

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

THE VISION

March 2018



The YAM team poses with students from the Methodist School in Furcy; below, Ben and Samantha Kim show some father-daughter teamwork.

YOUTH AMBASSADORS IN MISSION

Learning and Working in Haiti

This year's Youth Ambassadors in Mission (YAM) trip was to Haiti—a first for this program that in past years has visited Antigua, Bolivia, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Ghana.

The YAM ministry has been an important part of the New York Conference since 2005 with the goal to grow young Christian leaders by developing their faith and teaching them how to love and serve God's children everywhere in this world. The program also seeks to nurture a Wesleyan/Holiness mission spirit of evangelism and social responsibility.

The youth and their chaperones lived and worked within the small mountain community of Furcy, 30 miles southeast of the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Furcy is 6,000 feet above sea level, and is an area without electricity or run-

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COMMENTARY

Sanctuary Movement: From Doing To Being

BY REV. KARINA FELIZ

For the past 10 days, these words have been piercing my mind—knocking hard on the door of my heart and soul. It feels like a nagging child that wants a piece of cake at the beginning of the party; but that has to wait until the end to get it.

"Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary . . ."

I find myself reciting or singing and even shouting these words at some point in the day. For those of you that know me well, you will know that I am not just talking about the praise song. My desire is not simply some type of individual spirituality that could bring me closer to God, or mental space where I can hide for a moment. It is not about reaching that exciting moment in worship when we raise our hands for a couple of minutes pretending that somehow we have literally entered the throne of grace. Please do not misinterpret, those moments are needed to fuel our spirits. but in this instance what I am referring to is the concept of being a sanctuary; and that as we ask God to prepare us, to become, there is already an action of being; almost as if being and becoming are walking as one.

A concept of sanctuary as just "a safe place," leaves me empty, wanting more. Nowadays many local sanctuaries are far from being a sanctuary, even for their own members. Nevertheless, for those who have been placed on the margins, I believe that this time and season is calling us—the church—to redefine how we think about physical sanctuary.

For the past 14 months many have approached me to ask about what it means for

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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](mailto:Ximena.Varas) for more information.

3/24 Orientation to Ministry

All those who are inquiring, exploring or certified candidates for ministry are invited to this 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. event at the White Plains conference center. Learn more about the pathways to professional ministry and build relationships with Board of Ordained Ministry members. Lunch will be served; the event is free. [Register](#) online; for more information, contact Gail Douglas-Boykin, by email or call 914-227-9847.

4/7 “Hulapalozza”

Bishop Thomas Bickerton invites all conference churches to hoop it up at this 1–4 p.m. event to support and encourage the UMC’s Abundant Health campaign, both locally and around the globe. Location is the First UMC, 227 E. Lincoln Ave., Mt. Vernon, N.Y. [Registration](#) information is available on the NYAC website. Activities for children, teens and adults; healthy snacks will be provided, too. To learn more about Hulapalozza, check out this [video](#).

4/13–14 Day of Dance Conference

The two-day Day of Dance Conference to be held at Golden Hill UMC, 210 Elm St., Bridgeport, Conn. Friday night session will run from 6 to 9 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dinner, breakfast and lunch will be provided. The cost is \$20 per person within a group, or individuals for \$25. Contact Rev. Sheila M. Beckford at sheila.beckford@nyac-umc.com for additional information.

4/21 Early Response Team Classes

ERT classes, UMCOR’s basic training for disaster response volunteers, are being held at the following locations:

- Huntington UMC, Shelton, Conn.: 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., April 21. Register by clicking [here](#).
- Brooklyn, location to be determined: 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., April 21. Check [here](#) for details to be posted.

Participants must be 18 years of age, and submit to a background check (\$10 cost). The certification is valid for three years. We are looking

to schedule at least two ERT basic and two recertification classes in each district throughout 2018. Contact [Art Mellor](mailto:Art.Mellor) for information and to schedule an event.

5/5 & 12: Bishop’s Confirmation Rallies

Confirmands are invited to join Bishop Bickerton for a day of worship, discussion, and fun at one of two Saturday rallies from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.:

May 5: Grace UMC, 21 S. Franklin Ave., Valley Stream, N.Y.

May 12: Poughkeepsie UMC, 2381 New Hackensack Road, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Contact Neal Bowes at nealbws@gmail.com with any questions.

[Register](#) on the NYAC web site.

5/19: Missional Community Engagement Forum

Guest speaker for this event at the Edith Macy Conference Center is Andrew Roberts, author of “Holy Habits.” The center is at 550 Chappaqua Rd., Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. Contact Carol Merante at cmerante@nyac.com with any questions.

6/7–10 New York Annual Conference

In a schedule shift to include more youth and young adults, the annual conference will gather from Thursday through Sunday. The plans include:

- Ordination on Sunday, June 10.
- Special experience for confirmands during worship.
- Baptism for those who desire to receive the sacrament.
- Delegate voting for the Special 2109 General Conference Session.
- Simultaneous mission work in Nassau County.
- Reports/updates on disaster recovery in Puerto Rico from Bishop Hector Ortiz

[Regular updates](#) can be found on the NYAC web site.

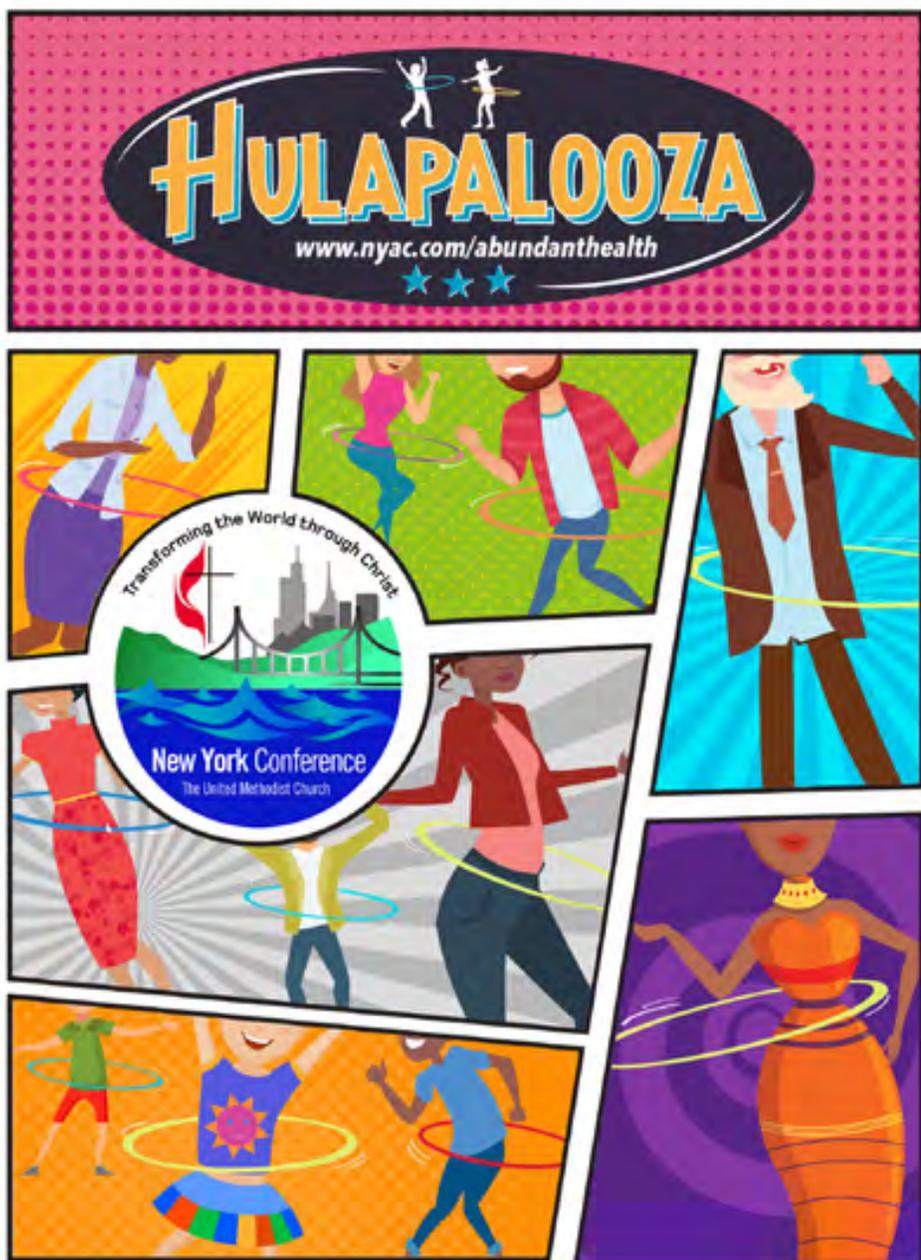
7/27–29 Mission u

Stay tuned for additional details about this annual multi-generational weekend for learning, worship and fellowship.

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.

 <p>The Vision</p>
<p>The News of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church</p>
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Hoop It Up for Abundant Health!

1–4 p.m., Saturday, April 7

First UMC, 227 E. Lincoln Ave., Mt. Vernon, N.Y.!

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton invites the members of the NYAC, their family and friends to the Abundant Health “Hulapalooza,” a multi-faceted event with a hula-hoop theme that includes activities for the body, mind, and spirit for all ages. Come and learn, or re-learn, how to hula hoop, and be a part of this incredible health-promoting event.

Healthy snacks will be provided, too!

Abundant Health is a United Methodist Church initiative to improve the health of children and adults, both locally and around the globe. A freewill offering will be received to benefit the initiative.

First New Appointments Announced

It is the intention of Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton to make the following appointments effective July 1:

Robert Hewitt to Stamford, First UMC (NY/CT)
Gene Ott to Simsbury (CT)
Heather Sinclair to Westport (CT)
Matthew A. Querns to Yorktown Heights (NY/CT)
Sheila M. Beckford to Wethersfield, (CT)
Kristina D. Hansen to Milford: Mary Taylor Memorial (CT)

Grants for Community Engagement

United Methodist congregations are being challenged by Discipleship Ministries to develop new intentional systems of discipleship to creatively engage and form relationships with people outside their churches.

The #SeeAllThePeople Challenge will award \$2,500 grants to two congregations that demonstrate how they are reaching out to their broader community as part of a new intentional system of discipleship.

The challenge is part of the #SeeAllThePeople movement, which Discipleship Ministries began nine months ago to encourage United Methodists to think less about “fixing” churches and more about involving people in the community as part of an intentional discipleship system.

To join the challenge, anyone in a congregation—pastors or laypersons—can submit an entry. Applications for the grant will only be accepted from U.S.-based congregations who currently have no discipleship system. All entries must be submitted by midnight April 9.

Choose one or both of these methods to submit an entry:

- **Write your plan.** Describe how your congregation will engage the community as part of a whole discipleship system.
- **Produce a video.** You do not need to produce a professional video. However, you must upload it to YouTube and copy a link in your entry. If you decide to only produce a video and not write a plan, your plan must be briefly explained in the video.

For more information about the challenge and how to enter, click [here](#). The two congregations receiving the \$2,500 grants will be announced April 16 on the Discipleship Ministries [Facebook](#) page.

Closed Church Getting New Life for Housing, Ministry

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.—Isaiah 43:19

A new thing is about to spring up in The Bronx to help meet the needs of the neighborhood around the former Trinity Morrisania United Methodist Church. The United Methodist City Society, the mission partner of the New York Conference, has signed an agreement with the Bronx Pro Group (BPG) to repurpose the property as a low-income senior housing complex, according to Rev. Dr. William Shillady, executive director of the City Society. The new 13-story building will house 154 apartments, with a ground level space designated for a United Methodist ministry.

The Trinity church, on Washington Avenue at East 166th Street, closed its doors on June 30, 2016. The building maintenance had become too much for the small congregation to handle.

"After a season of prayer and conversation, the church was led to give up their building to serve as a legacy church," Metropolitan District Superintendent Denise Smartt Sears wrote in an email. "Many of the members have found a home in our neighboring Methodist congregations."

The City Society has owned the church property since the 1940s, and under the development plan will retain a 25 percent partnership in the new building. The \$81-million project is being funded with "tax-exempt bond financing, low income housing tax credits and government subsidies," according to Shillady. "The society will receive funds from the partnership for years to come."

The mixed-use building will be named the Trinity-Rev. William M. James Senior Housing Complex. James led a revitalization of the church when he served as the pastor there from the mid-40s to the early 50s. The street-level space in the energy-efficient "green" building could be home to a childcare center, a senior center, an adult daycare center, or some other creative ministry. Construction is expected to begin this fall with completion in mid-2020. "This building project will be an exciting witness to the local community, where currently senior citizens are being forced to leave because of rising rents, to New York City as a joint venture between a faith-related partner and a developer; and to our United Methodist denomination," Shillady said.

He first reached out to the developers eight years ago when BPG was building affordable housing across the street from the church property. Shillady noticed that above the building's door lintel was inscribed, "With

God all things are possible." BPG has since built an affordable apartment building next door to the church. During that construction, the society leased land to the development project for a construction trailer and storage site.

According to their web site, the Bronx Pro Group "mission is to develop quality housing that is both affordable and sustainable with an increasing focus towards community building." Since 1998, BPG, which is primarily owned by the Magistro family, has developed more than 2,000 affordable housing units along with commercial and community spaces.

The scripture phrase, "With God all things are possible," from Matthew 19:26 is on many of the buildings that BPG has built, and will be inscribed on this joint venture project as well.

Involvement in property transactions is nothing new to the City Society's work. Throughout its history the society has helped start new congregations with financial support, land purchases, and grants and loans for buildings. At one point, the society's predecessor agency, the NYC Methodist Episcopal Church Extension and Mission Society, owned 30 churches in Manhattan and the Brooklyn-Long Island Church Extension and Mission Society owned 26 churches. As time moved on, many of these properties were sold as the congregations dwindled.

In 1983, after Grace UMC on West 104th Street burned to the ground, the society built a new church and apartment building from the ashes. The 10-story apartment building provides 56 units of affordable housing and 12 units to house religious workers.

The City Society was also a key partner with Salem UMC to build Salem House, low-income and transitional homeless housing at 129th Street and Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard in Harlem. Completed in 2007, Salem House is a seven-story, mixed-use project in central Harlem that combines commercial and community facilities with a variety of residential units. In 2016, the society returned its portion of the partnership to the Salem congregation under the



CHURCH PHOTO BY NEW YORK BIG APPLE IMAGES

A rendering, above, of the new structure planned on the site of the former Trinity UMC, below, in the Morrisania section of the Bronx.



leadership of Rev. Dr. Marvin Moss.

According to Shillady, the society has worked with Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton and his cabinet in the last year to dream of ways to repurpose properties. That partnership is focused on ways to better meet community needs as the conference continues to merge congregations and create cooperative ministries. The proceeds from property sales are being used for ministry in the Bronx, Harlem, and Brooklyn, and providing support for fulltime pastors where there had been part-time appointments. Recent sales have funded grants for major renovations in one congregation and assistance for a new boiler in another. As the City Society sells a property, it also fulfills the unpaid apportionments and obligations of the former congregations.

In 2008 when he joined the City Society, 10 churches were still owned by the organization,

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LEG Leaders Consecrated

BY REV. DAVID GILMORE
Director,
Congregational
Development and
Revitalization

The “Genesis” class of Metropolitan District laity excellence group (LEG) leaders was consecrated and commissioned during a February 26 service at the New York Conference Center. The five became the second group to be commissioned in the conference; a team from the Catskill Hudson District group was consecrated in November 2017.

The vision of the LEG movement is to challenge and empower laity to become transformed—and transforming—disciples of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Generally modeled after John Wesley’s class meetings, the LEGs will be small covenant groups that meet regularly to pray together, speak about the work that God is doing in and through them, and to hold one another accountable for growth in discipleship.

The “Genesis” class met for eight weeks with a two-pronged mission of education and transformation by presenting a brief history of, and rationale for reviving, the tradition of class meeting-style small groups; considering the basics of effective, life-changing small groups, including how to start and lead one; and, practicing spiritual disciplines together as means of grace.

Now that these LEG leaders have been launched, they are tasked with beginning their own groups with 8 to 12 participants.

Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will inspire and transform every lay person who enters a small-group community of accountability, so that we may indeed become disciples who are “transforming the world through Christ.”



Five LEG leaders gathered with District Superintendent Denise Smartt Sears and trainer Carol Merante for a consecration service. From left are Les Johnson, Merante, Susan Kim, Smartt Sears, Gale Godwin, Daisy Tavarez, and Evelyn Brunson.

Keeping Our Eyes On The Future God Will Provide

BY JIM STINSON
Consultant, Older Adults
Ministries



It is my 76th birthday as I write. Although I knew it was coming, like many of us, I am thinking about how quickly it arrived.

The last birthday was my 75th, a milestone half of my siblings never reached. Five of them died earlier than that, as did their spouses, a niece and a nephew. My first wife died a week after she became 50, and my son died at 35. I am very aware of how limited birthdays can be and therefore very appreciative of how many I have already been granted. I wonder how many more are in store for me. Perhaps surprisingly this thought is not a negative. In fact it is an inspiration, that urges toward the question, “What next?”

I am privileged to remain active in my vocation, privileged to enjoy relatively good health, a wife who loves me beyond my deserving, and grown children and grandchildren who I thoroughly enjoy. I will take as many more birthdays as I can get (hoping and anticipating that whatever they bring, they will show me ways to embrace them).

Now to some there may be echoes of a Pollyanna attitude evident here. But I don’t think there is. You see, I am aware of the possibilities before me, some of which I would not relish, and pray I can avoid. Who would look forward to dementia and Alzheimer’s, to debilitating diseases? No one would. They may well be a part of my future. But they are not a part of my “now” which is all anyone really has.

Why this esoteric sojourn within? It is to allow me to say a word to every older adult, every caretaker for an older adult, everyone who cares about an older adult. Embedded in the Sermon of the Mount, we find this advice: Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

In ministering to and with older adults a big task is to enable them to move from worrying about what might be to thoughts of sufficiency, to awareness that God will strengthen them to live each day as fully as possible if they let the past be gone and the future become the present in which God has always been found.

How to do so? No easy answer. My suspicion is that the best way to begin is to embrace the implications of “do not worry about tomorrow” in one’s own life and be with older adults, in Edwin Friedman’s phrase, as a “non-anxious presence.” We are called to be witnesses and models for a God who is sufficient to every need.

As you read these thoughts, I am off to enjoy the rest of my birthday.

JFON Report Details 2017 Efforts

The United Methodist National Justice for Our Neighbors has published a [2017 annual report](#) on the work the organization has done to address the needs of immigrants.

In a letter on the National JFON web site, Executive Director Rob Rutland-Brown wrote: “In 2017, the [Justice for Our Neighbors network](#) delivered a strategic and bold response to the most urgent legal needs of immigrants within our communities.

- When the Trump Administration announced executive orders that brought significant change and confusion, JFON provided education and clarity.
- When Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) came under threat, JFON held emergency clinics while steadily advocating for protections.
- When underserved immigrant communities along the border or in detention could no longer be ignored, we expanded and adapted our services accordingly.

We know that in 2018 our mission is more vital than ever. National JFON is equipped with a new strategic plan that recognizes two essential priorities for meeting the challenges ahead: strong partnerships and strong leadership.

This focus will allow us to serve more clients with unparalleled excellence and to stand with immigrants and allies in advocating for a nation that will provide opportunity, security, and justice for all.”

Getting Started on Puerto Rico Recovery

The team led by Terry and Mike Temple was not only the first NYAC team to Puerto Rico, but the first under the formal UMCOR/VIM/MCPR response program: “Revive-Rebuild-Reborn”.

BY TERRY TEMPLE

Hyde Park UMC

Our team of seven arrived in San Juan on the afternoon of February 21. Flying in we saw many blue-tarped roofs, so we knew we had plenty to do.

Edwin, who served as our translator and driver for the week, met us at the airport. Little did we know that he would become a part of our team, working beside alongside us on many days. Throughout the week, Edwin was able to teach us much about the history and culture of Puerto Rico. What a blessing it was to have him with us!

We stayed at Camp Patillas, a dorm-style building with bunks on the second floor and dining on the first in Patillas. The camp is owned by the United Methodist Women of the local church. Showers were intermittent cool water ones with plenty of time for soaping up or shampooing in between spurts of water.

The gourmet meals by our cooks, Juan and Queqe (pronounced Kiki), kept us fueled up for the week.

On the first morning we helped a team of three volunteers from Maryland paint a sealant on the roof of the pastor’s home. The pastor had finally agreed to have his roof repaired to stop the leaking. Two team members worked with the Maryland guys to rebuild a destroyed kitchen at a nearby home.

That afternoon we checked out what was to be our worksite in the nearby town of Guayama. But we never worked on Jose’s home because the roofing and paneling material was not available.

On Friday, after a delayed start due to several changes in our plans, we met Jose #2, who quickly became #1 in our hearts. We worked at his sister’s home helping to prepare it for concrete roofing. His sister normally cares for their bedridden mother and brother in this home, but right now they are all crammed into Jose’s house!

Saturday morning we continued to work on Jose’s home until lunchtime. After lunch we were called by Rueben, the PR conference site coordinator, and Ted Warnock with UMCOR to go to another nearby town, Maunabo, and help unload by hand a tractor trailer loaded with UMCOR building materials. The trailer held plywood, two-by-fours, and a ton (literally) of galvanized roofing which is very popular in Puerto Rico. We worked a long afternoon with many local community members and still didn’t finish!

Sunday, after a beautiful church service at the local Methodist Church,



The NYAC team and friends take a short work break.

we took the afternoon off to visit Ponce, and have dinner at a restaurant on the water in Salinas.

On Monday, we returned to Maunabo to spend the day moving the rest of the UMCOR material into storage.

Tuesday morning we returned to Jose’s home to work; it was truly a pleasure to work side by side with him. We so wanted to return to his home after lunch but we were called to help unload a truck filled with windows and doors. While six of us helped with this—including Edwin—two of our men fixed a leak in the camp’s kitchen sink!

Overall we had a fantastic week. We helped move about \$100,000 worth of building material into storage for future teams to use to help the country recover from the devastation of Hurricane Maria.

We also made a little bit of a difference for Jose and his family. But most of all, we met many wonderful people and made beautiful memories that will stay in our hearts forever.

Help Puerto Rico

Additional early response teams for Puerto Rico are being formed now. The next dates are April 23–30 and June 16–23. Cost is \$650 per person. The [application](#) is available on the NYAC web site.

Church to be Repurposed for Housing, New Ministry

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Shillady noted. The goal of the society has always been to turn the titles over to congregations that are flourishing and vital. Unfortunately, throughout the conference there are significant church buildings that have deferred maintenance, unsafe conditions, and very small congregations. There are dwindling resources to assist in maintaining large buildings for very small congregations.

However, as Shillady says he discovered, the value and possibility of repurposing these properties is enormous. He uses the term “mission value opportunity cost” to describe a calculation that includes the actual dollar cost of keeping churches operating along with the lost revenue from the value of the property. If a property is worth \$2 million, at a 5 percent return

on those funds, it is also costing \$100,000 in lost value each year—money that could go to helping people and ministries, and not simply buildings.

While closing a church is always difficult because of the memories associated with its ministries, congregations have the opportunity to become a “legacy church,” Shillady said. When a church unburdens itself from property, those funds can be freed up to start new faith communities and create vital ministries in new places.

“Leaving one’s ‘home church’ is always a difficult move,” Smartt Sears wrote. “This shift allows the church’s legacy to remain in the community and to serve the neighborhood in new ways. Changing the culture of any institution takes constant prayer, discernment and vision. One has to be willing to take risks to realize life anew.”

Wearing the Badge, Answering the Call

BY CASSANDRA BROADUS-GARCIA

It was 12 years ago that I first wore an UMCOR ERT badge. That was Katrina and it was Biloxi—East Biloxi, to be exact—where the storm surge washed away everything in its path, including all the landmarks from my childhood memories of Mississippi.

Now, another place and another time, I put the badge on again knowing that God had called me to serve in south Texas.

In late August, Hurricane Harvey devastated the Texas coastline from Corpus Christi to Houston and inland cities in between, establishing a new normal for individuals who lived in this region. Five months later, many families are still out of their homes or living in gutted houses with bare floors and tarped two-by-fours as walls. In Victoria alone, 19,000 families did not qualify for FEMA assistance. At the First UMC there, an energetic crew of case managers, construction supervisors and volunteer coordinators are working around the clock to help those who find themselves in the “after Harvey” life. But, the early response teams (ERT) are beginning to dry up, the media has gone, and life in parts of the city is getting back to normal. But, the new normal for many is not normal at all.

I was honored to lead Simsbury UMC’s long-term recovery team in our January 21–27 mission to Victoria. There, we were introduced to Silver City—a community of small wooden cottages covered with blue tarped roofs; memories of East Biloxi re-emerged in my head. Unlike Biloxi, these houses were filled with homeowners who, after the storm, returned to find damaged roofs that had sustained Category 3 hurricane force winds. Water poured in from the ceilings of their kitchens, bedrooms and



Cassandra Broadus-Garcia, second from right, and the recovery team from Simsbury UMC in Connecticut.

family rooms, leaving personal belongings ruined. Having no place to go, they mucked out their homes and moved back in. Today, some remain gutted and some only partially repaired.

In the first home where we worked, the couple was living in the middle of reconstruction. Each hour, the elderly man would come in to check our progress. Slowly, but surely, we began to see a smile emerge on his face as one ceiling panel went up, then another smile as we taped and mudded. On our last day, as we finished painting his bedroom and installed a closet system, we saw a different person. He was the same man that we had met five days earlier, but had become a different person all together. Before we left,

the team gathered in a circle with Marcus, the construction manager, and the homeowners to bless the home and to ask God to send other VIM teams to Victoria to finish the work.

Life goes on in Victoria, but the new after-Harvey normal is filled with challenges for so many. Victoria may look as if it’s back to normal, but inside the homes of the Silver City community, it’s anything but that. From Corpus Christi through Refugio to Victoria, there is great need—a need that calls for the attention of Christians everywhere.

May God call individuals to serve in this region, to be the hands and feet of Christ for those working so hard to find their normal once again.

Nicaragua VIM Seeking Team Members

For the fourth year, a Volunteers in Mission team from the New York Conference will travel to Nicaragua to support of the work of Acción Medica Cristiana (AMC). AMC is a Christian, ecumenical non-profit health and development organization. The trip is from August 10-20.

Beginning in 1984, young Nicaraguan doctors offered charitable health services to impoverished communities in the country’s Caribbean regions. Today AMC reaches 200,000 people in over 190 communities. Their impact includes healthier, empowered communities, sustainable agriculture, and emergency

preparedness training.

In the past, teams have worked on the construction of a training center and meeting room, and on the foundation of a bridge over a river in Nueva Jerusalén, Matagalpa. This year’s project—yet to be determined—but will most likely be in the mountains of Matagalpa. Dr. Belinda Forbes, a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries, will serve as the team’s contact.

People of all ages, high school and up, are eligible to apply for the team. No prior experience is necessary nor is the ability to

speak Spanish. This mission requires the willingness to try new things, be flexible, work hard, make new friends, and share faith and life in a different culture.

The cost per person including insurance, origination and entrance fees, air/ground transportation, food/lodging, and translators/guides is approximately \$2100. In addition, there is a team goal to raise \$4,000 for the project. A \$500 non-refundable deposit is due by May 1.

For additional information and an application, contact Jill Wilson at 860-690-1853, or Daryl Fitzgibbons at 203-314-8632.

YAM Trip: Learning & Working in Haiti

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ning water. The group also visited a Methodist School and the National Museum in Port-au-Prince.

Shanelle Pringle, of Fenimore Street UMC, offers this summary of her experience:

“The trip to Haiti was a life-changing experience for me. I had the opportunity to learn about the food and the culture. As soon as I arrived in Haiti, I did not know what to expect. Often I hear negative things about Haiti, but I’m glad I had the chance to experience how beautiful and fascinating Haiti actually is.

The best part of my trip was interacting with the children and showing them how similar we are when it comes to music, games, and school. They are caring and loving people and made me feel like I was home.

No matter what, there is always a smile on their faces regardless of what they may be going through. This mission taught me how to be grateful, and value the things that I have. I thank God for this opportunity. I will never forget this mission and the friendships I made. Thank you, Tom and Wendy for this time!”

This year’s team included Christopher Bartell and Julian Jensen from the Village Church of Bayville; Rohan Beckford and Juliet Bruce from St. Paul and St. Andrew in New York City; Jordan Butler of Bayport UMC; Elijah Caraballo of First Spanish UMC in New York City; Adrian Harewood and Leah Townsend-Brown from New Rochelle UMC; Samantha Kim of First UMC, Brewster; and Brielle Maynard and Shanelle Pringle, Fenimore Street UMC, Brooklyn. Chaperones were Andrea Harewood of New Rochelle



Wendy Vencuss and the YAMs teach the students to play handbells.

UMC; Ben Kim of First UMC, Brewster; Nicole Mazzara of Smithtown UMC; Gillian Prince of Fenimore Street UMC; and Leanne Cullam Summers of Mount Kisco UMC.

Tom and Wendy Vencuss, who hosted the team, offered these thoughts about the journey:

“On a personal note, this was a fantastic group! The schedule was packed from morning to evening. The living conditions could be described as “basic”—no electricity or running water, cold “bucket showers.” The team took part in a project to help local workers build a retaining wall/walkway at the Methodist Primary School.

During the week we visited homes and classrooms, met with youth from the schools, held

a game day, sponsored two community meals, attended worship, distributed backpacks to the Methodist Secondary School, and so much more.

Every evening we gathered for devotions and to debrief, often inviting local friends to join us. Our thanks to the youth who attended, their families and churches who supported them, and the chaperones that provided guidance throughout the week.

As part of our continuing support for this ministry we would encourage you to invite one or more of the YAMs to visit your church to share their experiences—either at a worship service, youth, or other mission event.”

To schedule a YAM speaker, contact Wendy Vencuss via [email](mailto:wvencuss@ymc.org).



A young boy gets a lesson in lacrosse on game day.



The schoolchildren enjoyed the community meals sponsored by the YAM team.

Bishops See Progress in Unity Effort, Focus on 2 Plans

BY SAM HODGES

UMNS | The Council of Bishops wrapped up a four-day meeting in Dallas on February 28 as leaders reported progress in their deliberations about how to prevent denominational schism over homosexuality, with a focus on two possible church futures.

“We’re dealing with a very difficult issue that’s clearly divisive, and yet there’s a real commitment to stay at the table,” said Council of Bishops (COB) President Bruce R. Ough. “There really is a desire to find a way forward, and I think that was reflected in our work this time.”

Ough insisted the council’s relationship with its advisory group, the 32-member [Commission on a Way Forward](#), precludes sharing many details for now.

“We’re not interested in the commission hearing or reading about things until the (bishop) moderators can go back and report to them,” Ough said of the closed-door meeting.

Ough and Bishop Kenneth Carter, his designated successor as council president and a moderator of the commission, did offer in a joint interview that the council discussed sketches for change in the church.

Carter noted that “contextualization” has been a key word for the bishops as they consider options.

“There’s a strong overwhelming desire in the council to see the church remain unified and yet, just by our very nature, we come here from very different parts of the United States and very different parts of the world, and often with different concerns,” Carter said.

In a report to the council, the commission shared two revised sketches based on three models presented to the bishops last November. A [press release](#) issued by the Council of Bishops immediately after the meeting said the two sketches “carry forward many of the values and principles” of the three sketches.

The bishops offered feedback but did not vote on the two revised sketches, instead asking the commission to continue working to prepare a



final report to be presented at the April-May COB meeting.

The news release contained a summary of the two models:

- The one-church model would give conferences, churches and pastors the flexibility to “uniquely reach their missional context in relation to human sexuality without changing the connectional nature of The United Methodist Church.”
- The multi-branch, one-church model would include shared doctrine and services and one Council of Bishops, while also creating different branches that have clearly defined values such as accountability, contextualization and justice. The five U.S. jurisdictions would be replaced by three connectional conferences, each covering the whole country, based on theology and perspective on LGBTQ ministry—progressive, contextual and traditional branches. Annual conferences would decide with which connectional conference to affiliate.

The press release said the details of the two models in progress could change based on the commission’s work at its next meeting.

A traditionalist model, [which was among three models](#) outlined to an international group of United Methodist leaders earlier this month, was not listed in the press release. In that presentation, Way Forward Commission members had listed three models, or sketches.

Under a traditionalist model, the church would have continued to declare the practice of homosexuality incompatible with Christian

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JOB POSTINGS

Upper NY Seeks Treasurer

The Upper New York Conference of The United Methodist Church is currently recruiting for a new conference treasurer and director of administration.

This role is responsible for budget coordination, cash and investment management, central treasury operations, financial reporting and accounting management of all conference assets, supervision of finance staff, the administrative functions of the annual conference in support of all ministry and mission areas, including property and office support.

The General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) is working with the Upper New York Conference to recruit for this position. The full job description is available [online](#). The deadline for applications is April 4, 2018. Candidates should email their resume and cover letter via email to jobs@gcfa.org. Any questions should be directed to Tricia Baker, GCFA director of Human Resources, at 615-369-2326.

Nursery School Director

The Valhalla UMC is seeking a new nursery school director/head teacher. Their faith-based program is based on sound educational principles that include cooperative play, discovery of creative abilities, and individual worth in a loving Christian atmosphere.

The director is responsible for all aspects of coordinating and operating a morning preschool program for children ages 2 years through pre-kindergarten. This includes leadership of curriculum development, classroom management, staff development, marketing and advertisement, staff recruitment, child enrollment processes, and preschool play and learning. Interested persons should forward a resume and letter of interest to: Valhalla UMC Nursery School, c/o Rev. Kevan T. Hitch, 200 Columbus Ave., Valhalla, NY 10595.

Kingswood Lifeguard

Kingswood Campsite in Hancock, N.Y., is looking to hire a lifeguard(s) for the summer camping season from June 22 through September 2. It has been one 10-week position, but we are open to hiring persons for several weeks at a time, rather than for the entire summer.

Candidates must be Red Cross certified, or an avid swimmer interested in getting Red Cross certification, and at least 18 years old.

The lifeguard stays in one of the cabins on site and works six hours per day, six days a week. The job includes cleaning of the bathhouse, maintaining the swimming and boating areas as well as four hours of guarding per day. Pay is \$300 per week.

Those interested or with questions should contact Cheryl Winship via [email](#) or at 845-615-1542. More information about the NYAC camp is available [online](#).

OBITUARIES

Dorothy M. Brown

Dorothy M. (Barlow) Brown, 90, died February 22, 2018, at the Bishop Wicke Health Center in Shelton, Conn. She was born on December 10, 1927 in Treadwell, N.Y.

For 51 years she was the wife of Rev. Paul W. Brown, who preceded her in death in 2003. The pair met at Ohio Wesleyan University and were married on July 7, 1951.

Rev. Brown was a clergy member of the New York Conference for 37 years, serving Kenoza Lake, Jeffersonville, Fosterdale, Cochection Center, Andes, Pleasant Valley, Union Grove, Goshen, Cairo, South Cairo, Walton, Cold Spring, South Highland, Greenport, and West Sullivan, all in New York, as well as Winsted, Conn.

The Browns participated in conference youth institutes at Oakwood School and Camp Epworth. He retired in 1988, and in 1992 they moved to the Wesley Village retirement community in Shelton, where they were active in the community and at First UMC of Shelton.

Brown is survived by her children, Susan (Gordon) Smith of Harwinton, Conn.; Timothy (Donna) Brown of New Windsor, N.Y.; and Meg (Rich) McGinn of Torrington, Conn. She is also survived by grandchildren, Trevor (Jessica) Smith of Simsbury, Conn.; Lauren (Greg) Zordan of Torrington; Kevin Smith of Harwinton; Erin (Bill) Talarico of New Windsor; Donny (Jennifer) Preiss of Bethel, Conn.; and Matthew McGinn of Torrington; and three great-grandchildren, Madison and Braden Preiss, and Mara Smith, and many cherished nieces and nephews. She is survived by her sister, Elizabeth Schlupe, of Oneonta, N.Y., and a brother, Theodore Barlow, of Chambersburg, Penn.

A memorial service was held March 10, 2018, at First UMC of Shelton; a reception followed in the church hall. Memorial contributions may be made to [The Bishop Wicke Health Center](#), 584 Long Hill Ave., Shelton, CT 06484. Messages of condolence may be left for the family at the [Riverview Funeral Home website](#).

Books for New Clergy, UMC Polity

The publishing office of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) has announced the release of two new books:

- “The United Methodist Clergy Book of Firsts” by F. Belton Joyner, Jr. Written especially for licensing school and Course of Study students, this book helps pastors navigate the early days of their ministry. Featuring topics from first appointments and first sermons to leadership development and community involvement, Joyner dives into opportunities and challenges pastors face as they grow and mature as clergy.
- “Quick and Easy Guide to United Methodist Polity” by Anne L. Burkholder and Thomas W. Elliott Jr. with foreword by Thomas Edward Frank. This book anchors our understanding of how God is calling us to be in covenant with each other and provides a comprehensive, annotated guide to the Book of Discipline for pastors and church leaders. District superintendents, bishops, agency staff and others beyond the local church will also find the quick reference guide useful to issues that arise in ministry settings.

Published by Wesley’s Foundry Books, an imprint of GBHEM, the two books are available at [Cokesbury.com](#) and [Amazon.com](#).

Rev. James Speights Jr.

The Reverend James “Mac” Speights Jr. of Huntington, N.Y., died February 10, 2018, at age 77.

Speights was born November 4, 1940, in Walterboro, S.C., to James M. Speights Sr. and Marietta Stribling. He graduated with a bachelor’s of arts degree from Florida Southern College in 1962 and from Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, with a bachelor of divinity degree in 1965. In 1963, he married Marguerite Johnson.

He moved to Camden, Ark., in 1965 to work as minister of Christian education at Camden Methodist Church. In June 1967, the family moved to Augusta, Ga., where he worked as minister of Christian education at Trinity-on-the-Hill Methodist Church. They moved again in June 1969 to Islip, N.Y., where Speights served as minister of Christian education at Islip UMC.

In 1974, he was appointed pastor of Simpson UMC in Amityville, N.Y., and in 1982 he was appointed to Merrick UMC in N.Y., where he served until 1990. Speights also worked as a consultant at the Parish Resource Center (PRC) of Long Island in Rocky Point, N.Y., from 1984 to 1994. He retired from the United Methodist Church in 1993.

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Speights was deeply involved with UM camps and provided leadership for programs involving puppetry, clowning, personal growth, spirit awakening, and nature. These types of programs continued with PRC and his private consulting business, M.A.C. Consultants, from 1990 to 2000.

In July 1989, he met Robert “Bob” Titus, who pre-deceased him.

In 1995, Speights began work as coordinator of pastoral care for the Visiting Nurse Service-Hospice of Northport, N.Y., continuing this work into the 2000’s.

In 2000, at his 60th birthday party, Speights came out to all his family and colleagues as a gay man. He was an active advocate for the lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender (LGBT) community by promoting and assisting PFLAG, and helping to launch SAGE Long Island and the Long Island LGBT Center.

Speights was a writer, musician and an avid reader. His poems, sermons, stories and series “Speights of Life” will live on as a part of his legacy.

He survived by his children, Emkay J. (Lara) Forest and James J. (Madrid) Speights; five grandchildren, Benjamin, Ally Rose, Aiden, Amaya and Axel; a sister, Virginia Harrison; and his partner, Bill Huckaby.

A celebration of Speights’ life will be held in early spring at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Huntington, 109 Browns Road, Huntington, N.Y. Memorial donations may be made to [PFLAG](#) and/or the [Long Island LGBT Network](#), earmarked for SAGE-LI.

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 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.

Bishops See Progress in Unity Effort, Focus on 2 Plans

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teaching, prevent clergy from officiating at same-sex unions and prohibit the ordination of self-professed practicing homosexuals.

The one-church model appears to align with a centrist model discussed earlier, which would see the removal of restrictive language from the Book of Discipline, letting conferences decide how inclusive to be, while protecting clergy who could not, as a matter of conscience, perform a same-sex union or support ordination of openly gay clergy.

Ough said that while two sketches were focused on in Dallas, bishops talked about elements of all three that they would like to preserve.

The commission will be asked to refine the sketches, based on the direction of Dallas' meeting. It's too early to say the bishops favor one, and

Sanctuary Movement: From Doing to Being

Continued from page 1

a church to become sanctuary, and what follows is: "How do we prepare our buildings to be sanctuaries?" This question has left me eager to hear next, "and beside the building, how do we prepare ourselves to be a sanctuary?" We are temples of the Holy Spirit, and for this reason, we are called to embody the word sanctuary.

"Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary . . ." is more than a song, it is more than something that we will become in the future, it is more than an individual space of solitude. Being a sanctuary requires a change of heart, a heart that lets the Holy Spirit inhabit its space. Being a sanctuary depicts the heart of Jesus. Jesus embodied being a sanctuary every day that he walked this earth, and we're called to follow his footsteps.

We must be aware that works of mercy alone are more about us than about "the other." That is why our works of mercy are to be followed by the work of justice. We will be doing nothing if our only goal is to provide for the immediate need. The goal of the works of mercy in hand with the works of justice, is that it engages the work of liberation from within the people's own voice, keeping their dignity intact, treating the sickness and not just the symptom.

This reminds me of 1 John 3:18, "Little children, let us love not in word and speech, but in action and truth." Our immigrant friends need more than a physical space; they need a community that would walk alongside them as they navigate this unjust system.

Sanctuary is more than a safe space.

Sanctuary is what we are in the pursuit of justice.

Sanctuary is seeing the face of Jesus in the other.

Sanctuary is hearing the voice of Jesus, saying "because I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

Feliz is a pastor in the Hudson Highlands Cooperative Parish and is the chair of the NYAC Immigration Task Force.



Pastor Karina Feliz

a blend might be possible, according to the council president.

"We came out of here with some sense of leanings, which is what we wanted to give to the commission," Ough said. "We didn't come to a place of saying we voted on this or we voted on that."

Carter added that part of the council's "maturing conversations" was to consider how the different sketches would affect the local church, annual conferences and other parts of the denomination.

During the meeting, the software [Mentimeter](#) was used to collect feedback from bishops, but that was to gauge where they wanted to spend their discussion time more than to record specific preferences for plans, Ough and Carter said.

The United Methodist Church's conflict over how accepting to be of homosexuality has gone on for more than four decades, and the threat of schism was clear at General Conference 2016, in Portland, Oregon.

Delegates instead declared a "pause," postponing consideration of sexuality-related petitions and creating the Commission on a Way Forward to help the bishops find ways to maintain as much church unity as possible.

A special General Conference to consider legislation coming out of the commission's and bishops' work is set for Feb. 23–26, 2019, in St. Louis.

But the timeline bishops and the commission face is more challenging.

The commission's last scheduled meeting is May 14–17. The bishops meet again April 29–May 4, their final gathering before a July 8 deadline for legislative petitions to the special General Conference.

Ough said his "aspiration" is for bishops to settle on a single legislative option to recommend.

As the Dallas meeting broke up, other bishops followed their leaders in refraining from any detailed account of the discussions. They also reflected the cautious optimism.

"We are encouraged by the conversation here in Dallas," said retired Congo Central Conference Bishop David Yemba, another moderator of the commission.

Bishop Thomas Bickerton, of the New York Conference, said: "It's great reason for hope that we're working together, exploring all the options that are before us. I believe in this council."

Ministry Grants Available

The United Methodist Frontier Foundation (UMFF) is seeking applicants for the 2018 Rev. Keith Muhleman Ministry Grants to encourage and support creative and vital ministry in the local church.

A grant will be awarded to a local church whose initiative, creativity, and commitment to the Gospel is evident in a ministry or program designed to meet an existing or emerging need within the congregation or greater community. The grant may not be used simply as an additional revenue source for the church's operating budget.

In 2017, grants were awarded to three conference churches for summer programming for children, and for evangelism efforts. The grants are formally announced at annual conference in June.

The application, located on the UMFF website, can be found [here](#). The deadline is March 28. For more information or questions, contact Ellen Knudsen, UMFF president and executive director, via [email](#) or by phone at 914-615-2238.