



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

THE VISION

December 2017



Second Man Seeks Sanctuary At Church

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY
Editor, *The Vision*

Just a week after Marco Reyes Alvarez left sanctuary at First and Summerfield United Methodist Church, a second Ecuadorean immigrant has taken refuge at the New Haven, Conn., church.

Early on November 30, Nelson Pinos Gonzalez, 47, entered the church to avoid being deported back to the country he left some 25 years ago.

According to Jesus Morales Sanchez of the Connecticut Immigrant Rights Alliance (CIRA), during an October 4 check-in with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Pinos was told to report back with a one-way plane ticket to Ecuador dated November 30.

At a press conference at the church on the day he took sanctuary, Pinos told the gathering,



Nelson Pinos, center, with son Brandon and daughter Kelly, is joined by supporters after seeking sanctuary at First and Summerfield UMC in New Haven, Conn. From left are John Jairo Lugo with Unidad Latina en Accion (ULA); UMC pastors Rev. Juhye Hahn and Rev. Paul Fleck. At right is Jesus Morales Sanchez with ULA and the Connecticut Immigrant Rights Alliance.

through an interpreter, that he made the decision because he "has a family to fight for . . . I don't want to abandon them." Pinos, who lives in New Haven, has three children—ages 15, 12 and five—with his longtime partner, Elsa. The children are all U.S. citizens. He is the sole provider for the family. ICE

has a policy of not entering houses of worships to arrest immigrants.

"God will give me strength to fight for my family . . . to be free," he said.

Pinos' oldest daughter, Kelly, also spoke about a three-page letter she wrote to ICE explaining how

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Conference Dates Set For June 7-10

December 2017

Dear Friends,

I greet you today in the precious name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. I pray that each of you are in eager anticipation of the joy and expectancy that is associated with this Advent & Christmas season.

I am writing today to let you know that our Annual Conference Sessions Team is currently working on some exciting plans for the next gathering of our Annual Conference in June, 2018.

Our team has been working on plans for the potential of a simultaneous mission experience to take place during our time together and events that we hope will draw in a wider circle of our churches into the life and activity of our Annual Conference Session.

Most significantly, the Sessions team has been involved in significant conversation around how we can begin to re-claim the

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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.

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. Guest speakers are from the West Ohio Conference; Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey is the director of missional church initiatives and Rev. J. Kabamba Kiboko is pastor at Forest Chapel UMC in Cincinnati. See full story on Page 6.

1/1 Conference Office Closed

Offices are closed for the New Year's Day.

1/6 CT Advanced Lay Servant Class

This advanced course focuses on the ministry of the lay servant who either regularly or occasionally leads a group, class, organization, or the congregation in worship. The course is grounded in the classic patterns of Christian worship and the practices of leading worship. Participants will come to understand more about Christian worship in order to lead worship with confidence. Meets from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at First UMC of Shelton, 188 Rocky Rest Rd., Shelton, Conn. Snow date is January 13. Pastor Ximena Varas will lead the class. Cost is \$10 and the registration form can be found [here](#).

1/15 Conference Office Closed

Offices are closed for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

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.

2/9 Lenten Preaching

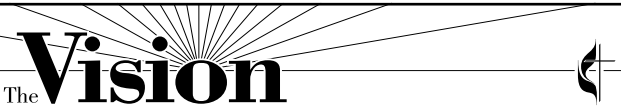
Union Theological Seminary in New York City has revived its "Got Sermon?" series and offers a daylong workshop for those preaching during Lent and Easter. Instructors for the 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. event are Dr. Lisa Thompson, assistant professor of Homiletics, Dr. Aliou Niang, associate professor of New Testament, Dr. Andrea C. White, associate professor of Theology & Culture, and Dr. Alan Cooper, Elaine Ravich professor of Jewish Studies and provost of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and visiting professor of Jewish interpretation. Registration info can be found on the [NYAC calendar](#).

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 2018

The Vision is a monthly online publication of the New York Conference. Deadlines are always the first Friday of the month, with posting to the web site about 10 days later. The deadlines for 2018 are January 5, February 2, March 2, April 6, May 4, June 1, July 6, August 3, September 7, October 5, November 2, and December 7. Please send any stories, photos, ideas, or questions directly to vision@nyac.com.

 <p>The Vision</p>
<p><small>The News of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church</small></p>
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Followers of Jesus Must “Invite, Initiate”

“... Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

(Matthew 28:19 The Message)

I am literally writing this piece looking out my window and meditating on this commandment from Jesus. Having served in the local church for nearly 20 years, one thing I found in common wherever I was appointed is many “Christians” can quote Christ, but don’t necessarily follow through with Christ. What do I mean? (I just know someone is asking this question.)

“Discipling” literally means to “learn as we follow.” If we are truly following Jesus we must go out. If we are truly following Jesus we must go beyond what makes us feel comfortable into places and among faces that may or may not reside on the same block as us. But, more than that, following Jesus also carries with it the reality of dynamic—rather than static—learning. Our learning must be such that it shapes us into a follower who sees not just what is, but also what God may be calling into being. In other words, in our following we cannot

always know the answer before we’ve been presented with the problem. We cannot stay where we are . . . doing what we’ve always done . . . the same way we’ve always done it. We learn as we follow! Sounds easy, doesn’t it?

Now to the “follow through” . . . We are commanded not just to go out, but to “train everyone [we] meet, far and near, in the new way of life,” and to “mark them by baptism.” For those wondering where this is going . . . here’s the rub. Just feeding or sheltering or marching or advocating or paying a light bill or hosting a nursery/daycare is not enough. We are commanded to train or teach *every person* we encounter about this new way of life . . . this “Jesus” thing!

If we are feeding without teaching, we are a charity and not the church of Jesus Christ! If we are doing all of these good acts without teaching/sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, we are not the church of Jesus Christ! And, a sad reality across our connection is that we have too many charities masquerading as churches, and feel good ministries whose focus is not Jesus Christ.

We are commanded to invite and initiate! This is a non-negotiable commandment from Jesus to us his disciples, and this is the



foundation of every work I do and every work I support. The foundation of my discipleship is grounded in invitation and initiation.

What about you? When was the last time your work(s) were focused on truly making disciples of Jesus Christ? When was the last time your work(s) had the end goal of inviting *every one* you encountered . . . out there . . . to experience the newness of Christ? When was the last time your work(s) were focused on the outcome of initiating those who do not know Jesus into the body of Christ? I believe that when we unashamedly invite and initiate with Jesus as our base, then we will witness the revitalization of our Church! What about you?

Stepping away from my window . . .

Dalton Honored for Work to Strengthen Diversity

Rev. Doris K. Dalton, a deacon in the New York Conference, was recently honored at a Thanksgiving diversity breakfast by the American Jewish Committee Westchester/Fairfield affiliate.

Dalton, William Darger and Rev. Kymberly McNair were each honored for their work in strengthening community diversity at the event that drew more than 350 people to the Duchesne Center at Manhattanville College in Purchase, N.Y. The theme for this year’s event was “Healing Our Fractured Society.”

Ordained as a full deacon in the United Methodist Church in 2009, Dalton serves as executive director of the Westchester Martin Luther King Jr. Institute for Non-Violence, located in White Plains, N.Y.

Dalton said she was surprised to be singled out for the recognition.

“I am still humbled by the honor, and I count it as a recognition for the work we all do together in creating connections across difference,” Dalton wrote in an email.

In her role with the MLK Institute, Dalton said she is able to “live out my calling as a deacon by leading communities in Westchester County to respond to the needs and hurts brought on by racism, systemic injustice and social inequality. I work with Christians, Muslims, Jews, spiritual but not religious, Unitarian Universalists, humanists, agnostics, Buddhists, atheists and more. I often do not speak in overt Christian language in my ministry because of the interfaith nature of my work . . . I bring the possibility of transformation through love, justice and compassion into the community, and invite Christian disciples into ministry with me.”



Rev. Doris K. Dalton

Dalton advises anyone considering the ministry of a deacon to “keep praying and discerning. Be assured there is a place for your unique ministry among the people of the NYAC and beyond.” She talks about her background and her call to work as a deacon in a [video](#) created for the event.

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry has a [web site](#) about the work of a deacon and there is a [blog](#) written by deacons across the UM connection.

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difficult it had been for her and her family.

"I can't concentrate in school," she said. "I want everything to be right . . . I want ICE to know that separating families is not right."

Pinos, a factory worker, came to the United States in May 1992. ICE picked him up in a raid in Minnesota; after moving to Connecticut, he missed a court date in Minnesota on his deportation. Yasmin Rodriguez, a lawyer with Esperanza Center for Law and Advocacy, said that Pinos' motion to reopen his case is pending with an immigration court in Minnesota. Rodriguez has requested a temporary stay so the court has time to review Pinos' case while he is still in the country.

"We're fighting an unjust system . . . and we're committed to continue the effort," she said as chants of "Keep Nelson—Home" rang up from the crowd.

At the press conference, each speaker stood behind a lectern that had been crafted by Marco Reyes. Reyes, an immigrant from Ecuador, took sanctuary at First and Summerfield on August 8, the day he was ordered to leave the country as part of the current U.S. administration's crackdown on immigration. He made the lectern in gratitude to the congregation and its pastor, Rev. Juhye Hahn.

The day before Thanksgiving—and after 105 days at the church—Reyes was granted another stay of his deportation order. He got the good news in a phone call during a luncheon at the church with Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal and other supporters. He was able to return home to his family while his lawyers seek a review of his deportation by the federal appeals court and the Board of Immigration Appeals.

Reyes, who is married with three children, came to the United States in 1997. The Meriden resident is a construction worker and the sole provider for his family. In 2009, Reyes was issued an order of deportation, but had been allowed to remain in the country with his family through a series of stays of that order. But in July, Reyes was informed that ICE officials would remove him on August 8.

In a press conference following his release, Reyes, 45, speaking through a translator, offered a word of hope for others in his situation.

"I also want to give a message to every immigrant out there in the country: Don't give up. Because if I can do it, everyone can," he said.



Lawyer Yasmin Rodriguez answers questions during a November 30 press conference with her client, Nelson Pinos, behind her.

Rev. Hahn called the circumstances around the reprieve "a perfect moment in a way." On November 21, the church had gathered for a Thanksgiving dinner and to celebrate the 24th wedding anniversary of Reyes and his wife, Fanny Torres. "It was a perfect Thanksgiving gift."

Her congregation at First and Summerfield had not even had time to debrief after their experience with Reyes before Pinos arrived. But the biblical mandate for the church to be a place of safe haven was clear.

"We cannot turn people away. We had to say yes," Hahn said.

During the press conference announcing Pinos arrival, Hahn had noted that the lectionary readings the Sunday before Thanksgiving had been about offering care for those who are hungry, thirsty, sick or in prison.

"As a follower of Jesus, you are there when there is a need," she said.

The NYAC Taskforce on Immigration urges any congregation considering becoming a "sanctuary" church to contact them for more info and training. Details are on [the task force page](#) on the NYAC web site.

Giving Tuesday Donations Top \$677K

More than 3,350 gifts totaling \$677,398.80 were received for missionary support, mission projects, and disaster relief in the 2017 UMC Giving Tuesday campaign on November 28.

The annual event benefits mission work supported in part through The Advance, the designated mission-giving channel of the United Methodist Church, related to the General Board of Global Ministries and its United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) agency. The theme this year was "Connect Your Passion with God's Mission."

The 3,357 gifts came from 15 countries, the

largest number from the United States, with the United States accounting for \$670,290.80 of the total amount received. Of the gifts, 149 totaling \$74,395 are for missionary support and 233 totaling \$303,197.92 are for a range of worldwide mission projects. Sixty-seven donations totaling \$299,805.88 are designated for UMCOR. One hundred percent of every Advance gift goes to the designated program.

Giving Tuesday is a broad-based observance encouraging support for humanitarian causes following the commercial Black Friday and Cyber Monday buying binges. Global Ministries

and UMCOR are among the pioneers in the use of the occasion for faith-based giving.

Gifts made through The Advance, via Giving Tuesday or otherwise, are considered "second-mile" mission giving—beyond that which comes through funds apportioned to congregations through the annual (regional) system.

Gifts ranging from \$35 to \$2,500 came from the countries or territories of Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belize, Canada, Chile, Germany, Guam, Ireland, Italy, Mozambique, South Africa, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

2018 Conference to Run Thursday–Sunday

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participation of a larger number of youth in our session. Much of that conversation has centered around the timing of Annual Conference which currently has much of its meeting during the time when our youth are in school.

For that reason, the Conference Sessions team is announcing that the dates for the 2018 Annual Conference Session at Hofstra University will be Thursday–Sunday, June 7–10, 2018.

I am writing to you now so that you can place these dates on your calendar and make plans accordingly. I am fully behind this shift in times and believe that we can make plans that will provide a meaningful and inspirational time together. Here are some of the plans being formulated:

- 1) Ordination Celebration on Sunday, June 10.
All Pastors are required to be in attendance to support the ordination of new colleagues in

ministry and have their appointments fixed for the next year. Each pastor is to work with their local church for lay pulpits for that Sunday. This is not considered a “vacation day” for pastors but is a part of their pastoral responsibility.

Local churches will be encouraged to bring confirmation students for a mass confirmation experience during worship.

Baptisms will be performed for those who desire this to be done along with a re-affirmation of the baptismal covenant for everyone.

Plans are being made to “live stream” the service to local churches across the annual conference in an attempt to truly connect the entirety of the New York Annual Conference.

- 2) Delegate voting for the special 2019 General Conference session.
- 3) Simultaneous mission work being done in Nassau County during our session.

- 4) Reports/updates on Puerto Rico disaster recovery with Bishop Hector Ortiz from Puerto Rico being present with us.

More work is being done on speakers, workshops, and other relevant reporting.

I pray that you will begin to anticipate and pray for a joyful, engaging, and blessing-filled annual conference session. Put these dates on your calendar now and begin planning for your attendance at our annual meeting together.

Until then, please know of my continued prayer for the health and vitality of your life, your church, and your ministry setting.

The Journey Continues, . . .



Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop

A Thank-You to Bishop Middleton



Bishop Jane Allen Middleton was honored recently for her support and commitment to the 2016–17 renovation of the New York Conference Center in White Plains, N.Y. The bishop was recognized with a plaque during a luncheon with the conference staff and her husband, Jack, on November 17. It was the first time Middleton had returned to the building since the renovation was completed.



Bishop's Convocation Planned for Jan. 9-11

Once again, clergy, their spouses and children can enjoy a time of spiritual renewal at the Bishop's Convocation from January 9-11 at the Villa Roma Resort in the Catskills. The scheduled guest speakers are from the West Ohio Conference of the UMC; Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey is the director of missional church initiatives and Rev. J. Kabamba Kiboko is pastor at Forest Chapel UMC in Cincinnati.

Kibbey, according to an Abingdon Press biography, is an ordained United Methodist elder who serves as the director of the Missional Church Consultation Initiative (MCCI), a comprehensive 360-degree training and coaching effort that assists congregations and their pastors to jump-start a new life cycle of fruitfulness.

Kibbey served as executive pastor of Ginghamburg UMC in Tipp City, Ohio, for 10 years, where she teamed with Pastor Mike Slaughter to create and deploy the vision of the church as well as provide oversight of the staff and all discipleship/mission initiatives. She is also the creator of the *Ministry by Strengths* program, which helps leaders connect into individualized areas of ministry service passion, and is an adjunct professor for ministry leadership at United Theological Seminary.

The author of three books, Kibbey has penned "Flood Gates: Holy Momentum for a Fearless Church," "Transformation Journal:



**Sue Nilson
Kibbey**



**J. Kabamba
Kiboko**

A Daily Walk in the Word," and "Ultimately Responsible: When You're in Charge of Igniting a Ministry." She also has a [web site](#) to share her work.

According to a biography on her church web site, J. Kabamba Kiboko was the first woman to be ordained elder (1983) in the Southern Congo Episcopal Area of the UMC. She has cross-cultural educational and pastoral experiences in both the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in the United States. In 2003, she transferred her membership to the Texas Conference, where she served from 1991 to 2013.

She holds a doctorate in biblical interpretation (Old Testament) from the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology Joint Ph.D. Program.

Kiboko has also served as mission interpreter and liaison for the Southern Congo/Zambia Episcopal Area since 1986 and as a translator (English-Swahili-French) for the General Conference since 1996. She is a member of the UM Judicial Council for 2016-2020.

She is author of "A Tapestry in the Disanga: Building Beloved Community from a Congolese Perspective" in "A New Dawn in Beloved Community: Stories with the Power to Transform Us;" and "Sharing Power: An Autobiographical View" in "Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women;" co-author with D. Halverson and L. Warner of "Women Called to Ministry: A Six-Session Study," and author of a forthcoming book "Divination in 1 Samuel and Beyond" to be published by Sheffield in the Hebrew Bible Monographs series.

The event begins with registration at 2 p.m. Tuesday and ends with lunch on Thursday. Early-bird prices before January 3, 2018, are \$355 single and \$575 double occupancy; after that date \$385 for single occupancy and \$605 for double.

Children may accompany their parents, but must be registered. Children under age three are free; age four to 10 are \$130, and 11 to 17 are \$180. Free childcare is available.

The schedule and registration information can be found on the [NYAC calendar](#).

Getting a LEG Up

The inaugural class of the Laity Excellence Group (LEG) leaders—from the Catskill Hudson District—were commissioned on November 15. The six LEG leaders will start their own group meetings in January. The intent of the groups is generally based on Wesleyan class meetings to nurture the faith of laity, and provide a sense of belonging and accountability. The program will be expanded to the other five districts in 2018. Pictured, from left are Carol June, Catskill UMC; Bill Seneschal, First UMC in Walton; John Stanforth, Ellenville UMC; Carol Merante, NYAC facilitator of LEG leader training; Diane McDowell, Saugerties UMC; Joycelyn Jordan, Woodridge UMC; Margaret Howe, New Paltz UMC; and Rev. David Gilmore, conference director of Congregational Development and Revitalization.





LEFT: The kitchen and dining area of the Kingswood farmhouse are warm and cozy; BELOW: sledding is a favorite activity at the winter weekend at Camp Quinipet.

Camps Hold Wonder—Even in Winter

BY JANE WAKEMAN

NYAC Deaconess

Camping is not just for summertime anymore; camping goes on all year and can be even more fun in the winter than in the summer. In fact, the fabulous Winter Weekend at Quinipet for campers ages 11 to 17 is January 5–7. This winter weekend, which begins at 6 p.m. Friday and concludes at 11 a.m. Sunday, includes hiking, campfires, vespers, arts and crafts, fun cabin activities and, weather permitting, ice skating and sledding. No matter the weather, the scenery is always a hit. If you have not seen Quinipet covered in snow, you have not see just how beautiful it can be. Registration info can be found on the [camps web site](#); the deadline is December 31. Why not start the new year out with a great adventure?

And if you're thinking about a retreat to beat the winter blues, both Kingswood and Quinipet have accommodations for you.

At Kingswood, you can enjoy that cozy country feel in the 1850s-era farmhouse. Much of it has been remodeled within the last three years. It can house up to 20 guests and has 2.5 baths, a large kitchen and meeting space, to say nothing of the year-round views. All the details can be found [here](#).

Quinipet has several winter-worthy buildings. Jesse Lee can accommodate 30 overnight guests and has room for 40 to 50 people in its meeting spaces. It offers a gas fireplace and a fully-equipped kitchen. If the weather is reasonable for outdoor sitting, the large front porch is a great spot.

Asbury, built in 1882, has 10 private bedrooms and can accommodate 25 guests. It has a wood-burning fireplace in the living room, a well-equipped kitchen and a wonderful wrap-around porch.

Bobilin is the spot for smaller groups. Its cabin feel is great for 20 guests. It is all on one level and has handicap-accessible bathrooms (not fully ADA compliant). Bobilin also has a cozy fireplace.



Willard Lodge, with or without the other two Willards, is the ideal place for large groups. With a beautiful bay view, gigantic fireplace and single-level, its meeting space can accommodate 75 and the sleeping quarters (dormitory style) house 32 overnight guests. The kitchen has commercial-sized stove and refrigerator and dishwasher as well as on-demand coffee and hot water. While it is not completely ADA compliant, it has two large bathrooms that are handicapped. There is a sound system and podium link-up. The two Willards each sleep 16 and are also on one level. The Willard Lodge and buildings can be rented together or separately.

North and McConnell buildings are available for occupancy from April 1 through November 1 and feature pine ceilings with open beams. Each has space for 30.

Of course, all of the retreat possibilities feature God's glorious creation in exceptional all-natural spaces. Whether studying, meeting, talking or worshipping, our camps offer inspiration everywhere you look.

Registration for summer camp in 2018 at Quinipet begins this month. Please check the [web site](#) for details.

OBITUARIES

Rev. J. Philip Gehres

The Reverend J. Philip Gehres of Newark, Del., died on November 25, 2017, at Arden Courts of Wilmington. He was 84.

Born in Huntington, W.Va., to Joseph and Ina Gehres, Gehres was raised in Lancaster, Ohio, and attended Ohio Northern University. He pursued a calling to the ministry and served his first parish as a student pastor at Harrod (Ohio) Methodist Church. In 1955, he transferred to the New York Conference where he served churches in Grand Gorge and Gilboa while completing his master's of divinity degree at Drew University in Madison, N.J. In the early years of his ministry, Gehres also served North Blenheim, Conesville, Manorkill, and West Conesville churches.

Beginning in 1960, Gehres served as pastor of the Hobart and Township UMCs. In 1978, he was appointed to Floral Park UMC on Long Island, where he also served for 18 years. He retired to Delaware in 1996 with his wife, Gerry Gehres, who died on September 15, 2017.

An active member of the Lions Club International in both New York and Delaware, Gehres served as a volunteer courier for the Lions' Eye Bank and district chaplain. The Gehres traveled extensively throughout the United States, completing several cross-country road trips along the Route 66, Route 50, Route 40, and US 30 corridors, as well as coastal tours of lighthouses.

Rev. Gehres leaves behind a son Mark (Jen) Gehres of Ocean Springs, Miss.; daughters, Rebecca Gehres of Hurst, Texas; Elizabeth (Tom) Lukacs of South River, N.J.; Deborah (John) Van Varick of Newton, N.J.; a daughter-in-law Donna Gehres of Euless, Texas; sister, Winnie (Gary) Rathbun of Cleveland, Ohio; brother, Gene (Patricia) Gehres of Las Vegas; six grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. He was preceded in death by his sisters, Hope Johnson and Judy Doner; a brother David Gehres; and son Stephen Gehres.

A private graveside service was held November 29, at the Barratt's Chapel Cemetery in Frederica, Del.

Memorial contributions may be made to a local United Methodist Church or to the Lions Club International. Messages of condolence may be sent to the family through daughter, Deborah Van Varick, 16 Eagle Nest Road, Newton, NJ 07860.

Rev. Dr. Albert R. Miller

The Reverend Dr. Albert R. Miller, 90, of Shelton, Conn., died on November 17, 2017, at Bishop Wicke Health and Rehabilitation Center.

Miller was born in Brooklyn on May 15, 1927, to Albert F. and Marietta (Johansen) Miller.

Miller, who was a U.S. Navy veteran, received his bachelor's degree from New York University, his seminary degree from Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky., and his doctor of ministry degree from the Graduate Theological Foundation in Mishawaka, Ind.

Rev. Miller was a pastor for more than 50 years, serving several churches in New Jersey before becoming a member of the New York Conference in 1965. He served the following NYAC churches: Bethel on Staten Island; Bedford Hills, Hicksville and Carmel, all in New York; and First UMC in Stamford, Conn. Miller retired in 1989, and continued to serve at Great Hill UMC in Seymour, Seymour UMC and Winsted UMC, all in Connecticut; and Lake Mahopac and Holmes in New York.

He is survived by his wife Marion (Hess) Ramsey, a son, Timothy (Hawley) Miller; a daughter, Lauren (Mary Beth Edwards) Pappas; grandchildren Kaitlin, Paige and Pierce Miller, Zachary Pappas, and Kyle (Amanda) Pappas, great-grandson, Grayson. His first wife, Virginia (Lord) Miller, predeceased him.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m., December 16, 2017, at the First United Methodist Church of Shelton, 188 Rocky Rest Road, Shelton, CT. The family requests that memorial contributions be made to [Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association](#), 54 Pitman Avenue, PO Box 248, Ocean Grove, NJ 07756. Condolences may be sent to the family at Wesley Heights, 580 Long Hill Rd, Apt 124, Shelton CT 06484.

Nancy F. Young

Nancy F. Young, 82, of Hamilton, Ohio, died November 7, 2017 at the University of Cincinnati Hospital.

She was the widow of the Reverend David E. Young, who spent 33 years in ministry in the New York Conference. He served the following churches in New York: Asbury and Wesley UMCs on Staten Island, Island Park, Coram, North Shore UMC in Wading River, Hobart and Township, Red Hook, Rowe Memorial UMC in Milan, and Beacon. Rev. Young retired in 1998 and died in 1999.

Young is survived by a son, Steven Young; a daughter, Peggy Sue (Steven) Jerles; and a sister, Elizabeth Laiacona of Phoenix.

A memorial service was held November 13, 2017 at First United Methodist Church in Hamilton, Ohio.

Gender Gap Persists for UM Clergy

Women are still under-represented as clergy in The United Methodist Church, although the percentage varies by region. And, overall, clergymen receive almost \$4,000 less in annual salary than clergymen, according to the [second half of a study](#) conducted by Magaela C. Bethune on behalf of the United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

While The United Methodist Church membership is comprised 58 percent of women, women made up 28.4 percent of clergy positions in 2015. This is only a slight increase from 2003 and 2008 figures, which estimated clergymen's representation to be 24 percent. While women remain underrepresented, there is variation in how clergy are distributed by gender across the country.

There are also regional variations in how clergymen are compensated, in comparison to clergymen. This recent study used 2015 nationwide data provided by Wespath Benefits and Investments to determine geographic trends in clergymen's compensation.

The first half results of the study can be found [here](#).

Celebrating Native American Outreach, Advocacy

UMNS | The Northeastern Jurisdiction Native American Ministries Committee annual gathering exemplified the importance of relationships while acknowledging painful realities as The United Methodist Church continues to walk the path of repentance.

Chairperson Patricia Parent from the New England Committee on Native American Ministry opened the October 12–14 meeting at Eliot United Methodist Church in Maine with a prayer spoken in the Abenaki language. Following a long tradition of gifting, she presented representatives from nine of the 10 sister conferences with food from each of the five states located within the New England Conference.

She also offered prayers and tributes for Oliver “Black Feather” Suprenant, a respected elder and former New England Conference CONAM chairperson who died in 2014.

Cynthia Kent, chairperson of the Northeastern Jurisdiction Native American Ministries Committee, praised the conferences for their completion of worship services with Acts of Repentance and the ways they continue the journey of repentance by “advocating for Native people and working with them within our gospel.”

She said the jurisdiction is “leading the church in this ministry” and urged them to keep moving and helping other jurisdictions. She reminded them that every conference according to The Book of Discipline shall have a committee on Native American ministries.

New England Conference Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar praised the group for their witness to the whole church. “We still have a long way to go so our Native American voices are heard and celebrated at every level, but as we stand together and include future generations, we will continue the work together,” he said.

The educational focus of the ongoing Acts of Repentance was reflected at the annual meeting when attendees engaged in two plenary presentations concerning the “Loss of Turtle Island.” Turtle Island is the title used by many Native American tribes to describe North America.

The first, “Loss of Turtle Island: A Narragansett Perspective,” invited participants to consider their own identity while weaving stories of the Narragansett people and how their identity is connected to the land they inhabit.

The second session helped participants understand the price that is paid when that identity is threatened. Developed by the Mennonite Church, “Loss of Turtle Island: What Does the Doctrine of Discovery Mean to Us Today?” used blankets to represent land.

Participants were led through an experience that illustrated the progressive loss of land, culture and life of Native peoples in the United States. The leaders brought the history of assimilation, relocation and land removal to life by asking participants to read landmark decisions, move from place to place, and stand on ever-shrinking territory until very few remained standing.

At the end of the exercise, they shared ways in which their worldview had been expanded concerning history, white privilege, identity formation, generational differences and ancestry. Some of the participants were overcome with emotion and several non-Native participants shared their surprise about their own lack of historical knowledge.

The exercise so deeply affected attendees that they decided to obtain



PHOTO BY DEBORAH COBLE

Rev. Bill Pfohl, right, participates in an exercise exploring the loss of Turtle Island at the Northeastern Jurisdiction Native American Ministries Committee annual gathering in Maine.

similar training for CONAM committees across the connection in 2018.

In addition to educational opportunities, the gathering spotlighted CONAM efforts to continue to engage with annual conferences concerning Native American ministries. Several corresponded to recommended action steps found in the Native American Comprehensive Plan and the Northeast Jurisdiction’s Native Ministries Plan of Action.

Delegates shared ways in which they united liturgy and social action. Calls for Columbus Day to be replaced with Indigenous People’s Day have been strengthened with worship resources such as those developed by Upper New York for an Indigenous Peoples Day liturgy. Concerns surrounding land and water rights were reflected in A Remembrance of Baptism liturgy that incorporated images of baptism and prayer for water protectors.

They also shared their efforts to strengthen relationships and raise up Native American leaders, including the [return of Native American Family Camp](#) and the development of Native youth leaders through the [Peg-Leg Flamingos program](#).

A notable example of advocacy came from the Peninsula-Delaware Conference CONAM. At the 2016 annual conference, the committee proposed a resolution to return the property of closed churches to local Native American tribes. As a result, when Union Wesley United Methodist Church closed it was transferred to the Accohannock Tribe of Maryland, who is now utilizing it as a community center and museum.

Ragghi Rain Calentine, chairperson of the Peninsula-Delaware CONAM, reminded everyone that this is just one way to spread the news that “Native American ministries can be celebrated every month, not just once a year as a remembrance of Native peoples!”

Young Adults Receive Grants for Racial Justice Projects

The first round of grants to help United Methodist young people with a passion for racial justice initiate projects that can impact their church, community and world have been awarded to groups in Oklahoma and the Philippines.

The grant program, administered by Young People's Ministries (YPM), a unit of Discipleship Ministries, awarded a grant of \$2,500 to four communities of students and young adults in Oklahoma—two primarily Caucasian and two primarily black—who seek to discern how they can partner together and work toward racial reconciliation and a grant of \$2,482 to support a camping experience for youth in the Philippines to be in intentional fellowship with leaders from indigenous communities.

Under the program, seed money up to \$2,500 per project is available to support efforts that can be leveraged by others to inspire and resource young people across the church. A total of \$65,000 has been allocated for grants to support the racial justice projects, including \$50,000 from the Connectional Table and \$5,000 each from Discipleship Ministries, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and General Commission on Religion and Race.

The grant recipient from Oklahoma, OKC DiREction, is composed of students and young adults from Edmond First United Methodist Church and the Wesley Center at the University of Central Oklahoma, both in Edmond, and Quayle UMC in Oklahoma City and Langston University in Langston, Oklahoma's only

historically black university.

In the Philippines, the ECSA Camp will be organized by the Ecumenical and Church Society Affairs (ECSA) Department of the National United Methodist Youth Fellowship in the Philippines. The camp aims to take youths outside the walls of the church to reach the least, the lost and the last. The five-day experience will strive to work toward peace and unity by bringing together brothers and sisters in Christ to look past their social circumstances and develop community.

The grants are set up on a rolling, monthly basis. Monthly review and distribution by the Project Review Committee will continue until the funding is exhausted. To apply for a grant, go to <http://bit.ly/2xUreBy>.

UMC Council: Review All Candidate Qualifications

UMNS—In a recent ruling on the duties of a conference board of ordained ministry, The United Methodist Church's top court restated [its earlier opinion](#) that all qualifications of ministerial candidates must be examined.

The new ruling, on a bishop's decision of law in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, was one of several decisions from the United Methodist Judicial Council's fall session related to the topic of sexual orientation. The council met Oct. 24–27 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Los Angeles Airport.

[In Decision 1352](#), Judicial Council affirmed a decision of law by Bishop LaTrelle Easterling that there was no requirement in denominational policy to vote on a certified candidate for the ministry.

The issue arose during the 2017 Baltimore-Washington clergy session when the board of ordained ministry did not include Tara C. Morrow on the approval list for ordination.

The Rev. J. Phillip Wogaman—about to celebrate the 60th anniversary of his elder's ordination—[decided to turn in his clergy credentials](#) because Morrow, a lesbian, and “others like her” were excluded by church law.

The Book of Discipline, the denomination's lawbook, prohibits “self-avowed practicing homosexuals” from being certified as candidates, ordained as ministers or given church appointments.

In its decision, the top court noted that a certified candidate must be recommended in writing by a three-fourths majority vote of the board of ordained ministry, saying it was the board's duty “to conduct careful and thorough examination of a candidate, not only in terms of depth but also breadth of scope to ensure that

disciplinary standards are met.

“The board is not required to present to the clergy session a candidate who is not eligible,” the Judicial Council decision stated. “The clergy session may not elect a candidate who does not meet this requirement.”

The council labeled questions about a clergywoman raised in a request for a decision of law during the 2017 Iowa Conference session as “clear efforts to re-litigate a complaint procedure that was closed and completed by the previous bishop.”

[In Decision 1351](#), the court upheld the decision by Iowa Bishop Laurie Haller that she had no authority to reopen a complaint procedure against the Rev. Anna Blaedel, who announced during the 2016 Iowa Conference that she is “a self-avowed practicing homosexual.” That complaint was dismissed on Aug. 30, 2016, by Bishop Julius C. Trimble, the presiding bishop at that time. Trimble said “a

letter of reprimand” was placed in her file.

Another question in the request referred to Blaedel making a public statement about her sexual orientation. The court agreed with the bishop's ruling that the question was hypothetical, since it saw no record of such statements since Sept. 1, 2016, or any action by the current bishop.

Two annual conferences, Denmark and California-Pacific, separately petitioned Judicial Council [to issue a declaratory decision about “incompatible” language](#) in the church's constitution.

Two alternate members of Judicial Council—the Rev. Timothy Bruster, first clergy alternate, and Warren Plowden Jr., first lay alternate—participated as substitute members in some of the decisions during this session.

The full decisions from the October 2017 session can be found [on the Judicial Council web site](#).

JOB OPENING

Conference Property Manager

The Board of Trustees of the New York Conference seeks a full-time property manager to oversee the maintenance of real property owned or operated in New York and Connecticut to ensure they are regularly monitored for maintenance, safety and security in order to maintain the value of these assets.

The properties to be managed include the conference center in White Plains, the episcopal residence, six residences occupied by our district superintendents, as well as discontinued church properties (from two to eight at any given time). The property manager will be based in White Plains, N.Y., and will report to both a designated member of the board of trustees and the chief financial officer. He/She must reside in close proximity to White Plains and be willing to travel as needed throughout New York City, Long Island, Westchester County, upstate New York and western Connecticut.

Responsibilities and qualifications can be found [here](#).

Laity Learn Discipleship Must Be Intentional

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY
Editor, *The Vision*

While the outdoor temperatures hovered in the twenties, the tent housing the Laity Convocation was filled with the warmth of the Holy Spirit moving amid the 260 people who gathered for the day.

The November 11 event at the Stamford Hilton provided time for praise and dialogue, singing and learning.

Guest speaker, Rev. Junius B. Dotson, the general secretary for Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church, was introduced by conference Lay Leader Roena Littlejohn.

Noting the temperature outside, Dotson said, "It's cold out there. You had to have a hope and a dream to come out today."

Key among the hopes and dreams was the desire to learn how to reach out to new and more people to share the story of Jesus Christ.

"We're ministering in interesting and difficult times," Dotson said. "The past is not sufficient to explain the future. I know that the church will be radically different, but I don't know what that will look like."

He compared some churches to a group of men in Ireland who had been hired to construct a road. While the work gave them a living wage, they soon realized they were building a road to nowhere.

"We all have a desire for purpose . . . a need to focus on where we're going," Dotson said. "Churches building roads to nowhere mistake activity for discipleship . . . we can't afford to build roads to nowhere."

Additional wisdom from Dotson included:

- Each congregation needs to discover their "why?" Why do we exist? "Filling the pews has nothing to do with our why?" he said.
- Everything the church does must come from its "why?" Dotson noted: If you build



Clockwise from above: Rev. Alpher Sylvester breaks bread for communion; a moment of praise under the tent; and guest speaker, Rev. Junius B. Dotson.



the church you will rarely get disciples, if you make disciples you will always get the church!"

- Congregations need to develop an intentional process that leads, grows, equips, and empowers disciples. Resources are available at [Teamworks](#) on the Discipleship web site. Start by requiring a spiritual growth covenant with the church leadership.
- Discover your own personal "why?" Dotson explained, "If you know your why, your what becomes more impactful because you're walking in your purpose."
- Stop neglecting evangelism. "We can't connect with people we don't have a relationship with," he said. "God is looking for show and tell believers."
- Find helpful models for discipleship

training at seeallthepeople.org.

In closing, Dotson urged those gathered to shift from a mindset of "fixing" their church to one of intentional discipleship.

"Despite all the evidence, our best days are yet ahead of us," he said. "We shall reap if we don't give up."

Following lunch, the laity broke into smaller groups to discuss three critical components of discipleship. The session on radical hospitality was led by Margaret Howe and Les Johnson; spiritual disciplines by Mary Brevigleiri and Sharon Noisette-Jenkins; and service by Susan Kim and Valerie Greenway.

Rev. Alpher Sylvester, superintendent of the Connecticut District, presided over Holy Communion with assistance from Littlejohn and Rev. David A. Gilmore, director of congregational development and revitalization.