus Christ of Nazareth God chose to sojourn in a particular way for the sake of all humankind…and restored the possibility of authentic community in which love and justice reign and peace prevails.”

107. **Justice For Our Neighbors in the New York Annual Conference**

In 1999, John Wesley UMC in Brooklyn, NY & Chinese UMC in Lower Manhattan, NY were selected to be among the initial sites to provide free quality legal services to immigrants of all nationalities. Since that time, the clinics have served hundreds of clients addressing a range of needs, including: Violence Against Women Act, Adjustment of Status/Permanent Residency, Employment Authorization, Visas/Visa Extensions, Family Petitions, Religious Workers, Naturalization, Widow Petition, Freedom of Information Act, and Political Asylum.

108. In 2006, The New York Annual Conference made Justice For Our Neighbors an official ministry of the Conference. A grant of $10,000.00 was given for the year 2007. The NYAC Clinics are Chinese UMC, in Lower Manhattan, NY, and John Wesley UMC in Brooklyn, NY. In addition, there is another JFON New York Region clinic in partnership with the Presbyterian Church: La Promesa Presbyterian Mission of Flushing, NY.

109. **Recommendation:**

In order to carry out the critical work of the Justice For Our Neighbors Immigration Project in the New York Annual Conference, a commitment of financial support is needed. The NYAC Justice For Our Neighbors Immigration Project Committee recommends that a permanent line item of $20,000.00 be established for the continuance of this most worthwhile ministry.
COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE
Les Johnson, Chair

101. 2006 was a period of hiatus for the “Conference Commission On Religion & Race” (CCORR). This is due in part to several changes to the date for conducting a review with the General Commission On Religion & Race. The review, now scheduled for October 10 – 11, 2007, will analyze several key factors impacting racial and ethnic minority people within our conference. The information to be analyzed is being gathered and compiled by Ann Pearson, Gene Smith, Ernest Swiggett and Dennis Winkleblack. At the conclusion of this study, the Conference Commission On Religion & Race, along with the cabinet and the Connectional Ministries Vision Table, will develop a strategy and roadmap identifying a path forward for addressing religion and race issues within the Conference.

102. We are thankful for the dedicated members of the commission for their faithful prayers as we continue to be challenged by age-old issues within our annual conference. And, we are grateful to God just for the opportunity to be of service for His kingdom.

BISHOP’S UNITY TASK FORCE
Douglas P. Cunningham, Chairperson

101. Twenty-five clergy and laity participated in a series of three pilot dialogues the Unity Task Force conducted during the summer/fall of 2006. Participants came from across the Conference and represented a broad spectrum of views on issues around homosexuality and the church.

102. Although homosexuality was a main topic of these conversations, the focus has been on the process. Members of the Unity Task Force have spent many months researching and learning to use circle process with the help of the Just Peace ministry of the United Methodist Church. In this process, participants sit in a circle. The session begins with worship. Symbols of the Christian faith, usually including the elements of communion, remain at the center of the circle throughout the dialogue. The facilitator asks a carefully prepared question and then passes a talking piece around the circle. While holding the talking piece, each participant in turn shares a response to the question out of his or her own experience. People share briefly and speak only for themselves. When a person finishes speaking, he or she passes the talking piece to the next person. After each round, the facilitator summarizes and then asks the next question.

103. The use of the talking piece allows each person the opportunity to speak. Since there is no competition to see who speaks next, nor to sway the
outcome, those who are not speaking can focus on really listening to the one speaking.

104. The dialogue focuses less on coming to the right answer and more on respecting difference. The goal is to help us learn to accept one another and work together in ministry even when we have different opinions or life experiences around homosexuality or other issues.

105. In January, 12 Unity Task Force members and other pilot dialogue participants attended an intensive training conducted by Rev. Scott Summerville, geared toward learning to be a facilitator or circle steward of one of these dialogues. These twelve have now formed teams of two to facilitate dialogues in the districts to be held in the spring of 2007.

106. This continues to be a heartening process for those who have participated. You are invited to a circle steward in your area if you are interested in participating in a dialogue.

New York Connecticut Team: Rev. Edwin Jones, Ms. Sondra Treadwell
Metropolitan Team: Rev. Denise Sears, Mr. Robert Bobb
Long Island West Teams: Mr. Paul Jefferson and Mr. Seymour Thomas;
    Ms. Shirley Pettiford, Rev. Dillon Bergen
Long Island East Team: Mr. Royston Bailey, Rev. Carmen Ortiz
Other Unity Task Force members:
    Connecticut: Rev. Hugh Hamilton
    Catskill Hudson: Rev. Juanita Middlebrook
    Unity Task Force Chairperson: Rev. Doug Cunningham
    Cabinet Liaison: Rev. Allen Pinckney

SOCIETIES AND INSTITUTIONS

THE UNITED METHODIST APPALACHIAN MINISTRY NETWORK
N. Sharon Leatherman, Executive Coordinator

100. The Appalachian Ministry Network is a partnership between annual conferences, mission personnel and General Church agencies. Its mission is to strengthen ministry of churches and their leaders, both lay and clergy, in the region designated as Appalachia.

101. The Network is designed to aid partner conferences, agencies and mission personnel when they find a lack of expertise or human resources to address needs relating to establishing, extending, or strengthening local ministry within a particular area of the region. Specific expertise that the Network can provide is:
• Advocacy on public policy issues affecting political, social and economic issues,

• Assisting partners to understand the cultural context of the region.

• Networking opportunities that bring church leaders together with each other and with community organizations to engage in popular education—learning from each other. Another function is to connect those interested in Appalachia with appropriate ways in which they can be in service.

• Interpreting the region’s political, social and economic needs to the larger denominational family as well as the needs of churches and their leaders for leadership development, and

• Resourcing that includes collection of data on the region and its churches, models for ministry development, resource personnel, immersion experiences, referrals for volunteers, scholarships to training events, providing grants to local ministries that address root causes of poverty.

102. These resources and others along with salary for an Executive Coordinator is provided through Basic Support from constituent conferences, donations to the General Advance Special Appalachian Regional Ministries (#982041) and grants for specific work from general agencies.

103. UMAMN administers the Appalachia Hunger and Poverty General Advance Special (#982039) fund. Ten grants were awarded during 2006 totaling $20,000. Many of these ministries are in isolated communities or low income neighborhoods where local resources are not available to develop or keep ministries functioning. Ministries include after school programs (some with satellite programs reaching out to other areas of the community), prescription drug program for underinsured or no insurance, equipment to expand a nutrition program to elderly and disabled persons, urban inter-parish nutrition program, a juvenile mentoring program, and ecumenical community outreach center.

104. On behalf of the United Methodist Appalachian Ministry Network I want to thank our constituent conferences and our General Advance donors for their continuing support and participation in this partnership.

105. On a sadder note I want to share with conference members the news that the ecumenical partnership, The Commission on Religion in Appalachia, was disbanded in October, 2006. Commissioners elected by the Network were the presence and voice of the United Methodist Church in the important work that CORA did for justice in Appalachia.

BROOKLYN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH HOME
Rev. Ieva Zadina, Director of Pastoral Care and Outreach

101. BUMCH was founded in 1883, and so we are preparing for our 125th anniversary in 2008. During its history the Home has expanded in services, complexity and inclusivity, but it has the same mission: To perpetuate the healing ministry of Christ by promoting those values which reinforce reverence for life, dignity of the individual, love, compassion, and service to others. Although the Home now is non-denominational, the spirit of Methodism is felt and it merges well with all the faith traditions that come together here. Families and visitors often remark on the special love and care they sense in the Home.

102. Located in the East New York section of Brooklyn near the Queens border, the Home serves people mostly from Brooklyn neighborhoods and hospitals, but of course is open to all. The blocks surrounding the Home evidence a blossoming of new home development. It’s possible that the presence of BUMCH has encouraged this neighborhood improvement.

103. The Board of Directors includes eleven United Methodist members: Don Kirby (President), Christina Stack (Corporate Secretary), Bianca Armitstead, Rev. John H. Cole, Ascension L. Day, Rev. John P. Fahey, Jr., Rev. Cedric Johnson, Kenneth P. Jordon, Ruby L’Heureux, Rev. Wendy Modeste and Rev. Richard Parker. Rev. Joseph Morrison recently resigned from the Board due to other commitments. Mr. Kirby, who has served as President with great skill and energy for three years, has chosen not to run for President again. We are grateful that he will remain on the Board, on which he has served for over 20 years. The other Board members are Joseph J. Fennesey (Vice President) and Sherwin Chue (Treasurer). The Board is seeking new members, especially those with health care backgrounds.

104. The Home consists of a skilled nursing facility with 120 beds and an Adult Day Healthcare Center, in an attractive new wing of the facility, which can accommodate up to 60 registrants per day.

105. Mr. Victor Orriola has completed his first year as Administrator. Amidst the many challenges, his energy and enthusiasm for the Home’s welfare are undiminished. May God continue to bless and strengthen him.

106. The new Director of the Adult Day Healthcare Center, Ms. Awilda Rosario, has brought a new vitality and growth to this important program, which seeks to help maintain the health of the elderly and disabled so that they can continue to live at home. Registrants are provided with transportation, two meals, medical care, and numerous activities to enhance their physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being.

107. Methodist-style connectionalism informs the Home’s desire to serve its
surrounding communities more fully. To this end, we encourage visitors and volunteers from many churches, schools and other organizations.

108. At our 19th Annual Awards Dinner Dance last November, we honored Walter Campbell, District Manager of Brooklyn Community Board 5; Rev. John H. Cole, Pastor of Grace UMC in Valley Stream, NY; and Robert Rigoroso, Private Banker-Vice President, The Citigroup Private Bank. All these honorees serve their communities in multiple ways. The 20th Annual Awards Dinner Dance will be held on Wednesday, November 7, 2007.

109. In 2006, the Home hosted two Brunches for clergy and key lay leaders. Besides offering good food, fellowship and tours of the Home, the Brunches also present informative talks on subjects of aging and healing. The Spring 2006 Brunch@BUMCH featured a representative from the Social Security Administration speaking about Medicare Part D, while guests at the Autumn Brunch enjoyed a presentation by Peter Poulos, Director of Pastoral Care at New York Methodist Hospital, who spoke about the problems and potentialities of aging.

110. The Home’s quarterly newsletter, *The Healing Hands*, informs the community about life and work at the Home. Contact the editor, Rev. Ieva Zadina (718-827-4500, ext. 133), to be placed on the mailing list.

111. Future plans include improvements in all aspects of care and in the physical environment. For example, a new Pain Management support group is being formed, with assistance from psychologists trained in behavioral medicine. Work has already begun on extensive renovations of the older, nursing home side of the Home.

112. For many years BUMCH was entirely supported by local Methodist churches. We are deeply grateful for those churches, which continue to faithfully contribute to our work with donations and the support of volunteers. Their ministry with us helps improve the quality of life of Residents beyond what our regular budget can afford.

113. We hope to enlist more volunteers to provide the quality of life for each resident that no money can buy. An excellent way to volunteer is to join the BUMCH Auxiliary, which has served the residents for many years and organizes an Annual Auxiliary Dinner every April. Please contact the Auxiliary President, Ms. Priscilla Frazier, of St. John’s Elmont UMC (516-285-8394). You may also contact Rev. Ieva Zadina at the Home if you wish to volunteer in other ways.

114. As we prepare to celebrate our 125th Anniversary, the BUMCH Board and staff will continue efforts to build and strengthen loving relationships with United Methodist congregations. As we bear the name Methodist with great pride, we pray that our churches will find their part in this tradition of social holiness.
CANDLER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
Jan Love, Dean and Professor of Christianity and World Politics

101. Candler School of Theology is grounded in the Christian faith and shaped by the Wesleyan tradition of evangelical piety, ecumenical openness, and social concerns. Its mission is to educate—through scholarship, teaching and service—faithful and creative leaders for the church’s ministries in the world. These purposes define Candler’s role as a school of Emory University and of the United Methodist Church and point to the unique challenges and opportunities we face in leading a national research university in rediscovering what it might mean to relate to a major denomination.

102. Our school, unique in its placement within a top twenty research university and its commitment to educate pastoral and academic leadership, is poised to play an active role in the positive transformation of the church and the world. Religion has bound and divided communities since the beginning of time and now is no different. When polled about their research, over three hundred Emory professors named “religion” as a theme in their work. Ethically aware, theologically profound voices are desperately needed in our society, and Emory draws on its Methodist heritage and looks to Candler to bring wisdom, clarity, compassion, and tolerance to the conversation. For example, Mary Elizabeth Moore, professor of religion and education, is co-chairing one of our university strategic initiatives, “Understanding Religions and the Human Spirit.”

103. Candler’s faculty continues to be among the most distinctive in theological education. Forty-six members hold full-time appointments, and six hold part-time appointments. An additional fifteen serve in an adjunct capacity. Woodie White and Jack Meadors serve as the United Methodist bishops in residence. Bishop L. Bevel Jones III remains at Candler working with the Development Office.

104. In our commitment to the practice of ministry, we partner with eighty churches to ensure that ministerial preparation takes place in both the local church and on the campus. Candler’s Contextual Education program intentionally pairs a faculty member with supervisors from church and community ministries so that teaching teams represent the church and the academy. Twenty-nine teaching supervisors support our Contextual Education and Teaching Parish (student pastor) programs. Dr. Alice Rogers has broadened the Teaching Parish program, and it now includes students appointed to churches in the Alabama-West Florida, North Alabama, North Georgia, South Georgia, and South Carolina Annual Conferences.

105. This year, enrollment was 510, with 396 in the Master of Divinity program, 59 in the Master of Theological Studies program, 20 in the Master of Theology program, 9 in the Doctor of Theology program and 26 enrolled as Special,
Non-Degree students. Eighty-three percent of students are enrolled full-time. The student population is 23% US ethnic minority, 10% international, and 51% women. More than 50 denominations are represented with 56% of M. Div. students being United Methodist from 34 Annual Conferences. Other denominations of the Methodist family represented at Candler include African Methodist Episcopal, Free Methodist, Wesleyan Methodist and the Methodist Church of Korea.

106. Good things are happening as we develop and put into action a plan for the life-long learning of church leaders. A group of leaders in life-long learning, including a number of United Methodists, have given advice on enhancing our programs. Our Institute of Preaching and Pastoral Renewal led a group to the Holy Land after having taken a course in continuing education and funding for this program has been renewed for 2007. Information on upcoming events is available at www.candler.emory.edu.

107. Groundbreaking on Phase I of our new building is planned for spring 2007. Our full project—two buildings—will provide faculty and administrative offices, state-of-the-art classrooms, new library facilities, a teaching chapel, and space for the University’s Ethics Center. The University plans to gather its rich religious resources within and near the Candler facilities to create a “religious complex” centered around Candler.

108. The faculty has begun to implement an inspiring strategic plan that calls for the facilities noted above, new faculty chairs, program support, and increases to our scholarship endowment. This year, 77% of eligible students received scholarship support from Candler with an average scholarship covering 78% of tuition. Gifts from the Methodist Education Fund (MEF) have played a large role in this support. However, so much more still needs to be done. More than 60% of Candler’s M. Div graduates leave school with educational debt. This burden undermines their effectiveness in ministry, such that some seek alternative employment. Your continued support, gifts, and prayers mean a great deal as we work to provide a strong educational program as well as support for the courageous and committed students who choose to undertake the challenge of theological education.

109. I am honored to be Candler’s dean as of January 2007. I am deeply grateful for the leadership of Russell Richey in the previous six years and for his help in ensuring a smooth transition. I look forward to his continued, powerful presence at Candler as a leading scholar of Methodism, as a teacher, and as one who makes significant contributions to the life of the church. Thank you for your many expressions of welcome and for your support of Candler. I very much look forward to getting to know you all better in the months and years ahead.
LONG ISLAND COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
Rev. Thomas W. Goodhue, Executive Director

101. These are difficult and exciting times for ecumenical and interfaith work. We are receiving more requests than ever before to help our neighbors in need and to help churches address the problems we face in our region.

Last year:
102. *We fed more than 2,000 people a month in Nassau and Suffolk counties, not counting the 354 Thanksgiving baskets and 319 Christmas baskets we distributed, and the 505 we served at our annual dinner for migrant farm workers and other needy people in Riverhead. The bad news is that more and more parents in Nassau County and more and more seniors in Suffolk County are finding it difficult to put food on the table. The good news is that we managing to find enough food and funding to assist them.

103. *We helped 48 families with utility bills and 78 families with rent or mortgage payments, and helped 73 people with emergency transportation assistance.

104. *We secured grants to greatly expand the prescription assistance we provide to the uninsured and the underinsured and we started signing up people for Child Health Plus coverage at our Hempstead office each week. Lack of adequate health coverage is probably our region’s second biggest problem, surpassed only by lack of affordable housing.

105. *We offered seminars in congregations and community groups on how to be good stewards of our money, planned giving, and how to avoid falling victim to predatory loans. This fall we presented our first bi-lingual seminars, offered simultaneously in Spanish and in English, and one congregation has asked us to do four seminars this year.

106. *Our Multi-Faith Forum presented its 184th Building Bridges interfaith education program, some of which have been for as many as 1,100 people at a time. We continue to provide these in congregations and workplaces and a growing number of public schools are asking our volunteers to speak to students and teachers about how to understand their new neighbors. The Forum’s video, “Faiths of Long Island”, is being widely used as a resource in multi-faith education, and the Forum recently created a new game show format for its educational programs, called “What’s My Faith?” Both in terms of the number of faith communities involved in the Forum and the magnitude of its educational efforts, this is a project without parallel anywhere else. We continue, however, to need more volunteers for the Forum, particularly Christians who are willing to tell how they practice their faith in their daily life.

107. *Our Women at the Well program, designed to keep women out of jail, graduated new classes, and the women in these support groups have had a far lower rate of re-arrest than other convicts.
108. *Along with Catholic Charities and the Diocese of Rockville Centre, we completed an intensive, two-year-long “examination of conscience” on racism. We are working ever more closely with ecumenical partners on such problems as hunger, affordable housing, and the lack of universal medical coverage.

109. We could not do this without the help of many people and many churches—including many United Methodists. Thanks!

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
Mary Lu Bowen, Executive Director

101. The people of New York’s Protestant denominations have worked through the New York State Council of Churches (NYSCC) for over a century doing ministry together to make a difference in people’s lives—in places and at times that none of us could, if we worked each in our own way in our own place in our own time. This has helped us as individuals, as congregations, and as denominations to bring hope in situations that seem hopeless and in places where people do not expect their burden to be lightened. You and your Christian brothers and sisters continue to make a difference. Often we do not realize the impact of the good we do by working cooperatively with our brothers and sisters across denominational lines because it is not the stuff of which headlines are made.

102. The work we do together can bring hope to a single life because of chaplains who serve the “invisible church” which exists inside state institutions of corrections, mental health, mental retardation and developmental disabilities or youth and family services. In an agreement with the state, the NYSCC has for 40 years set the competency criteria and certified chaplains for these facilities. The Certification Committees of the Council interview candidates who have submitted required credentials. The professional expectations are so high that only about 60% are certified on their first try; for the others the committees lay out a career path to follow before returning for future consideration. The role of an institutional chaplain is a lonely one and not often understood by administrators, who do not realize the importance of confidentiality or that ministry involves more than a worship service once a week. The Chaplaincy Coordinator of the NYSCC acts as an ombudsman to iron out problems so the chaplains can spend their time in ministry to the men and women they are called to serve. It is our work together through the NYSCC that makes it possible for quality pastoral care to occur in state institutions.

103. Over many decades, advocacy has been an important aspect of what we do together through the Council. At the present time, our advocacy includes a variety of economic and criminal justice issues. For instance, the NYSCC is
working with others to remove roadblocks from the path of those released from prison and trying to find a productive role to play in society. Always it is the combined voices of the faith community that cries out for changes in social services so fewer hungry, homeless and working poor need to come to the doors of our front line ministries. It is because of our scriptural mandate for justice that we can say together that it is unacceptable for the gap between rich and poor to continue to widen or that more and more of us are unable to afford necessary health care.

104. Making a difference on the issues just mentioned, and many more, takes planning, research and the combined efforts of many people. The process begins with the NYSCC Public Policy Commission spending two days in discernment at their annual planning meeting—a gathering that brings together denominational and local ecumenical representatives from across the state. From this meeting a list of suggested priorities are brought to the governing body for adoption for the coming year. Then staff and the Public Policy Commission get to work doing research, checking on national denominational positions, developing resources for congregations, arranging press conferences, writing position papers and distributing them, meeting with legislators, and doing lots of behind-the-scenes work with boards and other decision-making bodies. On some issues the Council hosts an interfaith working group, such as the one in recent years on education that has agreed upon principles from which to base their combined support of public schools and call for more equitable funding of education. At the annual Legislative Day representatives come from across the state in early spring to visit with legislators after being updated on the issues.

105. The Collegium (board of directors whose members are denominational bishops and executives) also raise their voices together in the public square. Continuing a tradition of over 10 years, they look forward again this year to a meeting with the Governor. These meetings often set the stage for staff-to-staff problem solving. And it is known and respected in Albany that if one of them testifies on behalf of the NYSCC at an Assembly hearing on the death penalty or speaks at a rally on education or immigration that their message is not just that of one person, but that they are speaking for the leadership of over 6,000 congregations.

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
G. Edwin Zeiders, President

101. UTS Mission Statement: United Theological Seminary is a Christ-centered graduate school of the United Methodist Church that equips leaders for the church in a pluralistic world through the nurture of piety, the love of learning and the pursuit of justice.
102. United Seminary has now completed its first full year at the new Trotwood, OH, facility after 80 years on the Harvard Boulevard Campus. The new facility is a state-of-the-art educational center, complete with the latest classroom technology, a media center for students and faculty, and a spacious new library. The EUB Heritage Center celebrates the long history of the seminary first founded by United Brethren Bishop Milton Wright, father of the Wright Brothers, and other area business leaders in 1871.

103. UTS is developing partnerships that reflect a lasting commitment to collaboration in urban ministries, wellness education, leadership formation, pastoral supervision, children’s and youth programs, advocacy for women and children, and peace with justice. The seminary has an effective program of medical ethics with Wright State University, and has begun internship programs in urban work with area municipalities. The area YMCA, the City of Trotwood, and United are cooperating in the development of health care and related work for students, faculty, and staff. Utilizing the recreational and educational facilities on campus, United has become in effect a gathering place for church, business and civic groups.

104. The planning process that first led to the relocation of the seminary has also paved the way for the most relevant and effective academic plan including a dynamic Master of Divinity degree. The M. Div. focuses attention upon vital faith in Christ, scholarship, and a profound commitment to justice ministry and outreach. The school has a long standing reputation as one of the top contextual education programs in the country, and also offers intercultural studies and cutting edge degree and certificate programs in pastoral care, liturgical studies, and media in ministry.

105. The seminary’s doctoral studies program has long been committed to educating leaders in context through a strong mentor-based program supported by the school’s tenured faculty. Degree candidates spend at least five intensives on campus along with numerous peer sessions in context with others. Research and projects document the depth of experience and scholarship associated with the degree.

106. Over the past several years UTS has engaged in consultation with the United Methodist Church and other judicatory partners in order to determine the most effective way to prepare pastors and laity for ministry locally and globally. The school is clearly dedicated to excellence in scholarship, faithfulness to Christ, and fruitfulness in service. At UTS we participate with others in equipping leaders, changing lives, and transforming communities.

107. This year is the seventh time members of the Collegium will travel together to D.C. on their Annual Peace and Poverty Mission to meet with the New York delegation in Congress. They have also been known to, on 24 hours notice, squeeze into their schedules a private meeting with a legislator who is about to cast a vote on a very important issue. Because of their commitment
to advocacy they have been able to build relationships with denominational and Congressional offices in D.C. and earn respect on the Hill as the only Council in the country who comes to D.C. every year to talk about the ethical dimension of pending legislation and how it affects people back home.

108. It is as we do these things together—whether it be the pastoral care of a chaplain or as a voice for justice—we can bring an element of hope to an individual, a family, a community or even a nation.