

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

THE VISION

The Newspaper
of the New York
Annual Conference
of The United
Methodist Church

May, 2014

Case Against Tweedy Dismissed

By Heather Hahn
UM News Service

Rev. Sara Thompson Tweedy, an elder in New York Annual Conference, no longer faces a complaint accusing her of being a "self-avowed practicing" lesbian.

This marks the second time this year that New York Conference leaders have resolved a case without a trial against clergy members facing complaint under the denomination's stance on homosexuality.

In March 2103, an official complaint was filed against Tweedy accusing her of being a "self-avowed practicing homosexual," a chargeable offense under the denomination's Book of Discipline. Last October, Bishop Martin McLee referred the case to

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Rev. Sara Thompson Tweedy speaks at the Methodists in New Directions luncheon during the NYAC's 2013 Annual Conference.



The jump team—in their official orange sweatshirts—poses with some of their supporters before they take to the skies.

Jump Team Raises \$15,000 for Malaria Fight

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY
Editor, *The Vision*

Eleven intrepid men and women took a giant leap of faith on World Malaria Day to raise nearly \$15,000 for the New York Annual Conference's "Imagine No Malaria" efforts.

The skydiving team for the tandem jumps at Skydive Long Island in Calverton, N.Y., included clergy, laity, staff and friends of the conference. Bishop Martin D. McLee has designated the Imagine No Malaria Initiative, and meeting the NYAC's \$1.2 million pledge to the denomination as the conference's primary mission focus for this year.

The youngest jumper, Sylum Mastropaolo, 18, had met the minimum age requirement just days before April 25. The senior at Mahopac High School is the grandson of Rev. Ann

Pearson, director of Connectional Ministries, and decided to take the opportunity to have fun and raise money for a good cause.

On the other end of the age spectrum was Phyllis Hunt of West Haven, Conn., who was beginning her birthday weekend with the 13,500-foot jump. As she approached her 69th birthday, she said that she had dreamed of going skydiving since she was 10 or 12. Her husband showed her the NYAC announcement and she was determined to do it even though some of her friends at First and Wesley UMC thought she was nuts.

"I'm glad it's over . . . glad I did it," she said after landing. "Now there's nothing left on my bucket list!"

Her daughter, Elana Whyte, added, "It's amazing . . . she never acts her age anyway."

Bishop Martin McLee came out to support the team by donning an orange sweatshirt and leading them in prayer, but kept his feet planted on "terra firma."

Sam Rosenfeld, a member of the conference staff, was an early volunteer for the fundraiser, and eventually convinced his daughter-in-law, Rachel Siegel, to join him. While Rosenfeld was all smiles and ready to jump again after the experience, Siegel quietly offered, "that was something . . . I don't know if I'd go again."

She did go on to say that she was able to keep her eyes open as her jump guide had recommended. "It was a great view," she said. "It puts something into perspective. All I kept thinking about was how much I love my husband."

Rosenfeld had been quite calm
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MAY 21—DEADLINE TO REGISTER FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE / 4



5/15 Anchor House Banquet

The Anchor House's annual fundraising celebration begins at 6 p.m., at the Grand Prospect Hall, 263 Prospect Ave., Brooklyn. Tickets are \$70, and can be obtained by contacting Emily Falero by phone at 718-771-0760, or email at efalero@anchorhouseinc.com.

5/18 City Society Annual Meeting

Featured speaker is Jennifer Jones Austin, chief executive of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies. She was the co-chair of Mayor Bill de Blasio's transition team and is the head of the task force for the NYC Universal Pre-K program. She is a long time advocate for children, the poor, and the disenfranchised. Austin is also a cancer survivor and has a powerful story to share. The event at the Church of Saint Paul & St. Andrew UMC, 263 West 86th Street, will begin at 3 p.m. with a pre-service concert by the Jazz Academy of St. Paul and St. Andrew UMC, with holy conferencing at 3:30 p.m. Free and discounted parking are both available. Please email Leticia Johnson at ljohnson@umcitysociety.org with a headcount and for parking instructions.

5/22–26 Community Nursing Training

Having a qualified nurse on a parish staff can enhance the church's efforts to integrate whole person health. The parish nurse/ faith community nurse is prepared to evaluate, and advocate on behalf of the congregation and the community concerns especially in whole person health and wellness. Sponsored by: the **New York Conference, Parish Nurse Ministries of New York, and Trocaire College of Buffalo.** The event is planned for the **Edna Macy Conference Center in Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.** Questions? Contact either: Claris Skerritt at Claris.Skerritt@nyac-umc.com, or 718-324-8386; or Ann Marie Mac Isaac at ammacisaac@aol.com, or 716-655-1163. Registration form can be found at: www.nyac.com/eventdetail/55922.

5/31 Spiritual Care Disaster Training

UMCOR training consultant, Rev. Wendy Vencuss, will be teaching this introductory model for "United Methodist Disaster Spiritual and Emotional Care" from 9 a.m.–4 p.m., May 31, at the Bellmore UMC, 2657 Clarendon Avenue, Bellmore, N.Y. All are welcome to attend, but the training is particularly recommended for clergy and others who serve in disaster response and or as Volunteers in Mission. To register by the deadline of May 24, please see the details at: www.nyac.com/eventdetail/113326.

6/4–7 Annual Conference Gathering

The annual meeting of NYAC clergy and lay members runs from Wednesday to Saturday at Hofstra University, Hempstead, N.Y. The last day to register online at www.nyac.com/ac is May 21; there will be *no onsite registrations* accepted this year. In addition to the business sessions and times of celebration, this year's agenda includes the election of clergy and lay delegates to jurisdictional and general conferences. Please see related story on Page 4.

6/14 Sower: Seeds of Faith & Finance

Ed Ruppman, a strategic planner, and John T. Henderson, an attorney, offer this program on financial planning with a Christian perspective. Both men consider this free service as ministry; nothing will be sold at this session from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at New Rochelle UMC, 1200 North Street. Contact Kevin R. Smith at 914-632-2166, or nrumc1200@verizon.net, to reserve a space.

6/14 Safe Sanctuaries Training


This Safe Sanctuaries workshop at Monroe UMC is designed for congregations who don't have a written policy. The workshop prepares a core team of 4–5 to work with the congregation to write a policy, as well as providing information on how to train trustees, teachers, parents and pastors on the implementation. For registration information and questions, please go to: www.nyac.com/eventdetail/114073. The class, which begins at 10 a.m., will be taught by Cassandra Negri.

6/21 Myers-Briggs Workshop

Learn to love and serve others more completely by knowing yourself better at this workshop on the Myers-Briggs type indicators led by Rev. Dennis Winkleblack. The workshop for lay servants is from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the UMC of Waterbury, 250 Country Club Road, Waterbury, Conn. There is a \$30 fee for the workshop due to the cost of the testing materials. Participants are asked to bring their own lunch. Registration form and additional information are available at: www.nyac.com/eventdetail/96793.

7/24–26 Mission "u" Returns

Join the journey from "hole-ness to whole-i-ness" with studies on the church and people with disabilities, the Roma of Europe, and "how is it with your soul." The one-day Saturday Sampler will again be offered on July 26. Registration and additional info about the event at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury be found at: www.nyac.com/eventdetail/77887; see the related story about this year's instructors on Page 7.

 <p>The Vision</p>
<p>The News of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church</p>
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Skydivers Raise Thousands to Fight Malaria

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during the first few minutes in the plane, but felt numb when the door was opened. When they jumped, he said he was startled by the force of the wind. "It was incredible," he said. "It feels like you can't breath . . . but I'm ready to go again."

While many had sought the financial support of family, friends and church members, Pastor Steve Knudsen made the jump without the knowledge of his congregation at the Seaford UMC.

"It was great," he said. "We were all prayed up; I knew it would go well."

The jumpers boarded the plane two or three at a time along with the photographers and videographers who would document the jump from beginning to end. The bright, clear day afforded views of the Atlantic Ocean, Long Island Sound, the East End of Long Island, and parts of New England.

Event coordinator Lynda Gomi convinced husband Kazu Gomi to join the jump team even though "a lot of people freaked out, especially in my office." But skydiving was on his bucket list, and he thought it would be a very visible way to help out the cause.

"Jumping out of the plane was great, but the turns were a little scary," he said. But Heather Combs admitted that she enjoyed the extra turns her jump guide took.

"He asked me if I liked roller coasters, and when I said I did, he just swung us right around," she said. Combs was among those who would jump again.

Middleton UMC Pastor Charlie Ryu wasn't exactly sure how his name wound up on the list of volunteer jumpers, although he had wanted to try skydiving when he was younger.

"But here I am a 55-year-old man, and I'm not so sure," he said. But he also noted that he had gotten a great deal of support from his



Sylum Mastropaolo, left, is all smiles after his jump; parachute closing pin necklace, above; Lynda Gomi, below, tries to capture her husband's landing.



church, especially from the men.

Long Island East District Superintendent Adrienne Brewington, who captained the team and has logged quite a few hours of solo skydiving, presented each member with a necklace adorned with a curved parachute closing pin as a charm.

On April 10, the Imagine No Malaria campaign announced that United Methodists had raised more than \$60 million—80 percent

of the \$75 million that has been pledged by 2015.

Since 2006, United Methodists have focused on the challenge of saving lives at risk from malaria—a preventable disease that still kills a child every 60 seconds. In the past eight years, the church has helped cut the death toll in half.

If you missed the chance to donate before the jump, you can still make the total soar by donating at www.nyac.com/inm.

Skeeter Defeaters to Battle Wizards in Malaria Fundraiser

On July 19, the Hofstra University Arena will be filled by the basketball prowess and hilarious antics as the "UM Skeeter Defeaters" take on the Harlem Wizards for "Jump, Shoot & Score Against Malaria."

Tickets for the 2 p.m. fundraiser are available online at www.nyac.com/inm. Prices are \$15 for adult general admission, \$10 for student general admission; \$25 for reserved seating; and \$100 for courtside seats. Tickets

can also be purchased at annual conference, where members of the Wizards will make a special appearance. Each church is being asked to sell 10 tickets for the game.

Or maybe you'd like to join the Skeeter Defeaters and put up your own basketball skills against the Wizards? For more info on this Imagine No Malaria event, please contact Lynda Gomi at lgomi@nyac.com, or 914-615-2228.

According to their web site, the Harlem Wizards have been amazing audiences with their athleticism, tricks, fancy teamwork and ball-handling wizardry for more than 50 years. Their appearances usually include a halftime show with hundreds of kids on the court, plus postgame autographs. The Wizards have put their own spin on show basketball by creating great fundraising events for schools and non-profits.

May 21 Deadline to Register for Conference

The preliminary schedule for the 215th Session of the New York Annual Conference includes the following activities and worship services:

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4

- 10 a.m.** Check-in begins at Hofstra
- 10 a.m.** UMCOR kit collection begins
- 1 p.m.** Separate clergy and laity sessions
- 7 p.m.** Opening of annual conference by Bishop Martin D. McLee
- 7:30 p.m.** Opening worship, memorial service and communion, with Rev. Dr. Zan Holmes preaching

THURSDAY, JUNE 5

- 1:30 p.m.** Legislative sessions
- 7:30 p.m.** Celebration of retirement—Class of 2014
- 8:30 p.m.** Episcopal address by Bishop Martin McLee

FRIDAY, JUNE 6

- 8:30 a.m.** “Dr. Bill Perkins Lecture Series” with Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey
- 11:15 a.m.** Business session begins
- Healing service begins at close of evening business session*

SATURDAY, JUNE 7

- 9:15 a.m.** Photo session for all members of the ordination and commissioning classes
- 10 a.m.** Commissioning and ordination service with Bishop McLee preaching
- 12:30 p.m.** Close of conference

Kim Named New LIW Superintendent

Dear New York Annual Conference Family:

I write to publicly thank Reverend Kenny Yi for his service as district superintendent of the Long Island West District. Kenny has served admirably by sharing in spiritual and relational leadership while supporting the congregations and clergy in the Long Island West District. We will miss his deep spirituality, his great capacity at language fluency, his love of music, and his commitment to making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

I am pleased to announce the appointment of the Reverend Sungchan Kim, pastor of Marn-Baeksung United Methodist Church as the next district superintendent of the Long Island West District. This new appointment will begin July 1, 2014. Reverend Kim is a man of deep spirituality, great commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to the connectional system. He is widely known for his skills at resolving conflict and for his reliance on the Holy Spirit.

Please keep Reverend Kim and his family in prayer as well as the Long Island West District as this new transformation begins.



Sungchan Kim

All my prayers,
Bishop Martin D. McLee

Registrations

This year, ALL registrations must be made online; there will be no onsite registration at Hofstra. Registrations after May 1 are \$250. The last day to register is May 21. Housing is \$50.25/night for a single; and \$40.25/night per person for a double. Go to, <http://www.nyac.com/ac>, to register today!

Health Screenings

Once again, participating in the Blueprint for Wellness Screening is easier than ever for NYAC HealthFlex members (and spouses). Quest Diagnostics will be available from 6–9 a.m. on June 5 and 6 during annual conference at Hofstra University.

To pre-register, call 1-866-908-9440 (employer group: “HealthFlex” or “United Methodist Church,” or go online to www.gbophb.org, log into WebMD and select “Quest Blueprint for Wellness.” Walk-ins will be limited! To receive the most accurate results, you should fast overnight.

By taking the screening, you can earn \$100 in HealthCash, plus up to 90 of 150 additional wellness points on your path to \$150 more in HealthCash. You will also receive a new Virgin Pulse Max activity tracker (\$39 value) from the Conference Board of Pensions. The Max Tracker is the next generation in pedometers and will allow you to upload your activity wirelessly.

Health Kits

Health kits for UMCOR will be collected beginning at 10 a.m. Wednesday, June 4. Health kits provide basic necessities to people who have been forced to leave their homes because of human conflict or natural disaster. Health kits are also used as learning tools in personal hygiene, literacy, nutrition, and cooking classes. Detailed information can be found at, <http://www.nyac.com/files/fileslibrary/2014-healthkitsflyer.pdf>.

Latest Changes in Appointments

- Narcisse (Cherie) Philips** to Bethany (Brooklyn); she currently serves the UMC of Peekskill.
- Ronelle Howard** to East Avenue UMC, district hire.
- Namsuk Kim** to New Hyde Park Korean.
- James Midgley** to the First of Ansonia and Seymour United Methodist Church, district hire.
- Ximena Varas** to St. Andrew’s of New Haven, district hire.
- Esau Greene** to Bloomfield; he currently serves the Chatham and East Chatham.
- Charles Ferrara** to Bellmore (LFT).
- Vicky A. Fleming** to Fort Montgomery (LFT); she currently serves at Sugar Loaf.
- Carol Bloom** to Diamond Hill and Springdale; she currently serves Centerport as the associate pastor.
- Paul Smith** to East Meadow (LFT); he currently serves at Cutchogue.
- Teresa Ko-Davis** to Copake and Craryville.

Tweedy Complaint Dismissed Without Trial

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a counsel for the church, roughly the equivalent of a prosecutor, for investigation. Last week, Tweedy received a letter from McLee telling her the complaint has been dismissed.

"I'm grateful that he did the right thing here and dismissed this case," Tweedy told United Methodist News Service on May 5. "I think it ended the way it should have, given our current *Book of Discipline*. This is as much as we can ask of our bishops."

She added that her case's resolution shows "that the New York Annual Conference is very committed to being a place where GLBTIQ people can live and serve, and I am very proud to be part of the conference today." The initials stand for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning.

The identity of the person who filed the complaint is confidential. Leaders of the Wesley Fellowship—an unofficial caucus of evangelical and orthodox pastors and laity in the conference—earlier said they did not file the complaint.

The Rev. Thomas Lambrecht, the vice president and general manager of Good News, said the decision to dismiss the complaint reveals two problems with the United Methodist accountability process. Good News is an unofficial United Methodist renewal group.

First, Lambrecht said, the "extreme secrecy" of the case is not healthy for the church. Second, he said, same-sex couples living together in married or partnered relationships should be held accountable "just as heterosexual couples living together as romantic partners outside of marriage are

accountable for their action of living contrary to the church's moral requirements."

The dismissal, he continued, "once again reveals the depth of division within The United Methodist Church and illustrates how the *Book of Discipline* does not apply equally to everyone in every part of our church."

Tweedy's background

Tweedy, 39, started as a local pastor in 2001 and was ordained an elder in 2006. She previously has worked full-time in parish ministry and now serves in extension ministry as the dean of student development services in the State University of New York Sullivan, a community college. She also serves as sanctuary pastor at Memorial UMC in White Plains, N.Y., where she preaches monthly.

"I would like my ministry to be known as one of compassion, service and grace," Tweedy said. "If somehow or some way through my service other lives have been touched and I've helped somebody along the way, then that's what being in ministry is all about."

She is on the steering team of Methodists in New Directions, an unofficial caucus that advocates for greater inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the New York Conference. On the caucus website, Tweedy's biography notes that she "shares life with her spouse, Kristin Marcell" and their two sons.

Tweedy told UMNS in July that she and Marcell married in 2008 in Canada after New York began recognizing same-sex civil marriages performed where they are legal. The State of New York legalized same-sex civil

marriage in 2011.

Tweedy does not deny that she is a lesbian. However, she takes issue with the term "self-avowed practicing."

"What's the equivalent in the heterosexual world?" she said. "Self-avowed practicing' perpetuates the injustice committed against queer people, which is that we have been reduced to our sexual acts . . . There is so much more to marriage than that and so much more to being a human being."

What church law says

The *Book of Discipline*, the denomination's law book, since 1972 has asserted all people are of sacred worth but the church considers the practice of homosexuality "incompatible with Christian teaching."

Church law bans "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" from "being certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church."

The *Book of Discipline* further defines marriage as a covenant "that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman." It bars clergy from officiating and churches from hosting same-sex unions.

Church law also calls for seeking a "just resolution" when complaints occur. The *Book of Discipline* says "church trials are to be regarded as an expedient of last resort."

However, a majority of voters in the New York Conference repeatedly have approved petitions seeking to change church law on homosexuality, most recently in 2011. In

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GCFA Can Grant Same-Gender Benefits, Court Says

UM News Service

By virtue of its own authority, the finance agency of The United Methodist Church can provide benefits for same-gender spouses of general agency employees.

That was one of the decisions reached by the United Methodist Judicial Council during its April 23–26 spring session.

Two Judicial Council lay members, Beth Capen and Ruben T. Reyes, were unable to be present at the Little Rock meeting. Participating instead were two elected lay alternates, Sandra Lutz of Canton, Ohio, and Randall Miller of Oakland, Calif.

Directors of the denomination's General Council on Finance and Administration voted Oct. 21, 2013, to expand the definition of spouse in the General Agencies Welfare Benefits

Program to include same-gender spouses recognized by a state as being legally married to the employee and civil partners who had state recognition for being the legal partner of an employee.

At that time, Bishop Michael J. Coyner, the finance agency's president, explained the action was taken "to make policy decisions that stay in conformity with both civil and church law."

The board also took a second action requesting "a declaratory decision" from the Judicial Council on whether the policy would violate Paragraph 806.9 in the 2012 United Methodist Book of Discipline, the denomination's law book.

The paragraph prohibits United Methodist funds from being given "to any gay caucus or group," from being used to promote the

acceptance of homosexuality or violate the church's commitment "not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends."

In Decision 1264, Judicial Council ruled that by its own action in adopting the policy, the finance agency had "determined that the use of general agency funds to subsidize premium costs for employees and their same-gendered spouses enrolled in the General Agencies Welfare Benefits Program" did not violate church law.

General agencies are not considered a gay caucus or group, the ruling said, and previous Judicial Council decisions have upheld the authority of the finance agency to determine for itself whether contributing to employee benefits would constitute promoting the acceptance of homosexuality.

Viera to Lead Drew Theological School

Rev. Dr. Javier A. Viera, executive minister of Christ Church United Methodist in Manhattan, has been selected to serve as the next dean of the Theological School at Drew University in Madison, N.J. He will assume his new role on July 1.

In making the announcement on April 30, Drew President Vivian A. Bull said, "I am very pleased that Dr. Viera has chosen to come to Drew. He brings great experience in the church and in community outreach that will enrich the work of our colleagues in the Theological School, as well as in the whole university," she said.

Viera, who was at his daughter's softball game when he got the call from Bull, said he is delighted and humbled to take on this challenge.

"The religious landscape of America is changing at a pace that is simply too fast for us to completely comprehend," Viera wrote in an email. "Our way of 'being church' is being radically transformed. Thus, we need well-trained and highly competent and thoughtful religious leaders to help navigate the uncertain terrain that lies ahead . . . I feel that coming to a leadership position in theological education at this time will be an energizing challenge."

Along with pastoral duties at Christ Church, Viera has been responsible for the programmatic life, including stewardship initiatives and outreach ministries. Viera spearheaded efforts to create partnerships with the Methodist Church in Colombia to build health clinics, churches and job training centers.

"I have loved my work, the people



Rev. Dr. Javier Viera, executive minister at Christ Church, United Methodist, will become dean of Drew University's Theological School on July 1.

of Christ Church, and especially my colleagues. It's a special place," he wrote.

In a congregational letter from Christ Church's senior pastor, Rev. Dr. Stephen Bauman said of Viera, Javier has indelibly stamped "our ministries with his unique blend of competencies—he has had a significant role in our evolving. We surely owe him a debt of gratitude for his commitment to us individually, and to our faith family, our church."

Viera was selected after a four-month international search process launched in late November 2013. He will succeed the Rev. Dr. Virginia Samuel, associate dean of contextual learning for the Theological School, who has

been serving as interim dean since Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Kuan departed to become president of Claremont School of Theology.

"Javier Viera is a dedicated pastor, an exceptional administrator, a devoted teacher, and a person of great integrity," said Dr. J. Terry Todd, associate professor of American religious studies, who led the dean search committee.

The Theological School at Drew University has its roots in the Methodist tradition and serves an ecumenical student body of around 460, a population so diverse that not one ethnic or cultural group claims a majority.

"Javier has spent his professional life building bridges between the church and higher education," said Todd. "He has a proven track record in leading complex organizations, including extensive experience in fundraising, and has a vision for the future of theological education that holds great promise for us in these challenging times."

In his letter of application, Viera touched on that very issue.

"I am of the mind that ours is a moment in history ripe for creativity, ingenuity and daring," he wrote. "Having the opportunity to build upon Drew's international legacy is something that energizes me and builds upon my prior professional experience."

Viera earned his bachelor's degree from Florida Southern College, his master of divinity from Duke University, and his master of sacred theology from Yale University. He has served on the governing boards of the divinity schools at both Yale and Duke. In 2012, he completed his doctorate in adult learning and leadership at Columbia University.

Brooks Elected to Head Preaching Program

The Rev. Dr. Gennifer Brooks, an elder in the New York Conference, has been elected dean of the Association of Chicago Theological Schools (ACTS) Doctor of Ministry Preaching Program. Dedicated to helping students discover their own pulpit hermeneutic, Brooks is the Ernest and Bernice Styberg Associate Professor of Homiletics and director of the Styberg Preaching Institute at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.



Gennifer Brooks

"Preachers stand in the gap to bring both God's word of justice and the Good News of salvation to the people of God," said Brooks. "I consider it a great honor to be a part of such an important ecclesial task as preachers use their sermons to engage the people in deeper modes of discipleship to advance the realm of God on earth. The position of dean . . . is an opportunity for greater ministry and I covenant to offer my best to the students, the program, to the Church and above all to Christ."

ACTS is a collaborative effort by 11 theological schools in the Chicago metropolitan area whose aim is to enhance the educational activities at each of the schools through the sharing of resources and cross-registration opportunities. Preachers and master teachers

of international reputation mentor students to claim and nurture their preaching voice.

President Lallene Rector praised Brooks as "a stalwart voice for the importance and the power of preaching the Good News at Garrett-Evangelical and we are thrilled that Dr. Brooks will have the opportunity to contribute even further as dean of this program."

Brooks was the assistant dean of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, where she also taught in the area of preaching and worship. She holds a master of divinity and a doctor of ministry from New Brunswick Theological Seminary; and a doctor of philosophy in liturgical studies from Drew University. Brooks is also an author who most recently published a book entitled, *Black United Methodists Preach!*

SANDY RECOVERY

Training Targets Spiritual Care in Disasters

As a part of the Sandy Recovery Ministries, the United Methodist Committee on Relief is offering a “Basic Spiritual and Emotional Care Team Training,” which will be led by Rev. Wendy Vencuss from 9 a.m.–4 p.m., May 31. All are welcome to attend, but the training is particularly recommended for clergy and others who serve in disaster response and or as Volunteers in Mission.

This introductory model for United Methodist Disaster Spiritual and Emotional Care will:

- Provide training on how to respond to and meet the spiritual and emotional care needs of individuals, communities, and congregations following disasters.
- Explore the development of “care teams” to provide spiritual and emotional support following disasters.
- Emphasize strategies for the disaster responders’ own self-care.

To register by the deadline of May 24, please email Gina Grubbs at gina.grubbs@nyac-umc.com. Please note “UMCOR SEC Training” on the subject line. A \$10 fee collected on the day of training will cover training materials, lunch and snacks at the Bellmore UMC, 2657 Clarendon Avenue, Bellmore, N.Y.

For further questions, please contact Wendy Vencuss at wvencuss@me.com.

Decorator to Help Sandy Homeowner

The Fabric Mill of Plainview, N.Y., recently came to the Sandy Recovery Center in Massapequa with a proposal: They would redo a room for a Hurricane Sandy victim.

“Decorator Madness” is the fabric store’s way of giving back and helping a family chosen by the LI Volunteer Center and United Methodist LI Sandy Recovery Ministry. The room will be brought back to life in style, using the services of a professional decorator. Designers will compete to win the honor of being chosen to redo the room.

The Fabric Mill has teamed with top home furnishing brands such as Safavieh, Hunter Douglas, Peykar Rugs, Elements Distinctive Lighting, C & S Marble and Granite, Thomasville and Hallman Furniture, as well as Sherwin Williams and Strokes of Creativity.

The winning designer will donate their time and talents, and all furnishings will be provided free of charge to the homeowner.

Volunteers Needed

It’s been more than 18 months since Super Storm Sandy raged through our area—and there are still many homes and families awaiting restoration. Teams of volunteers are needed to



Your team could be pictured in next month’s *Vision*, just like this hardworking team of volunteers from Simsbury, Conn., who worked on a Lindenhurst home at the end of April.

assist with rebuilding, replacing, and repainting.

If your church, school, or other organization is seeking a way to help this summer or fall, contact the Long Island Sandy Recovery Ministry online at www.nyac.com/recovery. For additional information, please call the Massapequa headquarters at 516-795-1322.

“Mission u” Announces 2014 Instructors

The three studies at “Mission u,” which will take place July 24–26 at Western Connecticut University in Danbury, Conn., will be lead by the following:

How Is It with Your Soul?

- Rev. Cecil Stone, pastor at Springfield Gardens and Hanson Place Central churches in Brooklyn.
- Faye Wilson has worked in mission education for more than 20 years, and wrote the participant’s guide for “How Is It with Your Soul?”
- Daryl Norman, a retreat and study leader throughout the conference.
- Rev. Juhye Hahn, pastor at Kensington UMC in Connecticut, will lead the Korean language class. She came to the United States through the denomination’s US-2 mission internship program.
- Elaine Williams Nelson, a newly consecrated deaconess, will teach the “Saturday @ Mission u” class, which is a option for those

who are unable to get away for the full three-day event A registered dietitian, Nelson attends New Rochelle UMC.

The Roma of Europe

- Lija Kim, former Korean language coordinator of the conference UMW, is the translator for the Korean-language Roma textbook. She has taught the NYAC Korean language class several times. This is the first opportunity for English language students to benefit from her leadership.

The Church and People with Disabilities

- Rev. Evy McDonald, a former member of the NYAC, serves on the UMC Committee on Disabilities and has been training other “Mission u” teachers for this study.
- Rev. Miyoung Kang, pastor of Trinity UMC in Coram, N.Y., will lead the Korean-language class.
- Ximena A. Varas will teach the Spanish-language class. She is the Connecticut

District lay leader, a certified lay minister, and vice-chair of the NYAC Visioning Table.

Children and Youth Studies

Children and youth will explore age appropriate versions of the disabilities study. Classes will be available for children going into grades:

- K–4: Elise Boykin is a senior at Drew University, majoring in political science and sociology.
- 5–8: Byungkook Lee is a graduate of Syracuse University with certification in childhood and special education.
- 9–12: Gail Douglas-Boykin represents the New York Conference as a director of United Methodist Women, Inc. Gail is a member of Vanderveer Park UMC, where she serves in a number of roles from youth leader to administrative assistant.

The online registration form and additional information is available at www.nyac.com/missionu.



LEFT: Members of a mission team from First UMC in Flushing lead the children in a song at Vacation Bible School. **RIGHT:** Maheet, center, is baptized by Pastor Oleg and prayed for by participants at the pastor's family retreat. Maheet, a member of the Bishkek UMC's English Ministry, is the first Hindi student to be baptized.

DISPATCHES FROM KAZAKHSTAN

Great Joy in Seeing the Spirit at Work

Dear friends

Our daughter, Ye-Ari, recently shared a bittersweet story with us. Recently, we took her to a toy store where she bought a small colorful horse. We were surprised because she usually prefers to buy arts and crafts sets.

She explained: "Mom, do you know why I stopped playing with dolls when we moved to Kazakhstan? It's because I didn't have any friends to play dolls with. But you know what? Now I have lots of friends in school and I want to take this horse to school to play with my friends."

This brought tears to my eyes, to hear that she was at one point so lonely she couldn't bear to play with dolls anymore. But at the same time, it was a sharing of hope and excitement. Now that Ye-Ari speaks Russian fluently, she's able to laugh and play with her friends.

When our family first moved to Kazakhstan, it was of course difficult for us, especially with the new language and culture. In many ways we could relate to our immigrant Korean parents—who also struggled to adapt. But after nearly 2½ years, I also feel like my daughter, that we have finally been able to not only adapt to the new language and culture, but that we have also developed deeper and meaningful relationships with our pastors, church leaders, and friends. Although we still miss our friends and family, we are starting to feel like we are part of a new family of pastors, leaders, and churches here in Central Asia.

We know that we have along way to go, but feel blessed and strengthened by our ties to the many people around the world who continue to pray for us and keep us close to their hearts. Our role here is to support the UMC of Central Asia. We meet monthly with the local pastors and leaders of Central Asia, where we share updates on the churches and Bible groups. Eumin visits different congregations to give seminars, sermons, and communion. Prumeh also works with the treasurer on the administration and finances of the Central Asia district of UMC.

In the past few months, Central Asia has hosted several conferences, retreats and mission teams. The Korean UMW from the United States organized a conference in Ushstobe led by P. Myung Rae Lee where more

than 50 women attended from eight different congregations.

At the fall session of the Moscow Theological Seminary held in Central Asia, Eumin's father, Rev. Joong Urn Kim taught a course—and our kids got hugs and kisses from grandma, too.

We also had the joy of having three interns serve in Central Asia for the past six months. Sam Yum from Flushing served children and youth in Ushstobe, and Dae Shik Kim and Joshua Bae from Hawaii served in Bishkek, starting new small groups for the English-speaking Indian students. All three were very much beloved and their service was very meaningful for many.

Prayer Requests

- Safe travels and fruitful meetings while our family itinerates in the United States from the end of April to early July. Also, pray for our kids' Kazakhstan visas, which they need to receive again while we are in the United States.
- For God's Spirit to move at the Student Forum, a leadership event for young adult leaders; Eastern Eurasia Annual Conference, hosted by Central Asia; and youth and young adult evangelism camp.
- The Kara-Balta UMC, a vibrant congregation in Kyrgyzstan that is experiencing a serious crisis with their building and may be evicted. Please pray for financial help to purchase their building.
- New clown ministry of Bishkek UMC and their outreach to children's hospitals and orphanages.

If you are interested in supporting Eumin or Prumeh through a covenant relationship, please contact us. You can also find more information and make donations by visiting the GBGM web site: www.advancinghope.com, and giving to:

- Eumin Kim, Missionary Advance #3021370
- Prumeh Kim, Missionary Advance #3021369, or
- Central Asia Mission Initiative Advance #14939A

Dropping Old Categories to Embrace Diversity

BY REV. JACOB DHARMARAJ
Shrub Oak UMC

An African proverb says, “When the rhythm of the drum changes you must change the way you dance.” The rhythm of our community’s drum has indeed changed during our lifetimes. We are more diverse than ever before. We live in an interconnected and interdependent world today. Immigration, advancements in technology, and globalization have radically altered our global and local landscape.

Many of us in the church are not sure how to maneuver through the complex maze of this new and continuing-to-emerge society.

What was once considered to be the role and function of the church and non-profit organizations is now being carried out by governments, individuals, and corporations. In his book, “How To Run the World,” Indo-American sociologist Parag Khanna, says we are in for a fractured, fragmented, multi-polar world. We live in an era of new Middle Ages of decentralized power where multinational corporations, wealthy and powerful families, humanitarians, religious radicals, universities, and mercenaries are engaged in a world of “mega-diplomacy.”

Others call our time “an axial age.” There have been other axial periods preceding ours in history. One started in the 16th century with the scientific revolution in the West—a transformation that continues today. However, the change we go through right now is different. It is discontinuous, disruptive and unanticipated.

Mission leaders, therefore, liken this time to a “deterritorialized world,” and “liminal period.” It is a period of transition from a known familiar world to another, not-yet fully-

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known. It is a tunnel experience; a strange no-man’s island. This is a state characterized by “betwixt and between.” The old has gone, but the new has not arrived yet. This phase of life is disorienting and disturbing because we are not fully in control.

Psychologists refer to liminal space as a place where boundaries dissolve a little, and we stand there—on the threshold—getting ourselves ready to cross from where we were into what we are to be.

How can the church adjust to the dance steps during these changing and challenging times? The simple and plain response is by creating a reformulated theology of mission based on cross-cultural encounters. We need to acknowledge that past practices and sustaining the purity of traditional practices are increasingly untenable. We must not hesitate to welcome and embrace hybridity and the creation of contextual theologies.

In addition, we simply cannot function like commercial fishermen, throwing nets over a vast area to troll in fish into the tank of our sanctuary.

The signs, symbols, liturgy, and acoustics that we engage must make sense and meaning in the context of present day listeners. To do so, we need to continue to learn new categories and new mission principles. Let me illustrate:

When little Johnny was in his mother’s belly, she used to play piano, read stories and sing songs to him. When Johnny became a toddler, he picked up a lot of new vocabulary for a kid of his age. He learned the names of

birds, animals, plants, and trees. Even before he went to school, his mother would often take him to the museum and art galleries.

The word tiger was a favorite word, but a bit scary given some of the animals he had seen at the Bronx Zoo. He quickly reached the stage where he could call the names of all the adorable household pets. One day his aunt visited with her dog, Tiger.

Imagine the toddler’s anxiety. Johnny had finally learned categories and words to go with them, for dogs and tigers and there was this bewildering situation. For a time he simply refused to call the dog by name. Though with some persuading, he came to learn and comprehend a new category—names! With this new category, he was able to accept that a dog could be named Tiger.

Even as adults, we fall victim to obsolete categories and outdated methodologies, and try to force them to fit into a given context. This forceful process leads to stereotypes and mindless interactions between people. As Christians we must make sincere attempts to come to grips with the enduring question of identity and difference, of “us” and “them,” and “of the particular and the universal.”

In our modern society, we cannot do away with difference or eliminate diversity. A new mission category must be created and applied in which we can be who we are, yet also embrace diversity; we can be faithful in our tradition in relation to other religious traditions.

During these changing times, let us be persistent and adaptable; committed and focused; be open and vulnerable. After all, we are only at the early stages of this new missional development. Let’s keep our seat belts buckled!

Second NYAC Case Over Homosexuality Stance Dismissed

Continued from page 5

2013, the conference approved a resolution by Methodists in New Directions that commended United Methodist individuals and congregations “whose bold actions and courageous statements help to provide for the pastoral needs of same-sex couples within The United Methodist Church.”

Dorothee Benz of Methodists in New Directions, said the decision to dismiss the case as “faithful to the New York Annual Conference’s decades-long opposition to the prejudice and discrimination in our *Book of Discipline*.”

She praised McLee for finding another way forward in the complaint process in two cases this year.

Follows resolution of Ogletree case

The dismissal of Tweedy’s case comes less than two months after McLee announced the resolution of the complaint against a retired United Methodist seminary dean, Rev. Thomas Ogletree, 80. Ogletree officiated at the wedding of his son, Thomas Rimbey Ogletree, to Nicholas Haddad on Oct. 20, 2012.

At the same March 10 press conference, McLee called for “the cessation of church

trials” against United Methodist pastors who perform same-sex wedding ceremonies. McLee, however, did not speak to the circumstances of Tweedy’s case.

Meanwhile, the complaint process is still ongoing against clergy across the United States for officiating at same-sex unions. They include the Rev. Stephen Heiss, a pastor in the Upper New York Conference; the Rev. William McElvaney, a retired United Methodist pastor and former seminary president in the North Texas Conference; and retired Bishop Melvin G. Talbert.

Sharing Promises of Spring Can Bring Hope

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant on Older Adult Ministries

Like most everyone else in New England, my thoughts are about Spring. Like many people, it is my favorite time of year. I begin looking forward to it in mid-February.

Why? Is it that winter has been too long by then? Maybe, but I'm tired of winter before it even begins, so that most likely isn't it. Is it because I can open my windows without wasting the heat? Perhaps, but opening them wide for the first time in months reminds me of how many windows I have to wash when I do, so that isn't it either. Is it because I don't have to mess around with overcoats, gloves, boots and such? Maybe, but, on balance, those are minor inconveniences, so it is not likely that either. So what is it about spring that is so appealing?

In a word, *promise*. Spring is a season of



renewal; a season of being reminded that winter isn't forever. It is a reminder that new life is still possible. It arrives with the crocus' popping through earth that is still hard as a rock, seemingly unable to crack open. It comes with earlier daylight and later darkness, which at times had seemed impenetrable. It comes with a vitality that its very name suggests. It bounces, it springs into being, just about the time winter has refused to let go, promising an end is in sight, as well as a new beginning.

What is it about spring? It is the promise that in the darkest times of life, light seeks to shine; in the most despairing moments of our lives, hope strives to pop out. Spring comes and reminds us that there is always the possibility of new life.

What a needed reminder! Especially to those who are feeling the effects of aging, the decline in one ability or another, the ever increasing doctor's visits and medications. Especially to those who are feeling as if their most meaningful days are over.

Life, even in the winter of our experiences, is always possible. Hear the reminder! Take heart! Bask in the sunshine! Do the best you can do! Be the best you can be and like the crocus, pop forth into new life! But more importantly, find ways to share the possibilities of Spring with the older adults for whom you care. It is often easy for them to forget the promise of new life does not come with an



expiration date. Practice a ministry of hope and promise.

Bishop Brown Takes Over as Council President

San Francisco area Bishop Warner Brown has begun his term as president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops.

Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of the Germany Episcopal Area had served as president of the Council since April 2014. Her two-year term ended at the close of the Council's executive committee meeting on May 4. A formal celebration and the traditional "passing of the gavel" will take place at the Council of Bishops' meeting in November 2014.

Bishop Robert E. Hayes Jr., who has served three terms as the Council's secretary, was succeeded by Louisiana Area Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey.

Looking back over the past two years, Bishop Wenner said she believed that the viewpoint she offered as a central conference bishop serving in Germany had helped to provide a broader perspective on many pressing

questions as the church seeks to live together in diversity.

"It's an ongoing journey," said Bishop Wenner. "I trust and I'm full of hope that Bishop Brown takes up these questions and that together, the bishops as a team can help the church to really keep focused on increasing the vitality in and through congregations that grow in ministries in the four areas of focus."

Bishop Brown praised Bishop Wenner for her outstanding leadership. "I feel honored to follow Bishop Wenner, who has done a really excellent job of helping the council begin engaging the conversation of how we lead the church for this time," he said. "I hope to step into those shoes and continue that conversation."

Bishop Brown said his hope for the Council is that they can speak with one voice words of encouragement to the church "in the many places where the church is doing good work, where growth is happening, where lives are being touched and lives are being saved ... we have much to celebrate."

Springdale Celebrates 140th Anniversary

The United Methodist Church of Springdale will be celebrating 140 years of service and worship on May 18 and 19.

At 3 p.m., Saturday, Roger Nelson, who has brought his award-winning performance to venues in 32 countries around the world, including Carnegie Hall and Wesley's Chapel in London, will perform "The Man From Aldersgate." The production explores the life and times, of John Wesley.

A celebration worship service is planned for 9:30 a.m. Sunday, followed by brunch with testimonies and remembrances of the church's life and history. The church is located at 1116 Hope Street, Stamford, CT.

For more information, contact Pastor Julia Winward at 203-313-6643, or via e-mail at weidemann.julia@gmail.com.

Revivals Mark St. Paul's Anniversary

Bishop Martin McLee and Catskill Hudson District Superintendent Jim Moore will be guest preachers during the 190th anniversary celebration of St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Middletown, N.Y.

McLee will preach at revival services at 7 p.m., on both Friday, May 16 and Saturday, May 17. Moore will speak at the 10:30 a.m. worship celebration on Sunday, May 18.

Saturday's events also include an open house from 1-4 p.m. to introduce visitors to the mission and ministries of the church, which is located at 58 West Main Street in Middletown.

For more information, please call the church office at 845-343-6911, or contact Rev. Charles Ryu at charles.ryu@nyac-umc.com.