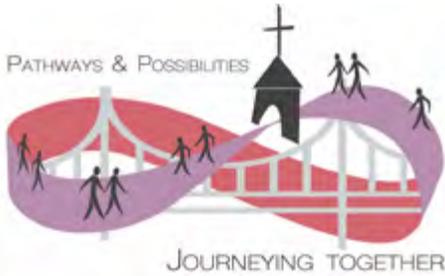


“Write the vision clearly on the tablets, that one may read it on the run.” – Habakkuk

THE VISION

May 2019



Bishop Calls All To 220th Conference

It’s that time of year again for the “call to conference,” the annual invitation for you to be a part of the unfolding work of mission and ministry in Connecticut, New York, and across the world. It is indeed my distinct pleasure to “call you” to be a part of our discernment and holy conferencing as the New York Annual Conference.

We will again be following our quadrennial theme, “Pathways & Possibilities,” with a focus on journeying together. Now more than ever, the conversation of why and how we journey together rises to the level of critical importance. Our need to find a way forward in the various expressions of our ministry, and to find deeper and more respectful ways to love one another and embrace the validity of one another’s calling from God to share the love of Jesus Christ is essential if we are to maintain and promote our public witness. To discover those “Pathways & Possibilities” will require serious and intentional examination.

As a part of this session we will elect delegates to the 2020 General Conference in Minneapolis, as well as work together on how we continue to embrace the Mission, Vision, and Core Values of who we are here in the NYAC. Preaching, teaching, great music, and rich fellowship can also be expected!

If you are an ordained or licensed clergy person or an elected delegate* to the Annual Conference, you are expected to attend all sessions. Members and any visitors must [register online](#) by May 23; there is no onsite registration.

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UMNS PHOTOS BY MIKE DUBOSE

Rev. Francisco Viagem Tivane describes damage to Dondo United Methodist Church and the surrounding community from Cyclone Idai in Dondo, Mozambique. Tivane is a graduate of the UMC’s Africa University.

After the Cyclone, Faith Abides

BY KATHY L. GILBERT
UM News Service

With winds up to 125 miles per hour, the cyclone ripped tin roofs off houses and hurtled them like deadly missiles that killed and maimed.

Otherwise placid rivers jumped their banks and submerged towns and villages, drowning hundreds and leaving hundreds of thousands more with no homes or possessions throughout Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. The final death toll is 843—but hundreds are still missing.

One month later, Isabel João and her mother and aunt, Maria Lidia and Luise Marufo António, were scavenging for food in their cornfields in Buzi, where fully-grown cornstalks were black from days spent under water. The cyclone came just days before the corn would have been harvested, robbing the planters of a year’s supply of food.

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Isabel João (right) and Maria Lidia António salvage what they can of their corn crop, which was killed before it matured when their field was flooded. “Hunger is the number one problem now,” João said.



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

5/18 VBS Preview Workshop

Come explore the new VBS program from Cokesbury, "To Mars and Beyond." The event from 10 a.m. to 12 noon is hosted by Vail's Gate United Methodist Church, 854 Bloomingrove Turnpike, New Windsor, N.Y. The gathering will preview the stories, make some crafts, and play some games. You will also get to meet other churches doing the program to make connections to share materials and ideas. Contact Cassandra Negri by email at with any questions or to register by May 12.

5/19 Farewell for Catskill Hudson DS

Join in a celebration of the gifts and graces of Rev. Timothy Riss as he completes his tenure as superintendent of the Catskill Hudson District. The event begins at 4 p.m. at Catskill UMC, 40 Woodland Ave., Catskill N.Y. For further info and to register by May 10, go to the [NYAC website](http://nyac.com).

5/24–26 Quinipet Volunteer Weekend

Whether you are part of a church group, youth group, Quinipet alumni or simply wanting to give back, you're invited to "Spring into Action" at the camp on Shelter Island. Your housing and meals are free in appreciation of your help. Projects may include painting, raking, grounds cleanup, etc. You will also get to meet new people, worship together and have fun. Register on the camping website here.

5/31 150 Legacy Gala

The United Methodist Women of the NYAC will be celebrating the group's 150 anniversary with a gala dinner at Christ Church UM, 524 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. The May 31 program runs from 7:15 p.m. to midnight; tickets are \$100 and attire is semi-formal. To purchase tickets call: Karen Prudente at 646-966-0463, Laureen Goodridge-Smith at 917-842-5979, or Bernice Semple at 917-817-5645.

6/1 Healing Prayer Workshop

The New York Annual Conference Worship team is looking for lay people with the gift of healing to be part of this year's team at Hofstra University. The candidates must be present at the NYAC gathering in June 2019 and be willing to attend this 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. training session

at the conference center. Register here; or for more information, email Ximena Varas at ximena.varas@nyac-umc.com.

6/6–9 New York Annual Conference

With the theme, "Pathways & Possibilities: Journeying Together," the four-day gathering runs from Thursday to Sunday. Among other considerations, we will be electing lay and clergy delegates to the 2020 General Conference. Additional details and registration info can be found on the [NYAC website](http://nyac.com). Register online by May 26.

7/10–14 Youth 2019 Registration

"Love Well," the national gathering for United Methodist youth and their leaders in Kansas City, promises four days of discipleship, worship, Bible study, big-name musical artists, service opportunities and life-changing fun. YOUTH 2019 is for youth grades 6–12 and their leaders. For more information, go to <http://youth2019.com> or @youth2019 on all social media platforms. Registration closes May 31.

7/26–28 Mission "u" Weekend

Join the United Methodist Women and Board of Laity for a weekend of spiritual growth and to expand your knowledge and concept of mission. The 2019 studies are: "Practicing Resurrection: The Gospel of Mark and Radical Discipleship," "What About Our Money? A Faith Response," and "Women United for Change." The event will be held at the Hilton Stamford in Connecticut. There is a one-day sampler program available on Saturday. For additional information or to register by July 1, click here.

8/18–23 Family Beach Week

Start a new tradition by experiencing summer camp as a family at Camp Quinipet on Shelter Island. Sail, swim, ride bikes, shuttle to nearby attractions, worship together, meet guest ministers and more. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Open week, [register a-la-carte](http://register-a-la-carte) and come for any combination of days. Hostel-style and private rooms available.

Vision Deadlines for 2019

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 2019 are June 7, July 5, August 2, September 6, October 4, November 1, and December 6. Please send any stories, photos, ideas, or questions directly to vision@nyac.com.

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

Brewington, Hawkins Featured AC Speakers

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Let us begin now to pray and prepare for our time together. See you at Hofstra!

The Journey Continues, . . .
Grace & Peace,



Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop

Letter from Lay Leader, Roena Littlejohn

I invite you to mark your calendar and prayerfully join me in accepting the call to the 220th Session of the New York Annual Conference, Thursday to Sunday, June 6–9, 2019, at Hofstra University, Hempstead, N.Y. The theme is “Pathways and Possibilities—Journeying Together”

By God’s grace, we’ve answered many calls, faced numerous challenges, and worked to make disciples, as is the call of all Christians—lay and clergy. Matthew 28:19—“*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” *Aligning our call with the Mission, Vision and Core Values of the NYAC, we share the good news of Christ’s love for us and the world.*

A special message for newly elected lay members and a reminder to returning lay members: Annual conference for me is a reunion of clergy, laity, deaconesses, and home missionaries. From this reunion, an equal number of laity and clergy will be elected to represent us at the 2020 General Conference.

“The lay membership shall consist of professing lay members elected by each charge, the diaconal ministers, the active deaconesses, and home missionaries under appointment within the bounds of the annual conference, the conference president of United Methodist Women, the conference president of United Methodist Men, the conference lay leader, district lay leaders, the conference director of Lay Servant Ministries, conference secretary of Global Ministries (if lay), the president of the conference youth organization, the president of the young adult organization, the chair of the annual conference college student organization, and one young person between the ages of twelve (12) and seventeen (17), and one young person

between the ages of eighteen (18) and thirty (30) from each district . . . if the lay membership should number less than the clergy members of the annual conference, the annual conference shall . . . provide for the election of additional lay members to equalize lay and clergy membership of the annual conference.” The Book of Discipline 2016 Paragraph 32. Article 1, pages 34-34

All are invited to join a call-in time of prayer and meditation for the annual conference session and all who will attend. To participate, please dial 605-313-4185 and enter the access code 135106, Monday through Friday from 6:55–7 a.m., through May 31.

All lay members to annual conference need to [register online](#) on the NYAC website. When you arrive at Hofstra on June 6, please look for the Board of Laity table to receive a special welcome and any assistance you may require.

Be prepared for an inspirational, engaging, and informative Laity Session led by Fred Brewington. Your participation will be needed, and expected, as one of many workers in the vineyard.

You can expect this to be a memorable conference with Spirit-filled music, powerful witness and worship, ordination, baptism, fellowship, election of delegates to the 2020 General Conference, workshops, and special services to name some of the events that will take place.

As laity, we will journey together through annual conference and beyond, just as Jesus sent forth the disciples and others chosen two by two, we will join hands and seek the pathways and possibilities that God provides us while following the examples of Jesus Christ our Risen Savior. You will not be alone.

In the service of the Lord,
Roena Littlejohn,
Conference Lay Leader

Delegate Elections

During the conference three clergy and three lay delegates will be elected to the 2020 General Conference planned for May 5–15 in Minneapolis.

Three lay and three clergy delegates will also be selected for the Northeastern Jurisdiction (NEJ) Conference which will be July 13–17 in Maryland; these six are also alternates to General Conference. In addition, the gathering will elect three lay and three clergy alternates to the NEJ Conference. Information on who is eligible to vote can be found [here](#).



Special guest presenters, Erin Hawkins, left, and Fred Brewington

Speakers & Preachers

Erin Hawkins, the general secretary of the Commission on Religion and Race, will be the guest preacher and will lead a plenary session. Hawkins guides the work of the GCORR centered around three priorities: supporting and leading vital conversations, developing culturally competent leadership and ministries, and promoting institutional equity while upholding the agency’s historic commitment to racial justice within the Church.

Fred Brewington, a lay member of the conference, will lead the laity session. Brewington is a civil rights lawyer on Long Island and was a member of the delegation to the 2019 Special General Conference in St. Louis.

Bishop Yvette A. Flunder, will speak on Friday night at the Methodists in New Directions (MIND) and NYAC Queer Clergy Caucus dinner. Flunder is founder and senior pastor of City of Refuge United Church of Christ in Oakland, Calif., and the presiding bishop of The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries.

Professor William Abraham, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, will speak at the Wesley Fellowship dinner.

Health Screenings

Clergy and spouses with health insurance through NYAC may register for the Blueprint for Wellness Screening by visiting www.wespath.org and selecting HealthFlex WebMD. Then log on to your account and select Quest Blueprint for Wellness to schedule your visit at a local Quest lab or at Annual Conference on June 7–8. If it’s easier, you may phone Quest at 855-623-9355 and tell them that you are a member of the UMC HealthFlex group and wish to make an appointment for the Blueprint for Wellness Screening.

Those who complete the wellness screening

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MISSION TO PUERTO RICO

Connecticut District Team Aids in Recovery

Note: A team of 11 people from the Connecticut District traveled to Puerto Rico at the beginning of February to help in the hurricane recovery there. Two of the team members offer reflections below.

I've had experiences that have made me wiser, or more grateful, or more mindful, or more realistic. Rarely, have I called an experience "life-changing." Yet that's precisely what the January mission trip to Arecibo, Puerto Rico, was for me. And it took me totally by surprise!

I worried before departure since I'd be traveling in a work group where I knew only one other person. Plus, I'm not a Methodist. Would I be treated like an outsider? What would the work commitment really be like? As usual, all my worries were unfounded. The work group, comprised of like-minded people from several denominations, bonded quickly. The work was well organized and exactly as described in our orientation meetings. The Puerto Rican homeowners we helped were welcoming and kind.

But this experience went well beyond the people around me and the physical labor we performed. Around grateful people, I became more grateful. Treated with Christian love, I was more mindful of my own responses to events. And giving without expectation of anything in return helped me remember the times others at home had helped me "re-build"



out of the goodness of their hearts.

Truly, this mission trip was life-changing for me. God provided all we needed; we just used our hands to do the work. Such a service trip had been on my bucket list for a few years. The only regret I have is that I waited so long!

—*Lisa DiLullo, First Baptist Church, Milford, Conn.*

The Puerto Rico mission was life changing



Paul Fleck, left, works with a power tool; Lisa DuLillo, above, washes out paint rollers.

for me. The warmth of the people matched the warmth of the island sun. Our family was appreciative in so many ways for the small things we were able to do for them. In the end, when we went to go sightseeing, they chased us down and gave us souvenir keychains with the island's mascot, the coqui frog on them. That keychain holds my keys; the people of Puerto Rico captured the key to my heart and will be key to their future.

—*Rev. Paul Fleck*

Update on Mission Work in Caribbean

BY REV. PATRICK PERRIN
Chair, Caribbean Mission Partnership

The Caribbean Mission Partnership was formed in December of 2013 by clergy in the New York Annual Conference from various Caribbean countries. The purpose was to coordinate the initiatives undertaken by congregations and groups within the New York Annual Conference, directed at mission projects within the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA).

Our vision was presented to the Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie, then director of Missions for the annual conference and, as a result, a group of us, including Rev. Ewoodzie, visited the Connexional headquarters of the MCCA in March 2014, and met with the Connexional Bishop, the Rev. Otto Wade, and his staff.

The partnership and the MCCA reached a "mutuality in mission" agreement that any work pursued would enhance the evangelical and spiritual needs of both groups.

While in Antigua, the birthplace of Caribbean Methodism in 1760, the group took the opportunity to tour the historic Gilbert Estate, where Nathaniel Gilbert—having been converted under Wesley's preaching in 1759—introduced Methodism to Antigua and to the Caribbean. The original steps from which he preached still remain.

Over the last five years the Caribbean Mission Partnership have been engaged in the following projects:

Antigua

Restoration of the Gilbert Memorial Conference and Retreat Center. Work teams were led by Rev. Dr. Gordon Edwards.

Haiti

Initiated the Fond Doux Methodist School serving 100 children, and continued financial support to provide staff salaries, and meals and uniforms for students. The creation of a goat

breeding project—modeled the Heifer—and sponsored by the Marco Depestre Foundation.

Jamaica

Raised \$20,000 for a new roof on the Sterling Castle Methodist Church through a grant of \$10,000 from the First Flushing UMC (Korean) and \$5,000 from the Korean Caucus.

Additional projects at various stages of planning include:

- Purchase of land for a building at Fond Doux school, Haiti
- Fundraising to complete the Gilbert Project, Antigua
- Raising funds and organizing works teams in Jamaica for the Cloisters Youth Camp, Conference and Retreat Center; and. St. Ann's Bay church building restoration.
- Fundraising and organizing work teams for hurricane rebuilding in Dominica, Anguilla, and Saint Maarten.



In the Footsteps of the Wesleys

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton, above, speaks to his fellow travelers on the Wesleyan Heritage Tour as he stands atop the grave of Samuel Wesley in the churchyard of St. Andrew's Church in Epworth, North Lincolnshire. John Wesley brought many to Christ perched atop the grave after not being permitted to preach inside the church where his father had served for many years. The bishop gathers with the members of the NYAC'S 2019 ordination class under the watchful eye of Wesley.



“Mission u” to Explore Radical Discipleship

BY ELISE BOYKIN

After a distinguished performing career, virtuoso violinist Jascha Heifetz accepted an appointment as professor of music at UCLA. Asked what had prompted his change of career, Heifetz replied: “Violin playing is a perishable art. It must be passed on as a personal skill; otherwise it is lost.”

—*Today in the Word, February 8, 1997, p15*

“Radical” is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “very different from the usual or traditional” while the word “discipleship” is defined as “one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another.”

If we connect these two words, the combination brings to mind many different questions. How often has the word “discipleship” come up and we are not quite sure what to think? Or we hear “discipleship” and it sounds like something passive we are supposed to do as followers of Jesus. Truly ask yourself when was the last time you actively participated in discipleship outside of a Sunday morning worship service?

What is radical discipleship? The image that this phrase brings to my mind is changing the pace. Radical discipleship is no longer a passive sometimes kind of practice. If we are to be radical disciples we need to be those individuals who are not just living the Sunday discipleship kind of

life. The message we have is far too precious, far too important to leave it to only a single day out of the week.

The truth is that the way we have been doing discipleship so far may not be the best way. Here is where we give room to try something new and, in this case, dare to learn, cultivate the skill, and practice radical discipleship.

The idea of radical discipleship makes Christian discipleship a full contact, active participation, not a Sunday, but an every day practice for all of us. Far too often discipleship seems to have become almost taboo. A word we dare not speak, a practice we dare not engage in for fear of what that entails.

What sort of skills must we develop, what commitments must we make, and what practices must we engage in order to be radical disciples? I invite you to come to “[Mission u](#)” on July 26–28 and learn about radical discipleship, one of three areas of focus this year.

Don't sit on the side lines any longer, don't just be a weekend warrior, but come and let's change the pace together. Let us learn how we can take our common understanding of discipleship and dare to be radical. Like violin playing, radical discipleship is a perishable art—it must be passed on as a skill. Come let us learn and grow together as radical disciples.

Bishops Move Toward Episcopal Church Accord

UMNS | By unanimous voice vote May 9, the Council of Bishops approved asking General Conference to agree to full communion with a denomination that, like The United Methodist Church, has historic ties to John Wesley's Church of England.

Also, like The United Methodist Church, The Episcopal Church has experienced its own divisions around the role of LGBTQ Christians in church life.

Full communion means each church acknowledges the other as a partner in the Christian faith, recognizes the validity of each other's baptism and Eucharist, and commits to work together in ministry. Such an agreement also means Episcopalians and United Methodists can share clergy.

“It's always a great opportunity when we talk about full communion to say what it is and what it is not,” Bishop Gregory V. Palmer told his colleagues. “It's not an organic merger, two denominations becoming one, but the reminder that we see in one another the signs of church—one holy catholic and apostolic church.”

Palmer, who leads the West Ohio Conference, also serves as co-chair of the United Methodist and Episcopal dialogue committee.

The United Methodist Church's top lawmaking body will have first crack at the full-communion agreement when it meets May 5–15, 2020, in Minneapolis. If the pact wins approval there, it will next head to The Episcopal Church's General Convention in July 2021 in Baltimore.

In Aftermath of Cyclone, Faith Abides

Continued from page 1

The women were bright spots in a sea of green grass as they slowly picked their way through the muddy fields. The trio toiled silently under the hot sun.

Checking each stalk, they shucked the rotten corn and piled the cobs on the ground to take home. They were hoping for enough to eat, feed their animals and perhaps harvest seed kernels that will be sowed into the dark earth for the next planting season in August.

“Hunger is the number one problem now,” said João.

Cyclone Idai made landfall March 14 near Beira, the fourth-largest city in Mozambique. Buzi is a rural area about 16 miles inland from Beira. Help was slow to reach Buzi because the catastrophic flooding destroyed the roads and bridges connecting it to larger areas.

“We suffered a lot. No one has a house, the roofs are gone,” said Maria. “The floods came, taking clothes, food, chickens.”

The women said the storm came while they were sleeping.

“Police sirens woke us up and (officials) told us to get together and head for higher ground,” João said. She said the storm destroyed all the houses made of tree branches and mud, but permanent buildings from brick or concrete survived.

A drive through the heart of the community is like entering a ghost town. Municipal buildings are still standing but badly damaged. Most of the people in the village made their homes from branches and tree limbs tied together then covered by mud. Those collapsed in the storm.

“We didn’t know we would survive. I think God knows what has happened and keeps protecting us,” said Luise António.

In the village, Jorge João Novo and Elias José Manuel worked on the roof of Manuel’s mother’s home.

“It was a very bad experience,” he said. “My mother doesn’t like to stay here now; there is no privacy,” he said, pointing at the bare branch walls stripped of their mud covering.

‘Thank you for your hands’

Many people from Buzi were rescued and brought to makeshift shelters like the government-run training center overseen by Georgina Alfredo. She is the director of the center for public administration in Beira.

At the height of evacuations, the center held more than 2,000 people. Most of the people from Buzi have returned home, Alfredo said. A young woman working at the shelter said there was one



Survivors of Cyclone Idai, above, make their way past homes and businesses that are undergoing repairs after the storm in Beira, Mozambique. Right, Natalia Inacio stands amid the rubble of her home which collapsed when the mud bricks used for its walls became saturated by wind-driven rain during Cyclone Idai in Gondola.



UMNS PHOTOS BY MIKE DUBOSE

woman left from Buzi who did not want to go home because she lost a son in the storm.

In addition to housing and feeding the families, administrators also provide grief and psychological help.

“They are allowed to stay here until the waters recede but this is not their final home,” Alfredo said. She said people would get a two-week food kit when they leave.

Alfredo said the local United Methodist church in the Sofala District was the first to step in and support the sheltered people.

“Thank you for your hands, thank you for the spiritual and material support,” Alfredo said to the Revs. Jacob Jenhuro, episcopal assistant in the Mozambique North Conference, and João Sambo, pastor of Malanga 2 United Methodist Church.

Alfredo said the church’s support opened the doors for other organizations to come to their aid.

On the first day they had over 1,000 people, and all the food they had on hand was 500 kilograms of rice and 250 kilograms of beans.

“We couldn’t see how to feed all these people. The United Methodist Church stepped in to help and filled that need the same afternoon,” she

said.

Since then, they have been able to provide three meals a day.

“By God’s grace, we have had no incidents of cholera and we have not lost any lives,” she said.

In fact, she said, they have had four babies born in the center. “The first one was given my name,” she said, laughing.

Respeito Chirrinze, Mozambique episcopal area disaster management coordinator, said that the United Methodist Committee on Relief has provided a \$10,000 grant to provide food and sanitation to areas affected by Cyclone Idai. UMCOR has helped 180 families in Nicoadala in the resettlement center of Dicudiva; 37 families in the United Methodist Church Mozambique Training Center in Dondo District in Manica Province and 35 people at the Dondo Orphanage, he said.

No more trees

The Rev. Francisco Viagem Tivane, pastor of Dondo United Methodist Church, surveying the damage in his community commented, “People probably won’t plant trees near their homes after this cyclone.”

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Court Rulings Escalate Talk of Church Split

BY HEATHER HAHN
UM News Service

Rulings by The United Methodist Church's top court on General Conference 2019 action have some church members celebrating and some planning exit strategies.

Whatever happens next, it's clear significant changes are coming to the 12.5-million-member denomination that just celebrated its 51st anniversary and remains deeply divided over the role of LGBTQ people in the church.

[The Judicial Council ruled](#) that parts of [the Traditional Plan](#) are in line with the denomination's constitution and struck down other parts. The result is that a good portion of the plan that strengthens enforcement of church bans on same-sex marriage and "self-avowed practicing" gay clergy will be added to the Book of Discipline, the denomination's policy book.

The church court, [modifying an earlier decision](#), also upheld legislation that in effect suspends the denomination's centuries-old [trust clause](#) and opens the way for congregations under certain conditions to leave with their property. The Judicial Council stressed that annual conference approval is among those conditions.

The church-disaffiliation legislation takes effect immediately. The constitutional parts of the Traditional Plan will take effect on Jan. 1,

2020, in the United States, and 12 months after the 2020 General Conference in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.

"This is a significant step forward in restoring the accountability of our covenant," said the Rev. Thomas Lambrecht, one of the primary authors of the Traditional Plan. He is also the vice president of Good News, an unofficial advocacy group. He said the group and other members of the like-minded advocates plan to bring legislation to fix the constitutional problems and add other reforms to the 2020 General Conference.

"This clear ruling should help moderates and progressives realize that the decision of General Conference is not going to be changed in the near future," Lambrecht said.

Among those thinking about next steps is the Rev. Tim Bruster, senior pastor of First United Methodist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. He is the General Conference delegate who made the motion for the Judicial Council review of the Traditional Plan, and had filed a brief urging the court to void the entire plan.

He said for many in his congregation, the Traditional Plan's punitive measures are intolerable. He is among the church leaders who plan to discuss the denomination's future at a [May 20–22 meeting in Kansas](#).

"There are many people who are moderates

and progressives who are trying to find a way forward," he said. "I think for the vast majority of us, we don't just want to disaffiliate. We have to have somewhere to go."

In any case, he said, "it appears our differences are irreconcilable."

The Rev. Alex da Silva Souto, an openly queer pastor, is a leader of UMForward, which is working on a fresh Methodist expression. That group [will meet May 17–18 in Minneapolis](#).

"Progressives have been fighting for survival mechanisms and deploying creative forms of resistance for so long, but now many of our places of refuge have been taken away," said da Silva Souto, who was also a General Conference delegate. "We are ready to begin thriving through God's grace, rather than remain in survival mode."

Ahead of General Conference 2019, the strongest calls for disaffiliation came from supporters of the Traditional Plan. The Wesleyan Covenant Association, an unofficial advocacy group, had made contingency plans to possibly form a new denomination if the rival One Church Plan had prevailed. That plan would have left questions of marriage up to individual churches and clergy, and ordination up to conferences.

Now the tables are turned. The Wesleyan

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Omaha Teens Delay Confirmation Over LGBTQ+ Ban

BY DAVID BURKE
Great Plains Conference

After eight months of confirmation classes as an introduction to United Methodism, a group of eight junior-high students at an Omaha church said they don't want to join the denomination until people of all sexual orientations have the right to marry in the local church and serve as pastors.

The Omaha First UMC youth made a [statement](#) during services at what was to be their Confirmation Sunday, April 28.

"We want to be clear that, while we love our congregation, we believe that the United Methodist policies on LGBTQ+ clergy and same sex marriage are immoral," the statement read.

"They're very much aware of what's going on in the church, and what process we're in the middle of," said the Rev. Kent Little, the church's senior pastor. "They want to stand in solidarity with LGBTQIA persons in The United Methodist Church."

Little said the students began to become concerned after the special session of General

Conference in February, when the Traditional Plan—prohibiting practicing LGBTQ pastors in the denomination and forbidding clergy to perform same-sex weddings—passed by the delegates.

An outline of the students' statement was read to the church council in early April, Little said, in the same meeting where the church said it would defy the vote and allow same-sex weddings in its church and allow its pastors to officiate at such ceremonies.

Little said the decision came as a surprise to those not on the council. Parents of the students were notified of their intentions several weeks earlier.

"It was received with a lot of tears and a standing ovation from the congregation," Little said. "Then we had a blessing for each one of them affirming their faith, affirming their courage and their conviction to say, 'Not yet, until everybody's included.'"

Tim Fickenscher, who has been teaching confirmation classes for nearly 30 years, said the decision during the special session in February

upset many of the students.

"We talked quite a bit about the decision, and they were pretty angry about it at the time," he said. "They went with it somewhere where I wasn't prepared to go, but I wasn't surprised."

Fickenscher was youth director and confirmation class teacher in 1997 when Omaha First UMC's pastor, Jimmy Creech, performed a same-sex blessing for a lesbian couple on church grounds. After a complaint by a church member, Creech was put on trial and defrocked.

Little said he admired the group's courage to take a stand.

"That's not an easy thing to do, when the tradition of the church is that you go through this process and confirm your faith and join as a full member," he said. "When you have seventh- and eighth-graders choose to stand up and say 'No, we're not going to do that until the church is open to everybody,' that's not a small thing."

"We trust their faith and their stance, whether they would have joined or not," he added. "That's what confirmation is about."

Rulings Escalate Talk of Church Split

Continued from page 7

Covenant Association, which represents 1,500 churches and 150,000 United Methodists, has no plans to leave.

However, the Revs. Keith Boyette, group president, and Jeff Greenway, chairman, say the group “remains eager to engage in good faith conversations with others with the goal of birthing new Methodist expressions as the best way to resolve our irreconcilable differences so that we might bless one another rather than being at war with one another.”

The Rev. Beth Ann Cook, the General Conference delegate who presented the revised version of the disaffiliation legislation ultimately adopted, said she would have felt compelled to leave if the One Church Plan prevailed. She sees the “gracious exit path” as a way of treating people as she would want to be treated.

The full implications for the denomination’s global connection remain unknown.

The Rev. Jerry P. Kulah, who leads the unofficial advocacy group Africa Initiative that championed the Traditional Plan, said he supports the disaffiliation for United Methodist churches and conferences that won’t abide by General Conference.

“The results of General Conference 2019 have given me much hope for a brighter future of the global United Methodist Church,” said Kulah, who was also a General Conference delegate from Liberia.

Audun Westad, a delegate from the Norway Conference, doesn’t see any reason to celebrate. He said the new enforcement mechanisms, specifically those aimed at clergy who officiate at same-sex unions, appear to violate labor laws in Norway.

“The Traditional Plan is really bad publicity,” he added. “We now belong to a denomination that is in opposition with the majority of the population when it comes to inclusiveness of LGBTQ people.”

David Field, a United Methodist in Switzerland, said even if some form of institutional division is inevitable, “we will be able to continue working together in mission.”

Still, there are United Methodists who at least for now plan to stay and resist the Traditional Plan.

Reconciling Ministries Network, an unofficial advocacy group that supports full equality of LGBTQ individuals, plans to resist actions taken by the 2019 General Conference, show up at the 2020 assembly and remain open to new possibilities for the church. The group represents 1,013 reconciling communities and 40,837 individuals.

“We believe there is still a place for LGBTQ Christians in the church. Indeed, the church needs LGBTQ Christians,” said Jan Lawrence, the group’s executive director.

Some of the denomination’s experience is playing out in the confirmation class at First United Methodist Church in Omaha, Nebraska.

On April 28, the eight students who had completed their confirmation studies announced they were delaying their confirmation service, which would mark them officially becoming church members. They said they want to see how their local church, whose pastor supports LGBTQ equality, responds to General Conference.

“But until then, we will continue to stand up against unjust actions that the denomination is taking,” the students said in a letter to the congregation.

What in the Traditional Plan is constitutional?

The Judicial Council, The United Methodist Church’s top court, ruled that the following changes in the Traditional Plan can take effect. For a chart of the decision, click [here](#).

- A more specific definition of “self-avowed practicing homosexual,”

to say it includes people “living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union or is a person who publicly states she or he is a practicing homosexual.”

- A ban on bishops consecrating gay bishops elected by a jurisdictional or central conference.
- Prohibitions on the recommendation or approval of clergy candidates who do not meet clergy qualifications, including those related to homosexuality. The prohibitions also now require bishops to rule any unqualified candidate out of order even if approved by the clergy session.
- A minimum penalty for clergy found guilty of performing a same-sex wedding—one year’s suspension without pay for the first offense and loss of credentials for the second.
- Requirements that bishops only dismiss a complaint against clergy if it has “no basis in law or fact” and that they share those reasons with the complainant.
- The requirement those filing a complaint be involved in any agreement to resolve the case without a church trial.
- The right of the church to appeal church trial findings “based on egregious errors of church law or administration.”

Both this and the ruling allowing church disaffiliation “are clear and sound and they give helpful guidance to the Church,” wrote Bishop Ken Carter, Council of Bishops president and leader of the Florida Conference.

A Letter from NEJ Vision Table

Northeastern Jurisdiction United Methodists,

During this Easter season when we celebrate new life, renewal, and hope, we give thanks to God for the many ways United Methodists throughout the Northeastern Jurisdiction are making a positive difference in the community. Yet, we recognize that our Church is not fully living into the promise of Easter. We are a broken institution—an unperfected body, still moving toward God’s vision of the beloved community.

We lament that before, during, and after the Special Session of General Conference 2019, we have done serious harm to one another, including our sisters and brothers in the LGTBQIA+ community; and failed to live up to Jesus’ example of agape love. We acknowledge that we stand in the need of God’s healing grace. And so, with humble hearts, we call upon one another, in the covenant community of United Methodists, to join in confession.

As we prepare for our annual conference sessions, we ask you to join with us in praying our eucharistic prayer of confession daily, so that we come together for holy conferencing with hearts of peace, resolved to do no more harm, to do good, to stay in love with God and be open to the leading of the Spirit as we seek to be in ministry with all of God’s children

May we humbly pray, every day:

Merciful God,

we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have failed to be an obedient church.

We have not done your will,

we have broken your law,

we have rebelled against your love,

we have not loved our neighbors,

and we have not heard the cry of the needy.

Forgive us, we pray.

Free us for joyful obedience,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Together in Christ,

Members of the Northeastern Jurisdiction Vision Table

Easter People Living in a Good Friday World

BY JACOB DHARMARAJ, Ph.D

The horrific attacks on Christian worshippers on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka churches and hotels shook me to the core, as my wife, Glory, had spent her childhood in that country. Her relatives are still living there. When the news broke out about the [blasts on Easter morning](#), she waited with bated breath to hear from some of her relatives. The shutting down of all communication by the government, including social media, made for a time fraught with anxiety.

When we decided to worship that morning at the United Methodist Church of Mount Kisco—standing a few feet from the pew where three generations of the Clinton family were seated—the pastor made a brief reference to the unbelievable attacks in Sri Lanka and said, “We are Easter people living in a Good Friday world.” A poignant and powerful summary of the Easter message, I said to myself.

Practicing costly faith

The violence in Sri Lanka was another reminder of how Christians in some parts of the world pay with their lives for their faith in Jesus Christ. Bombings and shootings during Holy Week and the Christmas season, when churches experience their highest attendance of the year, have become almost a common occurrence in South Asian countries, such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

As a minority group, Christians in these countries regularly face various forms of oppression and discrimination, but to pay with their lives is becoming a regular occurrence. In that part of the world, aside from religious extremism and political sectarianism, Christianity is often misconstrued as a hangover from colonial era, and an attack against Christians is an attack against the “Christian West.”

A traumatized church

Church services across Sri Lanka have faced some sort of disruption during the past few months, according to Ruki Fernando, a human rights activist. Just days before on Palm Sunday, an extremist group pelted a Methodist building in Anuradhapura with stones and rocks – an action that trapped the fearful worshippers inside the building for hours. But this Easter Sunday’s bombings were unprecedented, and will leave an indelible scar on the minds and memory of the Christian minority in Sri Lanka.

COMMENTARY

The visual image of the shattered church bombings, bodies slumped over wooden pews, and babies and their mothers strewn all over the nave will not find healing in the near future.

There is no template for grief, especially for those who have lost their dear ones violently. Grief is a long-term project. It has its own topography—jagged and unpredictable. It is circular. Recovery may appear to occur but it is almost always partial. Life may continue as normal. What else can they do? But loss endures.

Fear in small spaces

This unprecedented tragic event calls for a concerned response from all of us Christians and the adherents of other faiths to redress the problem. Violence, injustice and persecution of followers of any faith should make everyone at least a bit nervous. Undoubtedly, there is no simple solution to this horrific tragedy.

We live in a world where religion is increasingly seen as divisive and extreme. Mere legislation alone cannot defeat violence, injustice, and evil. They can barely contain it. Despite the advancement in secularization, social media and globalization, more and more people are becoming religiously conservative and fundamentalist. Religious fundamentalism is steadily on the rise in all parts of the world.

I firmly believe, political response alone will not disentangle religious violence. Politicians, legislations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may offer frameworks, structures, and respites—but these are no substitute for the inner work that our loved ones and spiritual advisors can offer us.

Jonathan Sacks, the British rabbi and philosopher, writes in his book, “Not in God’s Name: Confronting Religious Violence,” that violence against others is a “politicized religious extremism.” While diagnosing this malaise, Sacks says, “The 21st century has left us with a maximum of choice and a minimum of meaning. Religion has returned because it is hard to live without meaning.” Given that “no society has survived for long without either a religion or a substitute for religion,” and believers are burgeoning, Sacks predicts that the next 100 years will be more religious than the last. He arrives at the conclusion that any cure for violence in God’s name must work with

religion as a fact of life. Only religious leaders who have a care for community as a whole can bring a safe place not only to live but to worship freely as well.

Prayer and Activism

Extreme violence against humanity today is increasingly religion-based, fundamentalism-informed, globally-connected, and locally-grounded. It is trapped in self-inflaming conflagrations that could easily burn on for decades to come. No amount of dialogical catharsis can subdue the dark roil of violence and trauma.

Religious leaders of all persuasions ought to nurture their adherents in the elemental teachings that bind all religions together—to “see the image of God in one who is not made in their image,” not to raise their children to kill someone else’s children and to respect places of worship as sacred and holy.

This Easter Sunday violence shook millions of people around the world. Although my wife’s family members were okay, the news was not something that made us blissful. I only dream of a day when two selves from Christian and Islamic backgrounds genuinely meet and cross the abyss separating self from self, where one searching heart meets another and finds grace and peace. Neither attempts to change the other, yet both are changed by the very act of reaching out as fellow pilgrims on a spiritual path. In the final analysis, all humanity is connected beneath the surface like the giant colonies of aspen trees in Colorado that are actually all one organism.

Let us also remember, in the Body of Christ, there is no “us” and “them.” There is only “we” and “us.” May the bombs that broke the hearts of our sisters and brothers in Sri Lanka break our hearts too so that we may stand in solidarity with one another, and work for the freedom for all to worship and practice their faith without fear. It is not law that changes us, but the divine light that transforms us.

This tragedy is just another reminder that religion indeed plays a vital role for peaceful co-existence. Hans Küng, a Roman Catholic theologian of the past century, aptly summarized this sentiment when he said, “Peace in the world is not possible without peace among religions.”

(Dharmaraj, is a retired member of NYAC and a member of the denomination’s Connectional Table)

OBITUARIES

Marya Rodgers

Marya Rodgers, 83, of Kenoza Lake, N.Y., died on April 25, 2019. She was the wife of retired New York Conference elder, the Reverend Kenneth Rodgers.

She was born to Elizabeth and Leonardo Boelhouwer on January 29, 1936, in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. After graduating from a private Catholic school in Amsterdam, Rodgers immigrated to the United States in 1953, where she lived with her parents in Brooklyn, and worked at Long Island College Hospital as an X-ray technician.

The couple was married in 1958, the same year that he graduated from Yale Divinity School. Over the next 39 years they served together at United Methodist churches in Oceanside, Central Valley, and Pleasantville, N.Y., and at Torrington UMC in Connecticut.

After Rev. Rodgers' retirement in 1997, the couple moved permanently to the home they have had for 52 years in Kenoza Lake, N.Y. In retirement, the couple served Community UMC in Kauneonga Lake, Mongaup Valley UMC, and Bethel UMC.

Rodgers served in a variety of roles including Sunday School teacher and office assistant. She loved music and the ballet, and supported the Shandeele Music Festival.

In addition to her husband, Rodgers is survived by sons, Tom Rodgers of Northlake, Texas, and John Rodgers of Torrington, Conn; a granddaughter, Olivia Rodgers; and brother, Leo Boelhouwer.

A memorial service was held May 5 at the Kenoza Lake UMC, with Pastor Walter Haff officiating. A reception followed at the church. Memorial donations may be made to the Delaware Youth Center's Swimming Program, 8 Creamery Rd, Callicoon, NY 12723.

Rev. Donald Willard Sneller

The Reverend Donald Willard Sneller, 92, died on April 5, 2019.

Rev. Sneller was born on April 2, 1927, and grew up in Burnsville, Minn. He joined the U.S. Navy at the age of 17, serving on a destroyer escort in the Pacific Theater during WWII. Following his discharge from the Navy, he married Tallie Louise Keahey on October 8, 1946. The couple opened an electrical contracting business in Waterville and Fairbault, Minn., before being called to ministry in 1958. Sneller served churches in Janesville and Elysian, Minn., while attending Mankato State College.

Sneller then served six small churches in the mountains of North Georgia while attending the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Atlanta. In 1964, with the support of the Methodist Church Board of Missions and the Methodist Women's Society, the Snellers began work with the poor in the projects of Atlanta, the first real inner-city ministry there. While in Atlanta, the couple became involved with the civil rights movement. In 1966, they returned in Minnesota, where they formed another inner-city ministry in St. Paul.

In 1969, Sneller joined the New York Conference, where he served East Avenue UMC in Norwalk, Conn., for three years, and as associate program director for the conference for two years. He then pastored Community UMC in Massapequa, N.Y., until his retirement in 1986.

After retirement, the couple moved to North Carolina, where he served UM churches in Windom, Martin's Chapel, and Celso. Following a second retirement, he served as interim pastor at the Higgins and Bakersville churches.

The Snellers raised five children: Corinne Sneller, Denise Cook, Douglas Sneller, Teresa Henshall and James Sneller. He also leaves an innumerable amount of extended family, including spouses, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

A celebration of life was held April 11, 2019, at First Baptist Church in Burnsville, N.C. Memorial donations may be made to [Reconciliation House](#) in Burnsville, or [Shepherd's Staff](#) in Spruce Pine, N.C. Cards and notes may be sent to: Tallie Sneller, Smokey Ridge Health and Rehabilitation, 310 Pensacola Rd, Burnsville, NC 28714.

Jenny A. Schrock

Jenny A. Schrock of Cairo, N.Y., died March 29, 2019 after a long illness. She was 86.

She was the wife of Rev. Robert C. Schrock, who served in the New York Conference at First UMC in Brewster, N.Y.; St. Paul and St. Andrew in Manhattan; and Pound Ridge and Vista UMCs in N.Y. Rev. Schrock retired in 1978.

In addition to her husband, she is survived by eight children, 13 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. There will be a gathering of her family and friends on Saturday, June 1, 2019, in Cairo, to celebrate her life.

Pastor Susan M. DeSousa

Pastor Susan M. DeSousa, 75, died December 24, 2018, in New Milford, Conn.

DeSousa was born on February 3, 1943, in Detroit, and in 1964 graduated from the University of Michigan, where she was a member of Alpha Phi sorority.

She served South Meriden Trinity UMC from 2000 until retirement in 2011. While at South Meriden she spearheaded the creation of Unity House as a way to create safe and loving homes for the settlement of displaced refugees from around the world.

Previously, DeSousa taught school in Jackson, Mich., where she also served on the school board from 1974–1976. She received a distinguished service award for her work there.

DeSousa had a love of music across many genres, and was a talented singer in both professional and amateur venues. She believed that “one who sings, prays twice.”

She is survived by her husband, William DeSousa; son, Michael (Stephanie) Jones; daughter, Carol (Andrew Freeburg) Jones; brother, Mark Colby; sister, Karen Colby; and grandchildren, Aidan Freeburg, Lucas Freeburg, Alex Jones, and Zachary Jones. Condolences may be left for the family at thoughtsforsusan@gmail.com.

Rev. Karen Cook and Rev. Ken Kieffer presided at a private memorial at the DeSousa home in New Milford on January 12, 2019. Donations may be made in her memory to the [National Kidney Foundation](#) or the [National MS Society](#).

“Holy Habits” Resource Booklets Available

These resources, which include an introductory guide, have been developed to help churches explore the holy habits in a range of contexts and live them out in whole-life, missional discipleship. The booklets supplement the “Holy Habits” book by Andrew Roberts that explores Luke’s model of church found in Acts 2:42–47.

If your church would like a set of these resources, please contact Carol Merante. The discounted cost is \$50 for one set of 11 booklets. Make checks payable to NYAC, and put “HH Resources” in the memo and then send to NYAC, 20 Soundview Avenue, White Plains NY 10606, ATTN: Carol Merante. Please also include your mailing information.

Committee Aligns Language in GC2019 Petitions

The Committee on Correlation and Editorial Revision (CCER), a standing committee of the General Conference, met during and immediately after General Conference 2019 to execute its duties to correlate all legislation passed by the General Conference.

In its review of all approved legislation, on Wednesday, February 27 in St. Louis, the committee found four petitions that used differing language from *The Book of Discipline* wording “self-avowed practicing homosexual.” Elsewhere in other petitions submitted within the Traditional Plan, the petition language was in alignment with and also referenced the footnote to ¶ 304.3 where “self-avowed practicing homosexual” is defined.

In four petitions passed by the General Conference, the wording was inconsistent, sometimes omitting the wording “self-avowed” and sometimes omitting the word “practicing.” In its correlation work during the editorial process, the committee brought all the petitions into harmony within the Traditional Plan, using the language “self-avowed practicing.” This work was done with the awareness that all legislation was subject to review by the Judicial Council.

Latest New Appointments

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton intends to make the following appointments to be effective July 1, 2019.

Daniel Asibuoh-Sarpong to Derby UMC, CT
Brian Bodt to Hamden Plains UMC, CT
Jacqueline Carter to Union UMC, Brooklyn, LIW
Oon Don Choi to Hartford Korean UMC, CT
Esau Greene to Fordham UMC, Bronx, MET
Edward Horne to Litchfield UMC, CT
Miyoung Kang to Sea Cliff UMC, LIW
Kwang-il Kim to Delaware Headwaters Parish, CH
Samuel Jaesam Lee to Westhampton UMC, LIW
Morais Quissico to St. Mark’s UMC, Brooklyn, LIW
Gunshik Shim to St. Mark’s UMC, Rockville Center, LIW
Jennifer Stultz to Community UMC of Middle Village/
 Forest Hills, LIW

“Done in a Day”—Ministry of Care & Repair

The “Done in a Day” mission started as a response to Superstorm Sandy. It was a program designed to engage small volunteer teams in the recovery effort by assigning them to locations and projects that were well organized and managed, and with a specific task for a day. The catch phrase was, “Start early, end late—done in a day!”

As the New York Conference’s Sandy response effort drew to a close, this ministry was transitioned to engage the many skills and energies of local church volunteers for more local, non-disaster projects.

How does it work? A local church would identify local homes and homeowners who may need some repair assistance, who may not be able to afford repairs, or who may need some tender-loving care through home

After Judicial Council Decision #1378 was released on April 26, 2019, only one of those four harmonized petitions was found to be constitutional. That was Petition 90036 addressing ¶ 415.6.

On May 2 in the course of its editorial review of the entire “Addendum to *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2016*,” the committee reaffirmed its correlation work of February 27, 2019. The electronic Addendum to the 2016 *Book of Discipline* will be available at umofficialresources.com/updates as soon as additional matters are reviewed and confirmed by the Judicial Council and General Council on Finance and Administration.

Brewington, Hawkins Featured AC Speakers

Continued from page 3

by the July 31 deadline will receive \$100 PulseCash, a lower annual deductible next year and a complete report about their health.

Hygiene Kits

Please deliver your assembled kits and \$2 per kit to the designated booth on the mezzanine level of the Hofstra arena on Thursday and Friday. To be certain that all the correct items are in your kits, click [here](#) for the most current list and assembly instructions.

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed in a variety of roles: ushers, stage hands, hospitality desk/welcome center, and to help with the collection/boxing of hygiene kits. Please indicate your preference when registering and you will be contacted by the group managing each of the volunteer opportunities.

The worship team is also looking for lay people with the gift of healing to be part of an evening service on Friday, June 7 at Hofstra. Team members must be able to attend one training session on June 1 at the conference center. For more information or to volunteer, please [email](#) Ximena Varas. Register online for the [healing prayer workshop](#).

repairs. This might be done through church contacts, senior networks, or social service agencies. A priority is given to low-income families, seniors, persons with disabilities, single-parent families, and others with special needs or circumstances. Members of the local church would develop a scope of work and the volunteer labor for the effort. The Missions office will assist with funding if requested.

This is a great way to engage church volunteers, of all skill levels, in hands-on ministry. It is as much about our presence as it is about repairs.

For more information, or to establish a “Done in a Day” project through your church, please contact Tom Vencuss via [email](#).

In Aftermath of Cyclone, Faith Abides

Continued from page 6

Large coconut trees are uprooted and lying on the ground in crazy directions. Many fell on houses.

“When the cyclone started, I never thought it would have this impact,” said Lolita Meleco Nhavotso, a member of Tivane’s church.

Sitting on a mat, picking through a platter of roasted peanuts, Nhavotso recalled the night of March 14.

She said around noon, the wind started blowing. She tried to go to bed at 8 p.m. but at midnight, she walked outside to see what was going on.

“That’s wasn’t easy, some trees had already fallen,” she said. The storm roared across the village around 1 a.m. The roof of her sister-in-law’s house came off and the family crowded into Nhavosto’s house. Eventually, her roof also came off.

“I am very limited to even think what I am going to do,” she said. “I use my cell phone for a light at night.”

Thousands are still without electricity—I dai snapped and bent the electric poles in her path. Along the roads, men are working on rewiring the country.

“I continue holding my faith,” Nhavosto said. “This wasn’t somebody’s fault, it happened to everyone for a reason. I still believe my God loves me.”

Not far away, the Rev. Benilde Facaia Pale, director of Dondo United Methodist Orphanage, stood watching men working to repair the roof of one of the dormitories.

The staff and the 24 children living there sheltered in the bunk beds, “and that saved us from the flying iron tins of the roof,” she said.

Shelter in the storm

The Gondola Training Center, a United Methodist school for church leaders, became shelter for many in the area during the critical days after Cyclone Idai hit Chimoio and surrounding areas.

Natalia Inacio was sleeping inside her tiny home with 10 family members, including eight children. They ran to the center when the winds and rain started taking their home apart.

Almoco Julice and his wife, Louisa Albeino, said they were surprised by the ferocity of the storm. They also fled to the center.

The Rev. Filipe Elija Massango, superintendent of the Manica District, and the Rev. Manuel Maswanganhe, Gondola Training Center’s director, said that the center was



PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE, UMNS

The Rev. Jacob Jenhuro inspects damage to Macate United Methodist Church after the roof was torn off by Cyclone Idai near Chimoio, Mozambique. Jenhuro is episcopal assistant in the Mozambique North Conference.

damaged but it was the families who really suffered the most.

Massango said 28 families—126 people—huddled in one of the buildings. Some still come to the school for a safe place to sleep at night, he added.

“All those days when it was still raining, we fed them three meals a day,” he said. “After that we could only offer lunch.”

There is a water pump on the campus and four wells in the community, all built by The United Methodist Church.

“We drink clean water but malaria still prevails,” Maswanganhe said. “We have not experienced cholera.”

No more fruit

Macate United Methodist Church sits on a hilltop near Chimoio. After Cyclone Idai, it still sits on that hilltop, topless.

“The house of the Lord has been destroyed,” said the Rev. Robert Onisimus Zitsandza. “Because we have no roof, we worship under this tree.”

Candida Ernesto, lay leader, said she really can’t say how long she has been the lay leader. “Almost every pastor who comes wants me to work with them as lay leader. One of my responsibilities is to make sure people are moving forward in their Christian lives.”

When the cyclone was raging, Ernesto said she was not afraid. She said John 3:16 sustains her. That verse says: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

“I understood everything is under God’s control. Only God knows why something happens this way or that.”

Lucas Filipe Paulo Mugadue, the chair of United Methodist Men, called it a miracle that so many survived.

United Methodist Women chair Joaquina Ferro Jeque said lots of the fruit that Macate is known for was destroyed in the storm.

“Iron sheets flew off our houses and we found them on the roadsides. That is something that is very sad to us but we were delivered by God’s hand.”

Ernesto had one last message to the rest of The United Methodist Church: “We are not going back; we continue to go forward.”

At the end of the meeting, the group gathered under the tree, singing “Forward with Jesus.”

To make a donation to UMCOR’s International Disaster Response, [click here](#).

Gilbert is a news writer and DuBose is staff photographer for United Methodist News Service.

Agency Recommends Social Principle Changes

The board of directors of the General Board of Church and Society met April 23–26 in Washington, D.C., and decided on items to be put before the 2020 General Conference.

Following years of research, collaboration and writing across the denomination, the board voted to recommend a [complete revision of the Social Principles](#) of The United Methodist Church.

Three of the goals of the revision were to craft a version of the Social Principles that is more deeply theologically rooted, more succinct and more globally relevant. The revision will be available after it has been translated into multiple languages.

The board passed a motion for the 2020 General Conference to consider reducing the size of the board and increase the proportional representation of members from central conferences. The board currently has 62 members, of which 11 percent must be from central conferences. The board recommends General Conference change that to 32 members, of which at least 22 percent must come from central conferences. That change will make Church and Society a leader among the denomination's boards and agencies for central conference representation.

The board also made several recommendations to current resolutions and recommended the 2020 General Conference adopt nine new resolutions. Along with the Social Principles revision, the board sought to make the resolutions more theologically rooted, succinct and globally relevant. The texts of these will be released when finalized.

New resolutions on:

- Organ and tissue donation
- Suicide: A pastoral response
- A call for civility in public discourse
- The United Nations and multilateralism
- Eradicating abusive child labor
- Rights of all persons
- Church to be in ministry with all
- Alcohol and drugs (new resolution that combines existing resolutions)
- Energy policy statement (new resolution that combines existing resolutions)

“Human Chain” Pushes for Korean Peace

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

On 27 April, some 500,000 people joined hands to form a “human peace chain” along the 500-kilometer long Demilitarized Zone between South and North Korea. They expressed their strong desire for permanent peace in the Korean Peninsula, gathering to celebrate the first anniversary of Panmunjom Declaration and commemorate the centennial of the 1 March Independence Movement.

Rev. Sang Chang, World Council of Churches (WCC) Asia president, urged WCC member churches and all people of good will to continue to express their solidarity with Korean people. “The WCC will continue to work with the Korean people for the permanent peace on the Korean peninsula,” Chang said on the day the chain was formed.

In a message, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit said the WCC endorsed a worldwide call for the reunification of Korea. “As a Christian fellowship, the WCC will continue to stand with our brothers and sisters in Korea and invite all Christians to pray for the Korean peninsula and that God’s will, for justice and peace, be done,” Tveit wrote.

Human peace chain participants, in a call to action issued on April 27, said the wish of the people has been expressed. “With just one heart, we took our neighbors’ hands, looking for the day when we will hold our hands of North and South from Halla to Baekdu,” they wrote. “Through 70 years of separation, we learned that peace is the responsibility of our people.”

Their independence is more necessary than ever, the call notes. “It is more so because the peace that we have restored will benefit the world,” reads the text. “We do not doubt that the suffering of the 70 years’ division will become the foundation and the asset for the advancement of the world.”

Source: www.oikoumene.org

A Note About Upcoming Annual Conference

As a member of the global Wesleyan Covenant Association and also the NYAC Wesleyan Fellowship I want to express my gratitude to those in our conference who truly listen to the “other” and seek to serve Jesus Christ with grace and compassion. It is my hope that the time we will be spending at Hofstra in June will be positive, productive, and prayerful as we work together to explore the future of the New York Annual Conference.

Many who attended the recent gathering at Purchase College came away in shock and dismay over the spectacle that was presented. Clearly the rhetoric in the room was one-sided in favor of the progressive agenda and dismissive of traditional viewpoints and the results of the 2019 Special General Conference. As you are aware, the Judicial Council upheld much of the modified Traditional Plan and also a petition allowing for amicable separation for those congregations that cannot abide by the decisions



of the Special General Conference.

Many of the statements made at Purchase were damaging and hurtful to those of us who love the church and support the traditional teachings. We call upon our annual conference and our bishop to recommit with us to the vows we as laity, deacons, elders, and bishops willingly took at our reception and ordination, and/or consecration into the UMC.

We in the Wesley Fellowship and the NYAC Chapter of the Wesleyan Covenant Association welcome the opportunity to join with all our sisters and brothers in true holy conferencing at the June gathering of our NYAC at Hofstra to find a way to affirm one another as followers of

Jesus Christ.

On June 7, one of the Friday night dinners will be hosted by the NYAC Wesley Fellowship. We are pleased to have as our guest speaker Reverend William J. Abraham: Albert Cook Outler Professor of Wesley Studies, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. Rev. Abraham is an ordained elder in the Southwest Texas Conference and one of the most insightful theologians in our church. His widely read works include the topics of evangelism, and systematic and practical theology. He serves on the General Commission on Unity and Interreligious Concerns of the UMC and has done extensive research in Methodist theology.

And may God richly bless each and every one of us in the days, months, and years ahead!

Sincerely,
Pastor Steve Knutsen
United Methodist Church of Seaford