



That my glory may sing your praise & not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

Psalm 30:12

“Write the vision clearly on the tablets, that one may read it on the run.” – Habakkuk

THE VISION

November 2017



Gratitude For Baptism

When I was a pastor there was a ritual that I used at least twice a year. When I first decided to try it, I thought that there would be a limited response. What I discovered was that the reaction was greater than I ever could have imagined. This simple act, to my surprise, met an unrealized need. What I encountered was a level of emotion that I had underestimated. The ritual was “The Re-Affirmation of Baptism.”

I used very simple language: “Remember your baptism and be thankful.” I employed a very simple action: the sign of the cross with water on the forehead. The result was an emotion that could not have predicted. People longed to know and be reminded of God’s claim on their lives. It meant something to remind them that nothing separated them from the love of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. It moved them to know that they were a child of God, no matter who they were or what they

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The 43:19 ministry reaches out to young adults through “Theology on Tap,” at top; and an outing to pick apples this fall with “Coffee, Kids & Chaos.”



New Ministry Adapts to Meet Community Need

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY
Editor, *The Vision*

What began 10 years ago as a conversation about a ministry to reach young adults along certain subway lines in New York City has now taken life alongside a different set of tracks—the Hudson line of the MetroNorth Railroad.

The ministry of “43:19”—based in Cold Spring, N.Y., takes its name from the passage in Isaiah: “I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

Under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Jessica Anschutz and Rev. Gene Ott, flyers for a “theology on tap” gathering at a local bar went out to the community early last fall. While there was some initial interest, the ministry “never got a toe-hold tin that location,” Ott said.

But they soon found a new home at the Cold Spring Depot—right along the railroad tracks—where the owner and one of the wait staff were

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

Ongoing Immigration Prayers

Join the NYAC Immigration Task Force for a time of prayer for our country and immigrant brothers and sisters on Monday nights from 7:30–8 p.m. until further notice. Call-in number: 641-715-3580; group code: 780843#. Contact Pastor [Ximena Varas](#) for more information.

11/23–24 Conference Office Closed

Offices are closed for the Thanksgiving holiday.

12/9 Celebrating Olmsted Director

The Five Points Mission board of directors will honor Carla Maisonet at a Christmas candlelight dinner party at the Lindsley dining hall at Olmsted. Maisonet has retired after 22 years as director of Olmsted Center. The celebration will begin at 5 p.m. with hors d'oeuvres and dinner at 6. The suggested donation of \$30 will be collected that evening. Please RSVP to olmstedcenter@att.net.

12/9 & 16 Wesley Lay Servant Course

Discover what John Wesley has to say about leadership and Charles Wesley on “followership” in this two-day program led by Jerry Eyster. The program runs both Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Westport UMC, Westport, Conn. [Registration details](#) can be found on the conference calendar.

12/25–26 Conference Office Closed

Offices are closed for the Christmas holiday.

1/9–11 Bishop's Convocation

Clergy and their spouses will gather at the Villa Roma Resort in Callicoon, N.Y., to explore the theme, “Pathways & Possibilities: The Journey of Disciple Making.” [Hotel registrations](#) on or before January 3 will receive the “early-bird” rates.

1/20 Safe Sanctuaries Workshop


Training on creating a Safe Sanctuaries policy will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Plainville UMC, 56 Red Stone Hill, Plainville, Conn. For more information or to register, contact Cassandra Negri at childrensministry@nyac-umc.com.

10/14–25 Journeys of Paul Cruise

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton will host the nine-day journey aboard Royal Caribbean's “Jewel of the Seas,” in conjunction with Educational Opportunities Tours. Beginning and ending in Rome, the trip includes stops in Taormina and Pompeii, Italy; Mykonos, Santorini, Athens, and Corinth, Greece; and Ephesus, Turkey. There is also an optional two-day tour of Vatican City on October 25–26. Find the [reservation information](#) online. If you have any questions, contact [Rev. Chuck Ferrara](#), the regional representative for Educational Opportunities in our area.

Vision Deadlines for 2017

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 last deadline for 2017 is December 1. Please send any stories, photos, ideas, or questions directly to vision@nyac.com.

 <p>The Vision</p> <p>The News of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church</p>
<p>Bishop: Thomas J. Bickerton Editor: Joanne Utley New York Conference of the United Methodist Church 20 Soundview Avenue, White Plains, NY 10606 Phone (888) 696-6922 Fax (914) 615-2244; Website: www.nyac.com Vision e-mail: vision@nyac.com</p>

Road Trip for True Meaning of Christmas

Sixteen states, 21 cities, 23 days, 500+ volunteers, 16,400 cups of cocoa, a truckload of Christmas spirit and just one purpose: to help people unwrap the true meaning of Christmas. The United Methodist Church is hitting the road in December in a gift-wrapped touring truck, decked out to share fellowship from city-to-city.

United Methodist churches will host a come-and-go event in each city at a location bustling with holiday foot traffic. The festivities include free hot cocoa, a chance to join in a community service project, such as donating coats or canned goods, and an invitation to join local congregations for Christmas services and events. You can even share prayer requests or engage in a conversation about the true meaning of Christmas.

Throughout December, The United Methodist Church will utilize

television and digital advertising to explore the true meaning of Christmas as part of a [national advertising campaign](#), “Their words. Our beliefs,” which features children discussing faith. The holiday messages ask, “Children know the true meaning of Christmas. What if we all did?”

Follow the tour online at UnwrapChristmas.org and #UnwrapChristmas as it travels through:

Waco and Dallas, Texas; Shreveport and Baton Rouge, La.; Jackson, Miss.; Little Rock, Ark.; Memphis, Tenn.; Champaign, Ill.; Indianapolis; Columbus, Ohio; Charleston, W.Va.; Johnstown/Ebensburg, Penn.; Washington, D.C.; Virginia Beach, Va.; Greenville, N.C.; Charleston and Columbia, S.C.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Atlanta; Huntsville, Ala.; and back to Nashville.

MISSION MINISTRIES

Appeal for Teams, Funds for Puerto Rico

UMNS WITH LOCAL REPORTING

“The spirit of our people is not destroyed. The people of Puerto Rico are resilient. Led by the Holy Spirit, we are rising up.” But, “We can’t do it alone.”

Those were the words shared by Bishop Hector Ortiz, who leads the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico during a meeting of the UMC Council of Bishops in Lake Junaluska, N.C., early this month.

He noted that Puerto Rico is rising up from the devastation of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, but the U.S. territory continues to need the help of the United Methodist Church. The Puerto Rico church is an autonomous denomination that continues to have close ties with the UMC.

Ortiz pointed to the ways church members are already helping the long recovery. With the support of the United Methodist Committee on Relief and several United Methodist conferences, the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico is providing essential supplies, health clinics and pastoral care to a storm-swept people.

“At the same time that our congregations are responding to immediate needs in their communities, we are drafting a comprehensive, strategic plan with the help of UMCOR that will focus our work,” he said.

Ultimately, Ortiz said he expects his church to be “a catalyst of hope for the community in the months and years to come.”

Rev. Tom Vencuss, NYAC coordinator of Mission Ministry, was one of several UMCOR representatives who met with Ortiz in Puerto Rico recently to discuss a recovery strategy. Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton also made a special appeal for donations to help the battered Caribbean nation, whose 3.5 million residents are U.S. citizens. [Information](#) about

making a donation is on the NYAC web site.

Puerto Rico was already reeling from Irma when Maria made landfall September 20 as a Category 5 hurricane—bringing with it 175 mile-per-hour winds and 40 inches of rain. As of November 7, nearly 60 percent

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Bishop Hector Ortiz (second from left) of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico meets with members of an UMCOR advance response team, including Rev. Tom Vencuss (second from right) in Puerto Rico.



Churches of the New York Conference have been steadily supplying cleaning buckets to UMCOR to aid in recovery for those hit by the recent string of hurricanes. Above, are some of the youth from Asbury UMC in Greenville, N.Y., who helped assemble 72 buckets. The congregation donated more than \$4,300 to purchase the cleaning supplies. GNH Lumber, which is owned by church member John Ingalls and his family, partnered with the church to acquire the supplies and then loaned a truck for delivery of the completed buckets to St. James UMC in Kingston, NY. At left, Larry McDonald, maintenance coordinator for the NYAC, prepares to drive a truckload of 500 flood buckets and hundreds of health kits to Mission Central in Pennsylvania.



Erin Ott, left, entertains Dylan as his mom, Eliza Hand, looks on at “Coffee, Kids & Chaos.” At right, Rev. Gene Ott and his son, Isaac, hand out beads and invitations to 43:19 ministry events on St. Patrick’s Day at the Cold Spring train station.



Following the Spirit, Ministry Shifts Gears

Continued from page 1

supportive of what the nascent ministry was trying to do.

“There were younger people there . . . it’s a little like ‘Cheers’ now,” Ott said, of the monthly gathering on Thursday nights. “We post the topic of the month on Facebook, but leave room for the Holy Spirit to lead people from what’s on their hearts.”

The discussions take place on the patio in warmer weather or around a table of appetizers and drinks inside for the three to six people who attend. They often start with the question, “How was your week?” which opens the way for sharing. The group has tackled questions like being gay and Christian, what it means to be a proud American, why do bad things happen, and how do you talk to God.

In an effort to engage the larger community, they also rode the trains and handed out green beads and invitations on St. Patrick’s Day, and offered “ashes to go” at the rail station on Ash Wednesday.

Before launching this venture, Ott and Anschutz had explored communities between Beacon and Peekskill looking for where they might reach “new people in new places.” Part of the decision to begin in Cold Spring was predicated on the fact that 25 percent of the population fell into the youth adult demographic and Anschutz was already serving the church there.

Anschutz serves as lead pastor of The Open Doors Community Parish, which at the time of the launch included Cold Spring, South Highland and Grace-Putnam Valley United Methodist churches (Cold Spring and South Highland

merged in June 2017.) Ott also serves the Yorktown UMC.

After deciding on Cold Spring in spring 2016, the pastors had about five days to draw up a proposal and submit it to the conference for approval. That approval brought quarter-time appointments and salary support for Anschutz and Ott to launch the ministry. Eventually, programming funds for the ministry would come from parish development.

The cabinet required that the clergy have a coach for the start-up. They enlisted Trey Hall of the [Epicenter Group](#), whose services are covered by funds from the office of Congregational Development and Revitalization. The pastors have also been asked to attend the School of Congregational Development sponsored by the UMC’s Discipleship Ministries, Path1, and Global Ministries.

As Anschutz and Ott got to know the community better, they noticed all the moms and dads pushing baby strollers through town. Though it was not part of the original plan, they set out to create a place that might bring those caretakers together as community.

So the ministry took another turn in April 2017 with the launch of “Coffee, Kids and Chaos” that meets on Tuesday mornings in the fellowship hall of the Cold Spring church. A few flyers around town and a signboard in front of the church let the community know about the new opportunity.

“CKC” is thriving with the number of parents and children growing each week. Recently, 10 parents and 10 kids gathered together. The kids vary in age from a few months old to age five. Pastor Ott’s wife, Erin, and their kids, Isaac and Amelia, are there most weeks. The gathering provides an informal time of play and snacks for the kids, and coffee and conversation for the parents. There have also been apple-picking trips, and on Election Day when voting

booths occupied the church space, the group tried a new nearby playground instead.

Eliza Hand brings her sons, Martin and newborn Dylan, to the Tuesday morning chaos.

“I love the free play and how he (Martin) is learning to interact,” she said. “I see a better side of him here. There are new kids every week.”

New people are encouraged to attend through personal invitations, sharing the news at the library storytime, through Facebook, and that sign in the churchyard.

The Cold Spring church has been more than receptive to these new ways to reach out to members of their community. They have eagerly gotten involved in the group’s Easter egg hunt and Halloween party/parade.

“It has been my experience that there is a sense of excitement around these new ministry opportunities and the people they are engaging,” said Anschutz, who says that they are not expecting crossover into their churches.

“The goal of this ministry is to engage people who are not already engaging in the worship experiences of our congregations, people for whom traditional worship may not be familiar or appealing,” she wrote in an email.

Anschutz said that one of the most surprising things has been that “Theology on Tap” did not take off as they had initially expected. So they pivoted from weekly gatherings to monthly.

“Our experience on the ground in Cold Spring taught us that parents with young children were looking for places to gather,” she said. “This was not something we had even considered in our original proposal or in our long-term vision for 43:19.

“Following where the Holy Spirit leads has been fruitful for us, even when it has required that we shift gears and move away from the original vision for 43:19,” Anschutz added.



Rev. Dr. Jessica Anschutz

Get Ready For #GivingTuesday Nov. 28

On November 28, you are invited to come together with thousands of United Methodists to support the work of Advance missionaries and projects on UMC #GivingTuesday. Connect your passion with God's mission as you give to a world in need through your prayers, presence, gifts, and service.

Now is a great time to start thinking about where you want your UMC #GivingTuesday gift to go. Visit UMCmission.org/give and select from more than 600 UMC-related projects and more than

300 United Methodist missionaries who bring hope and healing to a world in need.

You can even do a search for those missionaries affiliated with the NYAC.

When you specify a destination for your gifts, that's exactly where every dollar goes; not one dollar of your gift goes to overhead. One of the great things about The Advance is that it allows you to invest your resources where your passion answers specific needs in the world.

Why not ask friends and family to make, in your honor, an early Christmas/Advent gift to your favorite missionary or Advance on November 28? Or make a gift in honor of those on your Christmas list?



Standing Against Forced Migration

United Methodists are being encouraged to observe [Global Migration Sunday](#) on December 3, 2017. This is the first Sunday of the season of Advent, a time when we remember the coming birth of the Christ child who himself was a migrant.

A letter from Council of Bishops President Bruce Ough read: "For most of these migrants, the decision to flee their homeland

comes as a last resort effort to live. We are reminded of Joseph and Mary as they sought to save their lives and especially the life of the Christ child as they fled to Africa to escape the wrath of King Herod, who (threatened by the birth of Jesus) ordered the massacre of children (Matthew 2:13-14).

UM congregations around the world are asked to pray for those who are suffering the journey of forced migration. In addition, churches are urged to gather an offering dedicated to the human suffering inflicted by forced migration. Offerings collected should be sent to the [Migration Advance No. 3022144](#).

Planning resources are available from [Discipleship Ministries](#) and on the Global Migration Sunday web site.



Protect Your Congregation When Unthinkable Happens

United Methodist Insurance, in an effort to help provide a safe haven for church ministries, provides the following guidance from the Department of Homeland Security and Ready.gov in the event of an active shooter on the premises. [Click here](#) to access a downloadable pamphlet from the Department of Homeland Security.

Your local law enforcement organization may also have information for your particular area.

In the event of an active shooter at your church, here is what you should do:

RUN and escape, if possible.

- Safely get out of the church at the nearest exit.
- Encourage others to go with you, but do not hesitate.
- Leave your belongings behind. What is important is your safety.
- Warn and prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be.
- Call 911 when you are safe, and describe shooter, location, and weapons.

HIDE, if escape is not possible.

- Take shelter in a safe room or closet, under furniture, behind a large object or outside.
- Silence ringers on mobile devices and make sure they won't vibrate
- Lock and block doors, close blinds, and turn off lights.
- Remain quiet
- Don't hide in groups
- Act quickly
- Stay in place until law enforcement gives you the all clear.
- Your hiding place should be out of the shooter's view and provide protection if shots are fired in your direction.

FIGHT as an absolute last resort.

- When there are no other options, commit to your actions and act as aggressively as possible against him/her.
- Recruit others to ambush the shooter with makeshift weapons like chairs, fire extinguishers, scissors, books, etc. to distract and disarm the shooter.
- Be prepared to cause severe or lethal injury to the shooter.

AFTER

- Keep hands visible and empty
- Know that law enforcement's first task is to end the incident, and they may have to pass injured along the way.
- Follow law enforcement instructions and evacuate in the direction they come from.
- Officers may be armed with rifles, shotguns, and/or handguns and may use pepper spray or tear gas to control the situation.
- Officers will shout commands and may push individuals to the ground for their safety.
- Consider seeking professional help for you and your family to cope with the long-term effects of the trauma.

HELPING the Wounded

- Take care of yourself first, and then you may be able to help the wounded before first responders arrive.
- If the injured are in immediate danger, help get them to safety.
- While you wait for first responder to arrive, provide first aid- apply direct pressure to wounded and use tourniquets if you have been trained to do so.
- Turn wounded people onto their sides if they are unconscious and keep them warm.

Events may evolve quickly. The safety of your congregation may depend upon your preparedness. Create an action plan now in the event the unthinkable happens so that you, your staff, and congregation are prepared.

Ephesians 6:13—*Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

Trapp to Lead GC20 Music & Worship

Raymond Trapp, director of Music at Vanderveer Park United Methodist Church in Brooklyn, has been named worship and music director for the [2020 United Methodist General Conference](#) by the Commission on the General Conference. Trapp has served as music director for the gathering of the New York Annual Conference at Hofstra University for the last five years,



Raymond Trapp

“Raymond will be responsible for developing the overall worship and music programming and also for providing musical leadership for the General Conference when we meet in 2020,” said Sara Hotchkiss, business manager of the United Methodist General Conference.

As director of music and organist at Vanderveer Park, Trapp leads four choirs, selects and arranges music for all musical productions, and developed an eight-part concert series. His work for the New York Annual Conference has included selecting music for the conference choir, as well as working with the worship committee in planning all services.

In his role as worship and music director for General Conference

2020, Trapp will be responsible for designing and coordinating the worship experience and music in conjunction with a theme to be chosen by the Commission on the General Conference. He also will be responsible for music leadership in the plenary sessions and will work with the Council of Bishops’ General Conference worship committee and Discipleship Ministries staff in planning worship services. Trapp and his team will audition and choose choirs to perform during the 10-day event.

“Raymond brings to this position not only unique gifts and life experiences, but also a deep spirituality that we believe will be a tremendous blessing to our global church during the 2020 session of General Conference,” said Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi from the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference and the Council of Bishops representative to the Commission on General Conference’s worship and music director selection task team.

“I am so excited about this role that I’m already doing run-throughs in my head and reading and looking back at clips from previous general conferences. The research has definitely started,” Trapp said.

“In terms of General Conference, I look forward to many gifts coming together for one purpose, and that purpose is to lift high the cross,” he said. “My prayer is that, in all the worship services, we meet people at their point of need. We need to be decreased and Christ increased,” he said. “To accomplish that is my number one goal.”

Trapp has been a music educator, creating and teaching curriculum for students in kindergarten through 8th grade. He previously served as music director and organist at St. Mark’s UMC, also in Brooklyn. Trapp received a master’s degree in sacred music, choral conducting from Westminster Choir College and has also studied at The Juilliard School.

Applications Sought for Youth Ambassadors

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of the island still had no power and many residents had no access to clean drinking water, according to some news reports.

Since the storm, some 100,000 Puerto Ricans have evacuated to the U.S. mainland, 80,000 of them to Florida, Ortiz said. An [evacuee center](#) opened in New York City on October 19, and has been seeing 50 to 75 families a day.

Equipping Communities for Mission—VIM Training Event

Approximately six million Americans engage in short-term missions domestically and internationally each year. This includes disaster response and local community missions. In many ways, volunteer missions are a key to the vitality of a church.

This training event will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 2, 2017, at the NYAC Learning Center, White Plains. It will offer an introduction to new persons interested in volunteer mission opportunities, encourage experienced VIM participants to reflect on the reasons “why” they engage in mission and further develop their leadership skills; allow us

to be more intentional and better prepared as to “how” we engage in mission.

Leader: Tom Lank, Northeastern Jurisdiction Volunteer in Mission coordinator

Resource: “A Mission Journey” will be provided.

Lunch will be provided. On-line [registration](#) is required.

2018 YAM Journey to Haiti

The next Youth Ambassadors in Mission (YAM) journey will be to Haiti from February 17 to 24. The mission location will be the small village of Furcy, a mountainous farming community 20 miles southeast of Port au Prince and some 6,000 feet above sea level.

Local congregations from the New York Conference are invited to recommend a youth to participate in the journey to Haiti. The application deadline is November 30.

The YAM ministry focuses on one main goal: making disciples for Christ. This goal is achieved by growing young Christian leaders, developing their faith, teaching them how to love and serve God’s children anywhere in this world, and instilling in them the Wesleyan/Holiness mission’s spirit of evangelism and

social responsibility.

The average age of YAM participants is 17 years and for most it’s their first time traveling away from home and family to a different country to experience a different culture. The experience offers a critical cross-cultural encounter and fosters a sense of maturity in the faith journey of our young people. About 200 youths have participated in the YAM ministry since its inception in 2005. Among the countries that youth ambassadors have worked are Antigua, Bolivia, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Ghana.

Each year these dedicated teenagers leave their comfortable homes, family and friends to travel to another country to accomplish specific assigned projects. The actual accomplishment is not the construction project they do, but the sharing of God’s love with others through humanitarian services. It is the lasting relationships they develop among themselves and with the new community. It is the transformation that occurs in the life of the youth through their encounter of Christ in the Other.

[Application materials](#) are available online on the NYAC web site.

'Remembering' Can Help Lessen Fear of Change

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant on Older Adults Ministry

One of the realities of aging is there tends to be more time to reflect and remember than there was when we were younger and busy "building our lives." Many a conversation with older adults begins with, "I remember when . . ." The supposition often is that we do so, in part, to "wish things were as they used to be." In such a supposition, we too often miss the importance of remembering or reminiscing. The importance is that it can be a way of assessing the meaning of our lives thus far, and can enable the one remembering to note the lessons life has taught him or her.

These lessons are often ones of inner strength, deepening faith, the ability to cope with unwanted and unanticipated changes that are part and parcel of every life. Remembering often strengthens us not to fear the changes of life, but to embrace them. Doing so allows us to take the next steps in life's journey with less fear and with more anticipation.

Franklin Roosevelt caught a fearful nation's attention at his first inauguration as the president when he said, "The only thing we have



to fear is fear itself." He set the stage for a tumultuous time, including the onset of world war and the many social changes that were coming, knowing there was danger and inertia inherent in living in fear of the present or the future. Humans possess a wealth of tools and the ability to adapt and change. One such tool is the gift of memory, especially if we allow it to enable us to face the future with less fear and more anticipation.

As those who minister with and for older adults, we do well to open opportunities for them to reminisce with those who have heard other words that would encourage them to keep on the journey.

"Fear not for I am always with you."

"Even though I walk through the valley of death I fear no evil, for you are with me."

Such is the continuing call to go make of all disciples. Growing and encouraging faithful and, fearless disciples does not suggest we do so only of 'those between the ages of . . .' It is an all inclusive call and direction. Helping people to remember who they are and where they have been, and who they can still be, is part of the task of making disciples who fear not because they do not forget, "Fear not."

Giving Thanks for Our Baptism

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had faced in their lives. Those simple words, "Remember, and be thankful," had a major effect on their spiritual journeys.

A few weeks ago, I was approached by one of our pastors about whether I would be willing to perform a baptism as a part of my visit to his local church. I readily agreed not knowing any of the specifics. What I discovered later was that there was a four-year old boy who was being "poured" instead of "sprinkled." My first reaction was one of concern. How will this little boy handle the water? What significance will this day have for him?

When I met Sammy, I was pleasantly surprised at how ready he was for his big day. When the time came, he confidently climbed onto a little stool positioned behind the baptismal font and dutifully bowed his head over the basin. When I tipped the pitcher over his head I noticed how cold the water was. Yet, Sammy never flinched. It was evident that he looked forward to the event, desired the water and, even though only four, he seemed to somehow understand the significance of what he had agreed to do. To put it simply, Sammy loved the water.

There seems to be power in the water and real significance in its meaning. After I baptized Sammy, I thought to myself, "How wonderful it is transmit God's grace and love through this sacrament." It blessed me to realize in that moment that this sacrament—this act of the church that affirms our place in God's family—was reaching people of all ages. Whether it's

a baby claimed by God before they can ever acknowledge God's presence, a four-year old who is only now coming to the awareness of God's love, or an elderly person who, at the end of life, needs to once again know how deeply they are loved, we need the sign of the water and the feel of God's touch on their lives. Whether it's a first-time baptism or an act to remember what God did on our behalf, there is a real power in the ability to teach and remind people how deeply God loves us.

In this world of terrorism, violence, judgement and degrading behaviors we have a wonderful opportunity to remind our people that there is a path that leads to hope, joy, and acceptance. What a four-year boy experienced was much more than naïve optimism. It was more than the liking or anticipating the ritual. It was the power of God at work through a simple basin of water.

What would it look like if we took the lead from a four-year old? What would it look like if we loved the water, actively engaged with its symbolism, and cherished the church's ability to transform its meaning into a constant reminder of God's love for us? What would

it look like if we longed to have God's grace poured over us in a symbolic act of God's grace? What would it look like if we wanted the water, longed for it, and couldn't wait to experience the presence of God in our midst?

Those longings for God's presence create the climate for spiritual renewal and transformation in our lives. They open us to the possibility of seeing God in new and fresh ways in our midst. They give us the courage and hope that God might use us to bless someone else on the journey.

There isn't anything magical about a font of water. What is amazing, though, is that God can use the simplest of things to have an eternal impact on our lives, even a simple basin of cold water.

Dear friends, every one of us needs reminders. We are loved and are a special part of God's family. It all starts with a basin of water and a simple statement: "*Remember your baptism and be thankful.*"

Thanks be to God.

The Journey Continues, . . .

Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop

New Resource for Multiple-Church Charges

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership, part of United Methodist Wesley Theological Seminary, has a new, free e-newsletter for denominational church leaders whose responsibilities extend beyond a single pastoral charge. It's called Focus, and [subscriptions](#) are available on the web site.

Savarese Made for Camp Quinipet Position

BY JANE WAKEMAN
Deaconess

Justin Savarese, Camp Quinipet's associate director of operations, is a man whose skill set, and love of camping and the outdoors make him a great fit for his job. Savarese joined the United Methodist Camps when he saw an opportunity to work as property director at Camp Epworth. But the preparation for this work began years before.

His early childhood was spent in East Northport, N.Y., until his family moved overseas to Singapore and Hong Kong. Savarese returned to the states to attend SUNY New Paltz, where he connected with the non-profit organization, Dianova International, that works with at-risk youth. With them, he developed his interest in helping others and became adept at running ropes courses and other outdoor youth-based programs. Although, he commented, he had never been interested in camps when he was growing up, he knew he had found something special.

Savarese worked at Camp Epworth from 2012 to 2014, the time of Camp Epworth's sale. He stayed on there, helping the new owners



Justin Savarese

understand the needs of the property and ensuring a smooth transition. He had taken technology classes in high school and was able to learn several other skills through Dianova, including landscaping and cooking. Justin then began his position with our Annual Conference, helping to maintain the properties of closed churches, assessing and maintaining their condition until they were purchased by new churches or others. During this time, he began his work at Camp Quinipet. This sometimes meant traveling from the extreme southeastern portion of our Conference, to the northwestern boundaries. He would travel for several days at a time. At the same time, Justin's skills as carpenter/plumber/electrician and general problem-solver skills were being recognized back at the Camp. This past June, Savarese shifted to full-time employment at Camp Quinipet.

These days, Savarese is busy all year long. He works well beyond his appointed hours and does it all with enthusiasm and the love of the Camp. During the summer, he does everything from shuffling paddleboards and kayaks to their launching places, to running to Riverhead for supplies, splitting firewood and making repairs. He works in the office scheduling and otherwise working with the staff as needed (including the occasional assistance to the kitchen crew). Once the official camping season is over, he keeps up a very busy pace working with the school groups that come

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Bishops Review Interim 'Way Forward' Report

COB PRESS RELEASE

Placing emphasis on the values of unity, space and contextuality—all for the sake of mission—the Council of Bishops (COB) is exploring sketches of three models as possible directions for a way forward for The United Methodist Church over LGBTQ inclusion.

With the mission of God through the risen Christ at the core, the bishops this week received an interim report from the Commission on a Way Forward that offered three sketches of models that would help ease the impasse in the church, noting that the power of the Holy Spirit trumps and guides all the church's activities. The Commission serves the COB, helping prepare the COB to fulfill its mandate to make a recommendation for a way forward to the General Conference.

Just as the Commission did not express a preference for any of the models in its interim report to the COB in order for the bishops to fully do their work, the COB is also not now expressing a preference for any model, while engaging deeply with them and the implications for their church and their leadership. This will provide the space bishops need to teach and engage leaders in their episcopal areas.

After receiving the interim report of the sketches of the three possible models, the bishops engaged in prayerful discerning and offered substantial feedback to the Commission, but did not take any vote on any of the sketches.

The moderators of the Commission on a Way Forward noted that the values highlighted in any one model also live within the fabric of the other models. Values expressed by any one model are not exclusive to one or absent in another. The values that may be associated with the identity of any one model are there because it may be a value lifted to a higher level of preference or differentiation among the models.

"Operate with a heart of peace and an openness. All three models grew

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CHURCH & SOCIETY

Multicultural Bible Study

The Conference Board of Church and Society is seeking input on a pilot Bible study that encourages churches to examine racial and cultural attitudes. The scripture study is available as a download [here](#).

All members and friends of CBCS are asked to read this short study and to join in a discussion at the board's next meeting on Saturday, Dec. 2 at the White Plains Conference Center. A portion of the gathering time will be spent in participating in this study. If you cannot make the meeting, please email comments to churchandsociety@nyac-umc.com.



Cards for the Incarcerated

The conference Board of Church and Society is again inviting all NYAC churches to send Christmas cards, like the one above, to our incarcerated brothers and sisters. Templates for eight different designs that can be printed out are available on the [CBCS web page](#). Church members may write a short message and sign just their first names. The cards are then collected and mailed in a large envelope by December 4 to coordinator Sheila Peiffer.



The Cure for Today's Drug Crisis: Community

BY REV. DR. STEPHEN BAUMAN

I've been thinking about the opioid crisis. It's awful. The statistics are overwhelming: opioids are the leading cause of death for Americans under 50 years old, killing roughly 64,000 people last year, more than guns or car accidents, and doing so at a pace faster than the H.I.V. epidemic did at its peak.

It's an especially acute problem in rural America, and in this way differs from the crack cocaine scourge from the '80s and '90s. The majority national opinion at the time considered crack a matter of law and order in the inner city, and we wound up imprisoning African Americans at an alarming rate. It should not escape our notice that this current affliction started as a rural white problem that has been addressed very differently. Compassionate restraint has replaced lock 'em up.

We should also notice that today's epidemic corresponds with a devaluation of historic pillars of American culture like churches and civic involvements that share an affinity for communal values supporting the common good. Today everyone is electronically fully connected except to things that really matter, things that nurture our souls and bind us together with love and compassion.

Years ago when learning about addictive behaviors, one of my mentors referred to alcoholism as a spiritual disease—behavior attempting to fill an emptiness at the center of a person's core. While that doesn't exhaust the topic, it still points to an important aspect of our current crisis. Something crucial is draining out of our culture and the resultant void needs to be filled.

When persons seek to get "clean," in the words of Alcoholics Anonymous' first step, they admit they were powerless over alcohol, that their lives had become unmanageable, and came to believe that a power greater than themselves could restore them to sanity. Over the years I have learned that many things could be inserted for the word alcohol, including money, sex, drugs (social media?), well, nearly anything

that held one captive to behaviors that diminished their human dignity and capacity for compassionate and loving relationships.

Recently I was reminded of a speech Martin Luther King gave eight months before his assassination entitled, "Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?" Largely a *cri de coeur* for major renovation of the social fabric—laced as always with biblical allusions—much still rings with timeless potency:

"One night a juror came to Jesus and he wanted to know what he could do to be saved. Jesus didn't get bogged down on the kind of isolated approach of what you shouldn't do. Jesus didn't say, 'Now Nicodemus, you must stop lying.' He didn't say, 'Nicodemus, now you must not commit adultery.' He didn't say, 'Now Nicodemus, you must stop cheating if you are doing that.' He didn't say, 'Nicodemus, you must stop drinking liquor if you are doing that excessively.' He said something altogether different, because Jesus realized something basic: that if a man will lie, he will steal. And if a man will steal, he will kill. So instead of just getting bogged down on one thing, Jesus looked at him and said, 'Nicodemus, you must be born again.'"

King meant the whole nation required redemption, that is, a new way of understanding and organizing itself, with ramifications for individuals and the whole body politic.

I'm thinking that sounds about right for our moment as well...



Rev. Dr. Stephen Bauman

Rev. Dr. Stephen Bauman is senior minister at Christ Church United Methodist in Manhattan. Read more of his "[Faith Matters](#)" reflections on his Christ Church NYC blog.

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out of mission, vision and scope. Each one of these models connects to a story and experience that is represented in this body," Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, one of the moderators told her fellow bishops.

She added: "As we talk about it, let's be respectful of each model. When we speak about one of the models in a less than respectful way, we are speaking of someone's experience or someone's conscience. How we talk about these models is important because they are representative of where people are standing and how people are experiencing the church."

The Commission and the COB acknowledge the interaction between the values of unity, space and contextuality, and the tension this interaction often creates, as part of what completes the UMC as a denomination rather than what divides it.

The Commission shared sketches of three models, with the awareness that the Commission and the COB are not restricted to these sketches and are open to learning, listening and improvement. It is likely that additional models or sketches may emerge as this process continues. Here is the summary about the sketches of the models presented to the bishops:

- One sketch of a model affirms the current *Book of Discipline* language and places a high value on accountability.

- Another sketch of a model removes restrictive language and places a high value on contextualization. This sketch also specifically protects the rights of those whose conscience will not allow them to perform same

gender weddings or ordain LGBTQ persons.

- A third sketch of a model is grounded in a unified core that includes shared doctrine and services and one COB, while also creating different branches that have clearly defined values such as accountability, contextualization and justice.

- Each sketch represents values that are within the COB and across the church.

- Each sketch includes gracious way of exit for those who feel called to exit from the denomination.

The values underlying these proposed models are found in two documents; The Mission, Vision and Scope document, which was affirmed by the COB; and the Status Report of the Commission, released in July 2017. As part of the ongoing discernment within the church, resident bishops are being equipped to lead discussions in their episcopal areas by emphasizing the values of the proposed models as found in these two important documents.

The Commission will process the feedback received from the bishops at the Lake Junaluska meeting and will continue to welcome further input from members of the church through conversations and discussions with their respective bishops on the strengths and limitations of each model. The basic resources for these conversations were shared in a handbook with the bishops, and this handbook will be available on the Commission on a Way Forward's website as a PDF.

OBITUARIES

Rev. Robert W. Howard

The Reverend Robert (Bob) W. Howard, 85, of West Hartford, Conn., died of heart failure on October 30, 2017.

Pastor Howard, as he was fondly known, was born in 1931 in Stamford, Conn., the only son of Harold and Evelyn Howard. He attended Stamford public schools and earned a bachelor's degree from Williams College. He graduated from Union Theological Seminary in New York City with a master of divinity degree.

Howard began his 50-year ministry as a student supply pastor serving congregations, including West Redding and Sandy Hook, Conn. He was ordained in the New York East Conference in 1955, serving briefly at Mamaroneck, N.Y., before moving to Brooklyn, where he served Sunset Park and Elim for several years. He was appointed to Christ UMC in Brooklyn in 1965 and served for 18 years there, followed by 29 years as senior pastor at Grace UMC in Valley Stream, NY. He retired in 2002.

Howard was active in the community, leading church youth groups, serving as the chaplain of Valley Stream Fire Department, and as president of the board of Brooklyn United Methodist Nursing Home.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Barbara Davis Howard; daughters Elizabeth Carnes of West Hartford, Gweneth Mahoney of Cockeysville, Md., and Kathryn Curtis of Shrewsbury, Mass.; eight grandchildren: Henry and Robert Carnes; Jessica, Craig, Jack, and Ben Mahoney; and Alanna and Sohani Curtis.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m., November 24, 2017, at Asylum Hill Congregational Church, 814 Asylum Ave., Hartford. A private burial will be held in Stamford. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Asylum Hill Church, or Hartford UMC, 573 Farmington Ave, Hartford, Conn. 06105, or a United Methodist Church of your choice. Online condolences may be offered at: www.taylorandmodeen.com.

Genell Yvonne Poitras

Genell Yvonne Poitras, 87, died September 24, 2017, at the Heritage Living Center in Park Rapids, Minn. She was the wife of Rev. Edward W. Poitras, who served the New York Conference for 39 years, primarily in overseas missions in Korea. He retired as professor of world Christianity from the Perkins School of Theology in 1997.

She was born on August 3, 1930, in Lidgerwood, N.D.; graduated from Edgeley High School in 1948 and from the University of North Dakota in 1952. She received a master's degree in social work from Columbia University in New York City in 1959. She and Rev. Poitras were married on June 20, 1959, in Ellendale, N.D.

The couple moved to South Korea in 1959, where she worked as a teacher and social worker until their return to the United States in 1989. She was the recipient of the *Korea Times* translation prize (Korean stories into English) in 1976. In 1990, the couple moved to Dallas, where she served as a social worker at Bryan's House, a center for children with HIV. Then there was a move to Freeport, Maine, from 1997 to 2011, before the pair settled in Park Rapids.

Poitras enjoyed painting, family history, gardening, cooking and entertaining, and playing piano and organ.

In addition to her husband, Poitras is survived by a daughter, Catherine Breer of Freeport, Maine; grandchildren, Griffin Breer and Mina Breer of Freeport; a brother, Wayne Kirmis (Pearl Courneya) of Park Rapids, Minn.; three sisters, Kathryn Medellin of Park Rapids, Minn., JoAnne Kirmis (Robert) Hill of St. Paul, and Bickey Kirmis (Frank) Bender of Park Rapids, Minn.; a sister-in-law, Priscilla Gallagher of Sanford, Fla. She was preceded in death by son Peter.

A memorial service was held October 21, 2017, at Hubbard UMC in Hubbard, Minn. Burial was to occur at a later date at the Mount Hope Cemetery at Edgeley, N.D. Memorial contributions may be made to the [Southern Poverty Law Center](http://SouthernPovertyLawCenter.org), 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104. Friends may offer online condolences at ceasefuneralhome.com.

Warren Whitlock

Warren G. Whitlock, Jr., who served in many capacities as a lay servant in the United Methodist Church, died on October 20, 2017, at age 73, in St. Luke's Cornwall Hospital, Newburgh, N.Y.

Whitlock grew up in Hillsboro, Ill., the son of Warren G. Whitlock, Sr., and Jeanne Pearl (Bess) Whitlock. He joined drama club in high school, and enjoyed going to plays throughout his life. He graduated from Hillsboro High School in 1962, and MacMurray College in 1966.

He worked in corporate insurance, becoming a branch manager in Buffalo before retirement. Traveling frequently as part of his job and with his family, Whitlock had visited Canada, Europe, China, Australia, and New Zealand.

Whitlock, who lived in Glenham, N.Y., was a member of Christ Church in Beacon, where he served on the Board of Trustees. He had most recently also served as the registrar for the New York Connecticut District lay servant ministries. He often taught during that district's Lenten School and was known for his hospitality at many other training and worship events.

He was responsible for the early morning prayers sponsored by the Board of Laity every morning in the month before Annual Conference. Whitlock was a member of Council on Finance and Administration, the Episcopacy Committee, Task Force on Immigration, Older Adult Ministries, Board of Laity, Lay Servant committees—both district and conference.

Whitlock is survived by his children, Sterling and Cory; and a sister, Jennifer.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m., November 18 at Christ UMC, 60 Union Street at Phillip. Burial will be in Whitlock's home state of Illinois. Memorial gifts in Whitlock's name may be sent to Christ Church, 51 Violet Dr., Beacon, NY 12508-2217.

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out doing team building programs, loading fishing boats, etc., all the time continuing to make repairs and improvements on the buildings, winterizing various parts of the Camp. During the winter months, he has a small amount of time to make larger improvements and perform renovations.

When asked about how he cares for himself, he replies that he likes rock-climbing, spending time walking his dog George, reading and contacting his fiancé who is awaiting a fiancé visa to join him from England. Indeed, he recently journeyed to Iceland in order to spend some time with her!

Justin came to Camp Quinipet with experience in hands-on maintenance, youth work, international perspective and love of the outdoors. Is it any wonder that he seems to be the perfect fit!