

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

THE VISION



August 2019



Prayers, Donations Revive Bay Shore UMC

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY
Editor, *The Vision*

The first time Reverend Wendy Modeste walked into the sanctuary of the Bay Shore United Methodist Church, she looked around and thought to herself, "Oh, boy, we have work to do." When Modeste arrived in July 2014, paint was peeling and falling off the pressed tin ceiling and the walls of the sanctuary in the church on Long Island's south shore.

"The church was in a really bad place . . . there was no money for repairs," Modeste said. And they were behind on their bills and shared apportionment payments.

But the deferred maintenance did not end in the sanctuary. There were problems in the fellowship hall, basement, education wing, and parsonage, too. The church complex on East Main Street in Bay Shore includes an 1893 Richardsonian Romanesque-style sanctuary built

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YAMs Tackle Repair Work, Share God's Love

The Youth in Ambassadors in Mission team helped brighten up two churches and some classrooms with paint while sharing the light of God in a pair of communities in Ecuador. Read about their experiences on Page 5.

Campers Get Visit from Hillary Clinton

Editor's note: Rev. Bill Shillady and Rev. Joanne S. Utley collaborated on this story.

Camp Olmsted, which has been creating special experiences for its campers in Cornwell on Hudson, N.Y., for more than 118 years, added another special memory with a visit from former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Clinton came to tour the camp on July 23, and to meet six young women who were chosen to receive scholarships given in her name this summer. The campers in the second session of this year's camp had no idea that Clinton would be visiting.

One of the six girls, 10-year-old Saraj Good from Newburgh, N.Y.,



Secretary Clinton talks with one of the counselors during her visit to Camp Olmsted.

said in a phone interview that she had been excited to meet Clinton.

"It was the best experience I've ever had in camp," Good said. "She made me feel excited about myself . . . that I'm a good person."

Good and the other five scholarship recipients—Ayevah Marinez, Bianca Martelli, Leyana Narvarro, Angelina Martelli, and Nina Levret de Melo—met with Secretary Clinton to share their experiences of Camp Olmsted and talk about how the skills they are learning help make them better students and leaders in their school and community.

Angelina Martelli, who has been coming to Olmsted for seven of her 13 years, called the camp "her home away from home."

"When I first came here as a little kid, I thought I could do whatever I wanted," she said in a

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A donation can in the church sanctuary.



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

7/5–8/30 Conference Center Summer Schedule

Starting July 5, the conference center will be closed on Fridays for the summer.

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](#) and come for any combination of days. Hostel-style and private rooms available.

8/22–24 “NAVIGATE: Unleashing the Leader in You”

This event sponsored by the Northeastern Jurisdiction sets out to equip current and future leaders to transform their congregations and communities for Jesus Christ. Clergy and laity can explore tracks for revitalization, the small church, lay pastors, new places for new people, young leaders and conference leaders. The event will be held at the Radisson Hotel Harrisburg in Camp Hill, Penn. For more information and to register, go to the [Susquehanna Conference website](#).

9/7 Children’s Ministry Coordinator Training

This training workshop for those creating or leading children’s ministries in their churches runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the conference center. Contact Cassandra Negri, children’s ministries coordinator, at 845-926-8839, or by [email](#) for additional information and to register.

9/14 & 28 Safe Sanctuaries: Train the Trainer

These 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. workshops are directed toward the person(s) responsible for training church staff and volunteers in the church’s Safe Sanctuaries policy. Topics will include reviewing and editing the policy, cyber safety, and vulnerable adults. Participants will leave with tools to help facilitate training at their home church.

- **September 14:** Asbury UMC, Forestville, N.Y.
 - **September 28:** United Methodist Church of Shrub Oak, N.Y.
- To register or for more information, email childrensministry@nyac-umc.com.

9/15 Installation of DS Karen Monk

Join in the official installation of the new superintendent of the Catskill Hudson District at Overlook UMC, Woodstock, N.Y. The 4 p.m. event promises to include inspiring worship, uplifting music, great fellowship & feasting. [Additional details](#) on the website calendar.

9/16 Table Ministry Workshop

Learn how to do church around the table from Pastor Zach Kerzee who started [Simple Church](#) in 2014 with a simple question: What if church was a dinner party? The 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. event at the Stony Point Center, in Stony Point, N.Y., is free, but registration is limited to 50. [Register](#) on the NYAC website.

10/11–13 “Hatch-a-Thon”

Stay tuned for more info on this event to develop innovative ideas for engaging youth and young adults that was announced by Rev. David Gilmore at annual Conference.

10/26 UMM Annual Retreat

“Hearts on Fire for God II” runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Memorial UMC in White Plains. \$25 donation is requested. Rev. John Simmons Jr. and Rev. Matt Curry will be guest speakers. [Register](#) online.

11/16 Laity Convocation

Guest speaker Dr. Jacqui King from Discipleship Ministries will explore what it means to “lead courageously.” The 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. event at the Tarrytown House Estate in Tarrytown, N.Y., will include worship, fellowship and communion. Cost is \$30. Register on the [NYAC website](#) by November 8.

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

Improper Voting at GC2019 Voids Key Vote

By **HEATHER HAHN**

UM News

General Conference organizers have determined enough improper voting likely took place at the 2019 special session to nullify a key vote on how congregations can leave The United Methodist Church.

The Commission on General Conference—meeting behind closed doors during its August 7–9 meeting—reviewed an investigation that found “credible objective evidence” of four ineligible people casting votes using the credentials of delegates who were not present.

The commission did not speak in public about its investigation’s findings and did not provide the names of the accused ineligible voters or the conferences they represented.

“When you are dealing with allegations, they may or may not be factual in nature so you don’t want to do any defamation of anyone’s character by inappropriately saying certain things,” said Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton later told United Methodist News. He is the Council of Bishops representative on the commission and leads the New York Conference.

Ultimately, the commission wants the Judicial Council—the denomination’s top court—to weigh what the fraudulent voting means for the legality of the disaffiliation legislation.

The investigation findings come more than five months after a pivotal special General Conference, called by the Council of Bishops to try to resolve the longtime debate over the status of LGBTQ people. Since the Feb. 23–26 special session in St. Louis, discussions of splitting the denomination have only intensified and giving to general church ministries has dropped.

The denomination’s top lawmaking body, by a vote of 438–384, adopted the Traditional Plan that adds enforcement measures to bans on same-sex weddings and “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy.

The number of ineligible voters was too slim to affect that outcome. However, the invalid vote count was enough to cast doubt on the disaffiliation legislation that allows, [with limitations](#), congregations to leave the denomination while keeping church property.

By a two-vote margin, 402–400, the body substituted a minority report for [Petition 90066](#), the originally submitted disaffiliation legislation.

Because voting at General Conference is supposed to be confidential, the investigation did not determine whether the ineligible voters favored the substitution or not. But under Robert’s Rules of Order—which General Conference uses—the possibility that invalid ballots might affect the result of a vote invalidates the entire ballot.

“Having found sufficient evidence that there were invalid votes that potentially affected the result of the vote, the Commission determined that the vote to substitute the minority report is void,” the commission leadership said [in a press release](#).

The substitution eliminated the precondition that churches repay any grants from their annual conference. It also gave a conference’s board of trustees, rather than the bishop, a role in setting the terms and conditions of church’s departure.

The substitution required that departing churches make any payments under those terms and conditions prior to the effective date of departure. The original legislation allowed a term of payment up to 10 years.

With the substitution, the disaffiliation plan went on to pass by 420–390. It is now listed as an addendum to the Book of Discipline, the denomination’s policy book. Seven congregations in Mississippi already have used the legislation to exit the denomination.

The commission is asking the Council of Bishops to refer the matter to the Judicial Council. The church’s top court has the authority to determine



PHOTO BY HEATHER HAHN, UM NEWS

Members of the United Methodist Commission on General Conference listen during a presentation at their meeting in Lexington, Ky. From left are: Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton, the Rev. Gary George and Kim Simpson. Bickerton is the Council of Bishops representative on the commission, George is secretary and Simpson is chair.

legality of General Conference actions, and the bishops—not the commission—have the authority to request the court to weigh in.

The commission also plans to initiate conversations on membership statistics with the Council of Bishops and the General Council on Finance and Administration, the denomination’s administrative agency. An annual conference’s number of professing members helps determine its number of General Conference delegates, but the membership data available can be out of date and unreliable.

The investigation also raised the possibility of irregularities in how delegates were selected and instructed to vote. The commission, behind closed doors, voted to refer these allegations to the Council of Bishops for further investigation.

Bishops preside over annual conference meetings where delegates are elected.

The sons of two different bishops, East Congo Area Bishop Gabriel Unda and South Congo Area Bishop Kasap Owan were named in a New York Times article as possible ineligible voters. However, Unda provided UM News a document listing his son as a reserve and Kasap provided a conference journal showing his son elected as seventh reserve.

Just before *The New York Times* story appeared March 14, the Rev. Gary Graves—secretary of the General Conference—acknowledged problems with credentialing and voting. He announced that “a very limited number” of people initially denied credentials to vote had later obtained them. At the time, he declined to give a precise number.

On March 16, the General Conference commission named 12 of its members to serve on a task force to investigate improper voting. The commission also authorized staff members Graves and Sara Hotchkiss, business manager, to negotiate with auditing firms to help with the work.

The Council of Bishops’ executive committee soon called for an independent probe, and the commission hired attorneys with the Nashville, Tennessee, law firm Bass, Berry & Sims to work with the auditing firm, LBMC, in the investigation.

The auditing firm looked at available documentation for every

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Bishops Urge End To White Supremacy, Xenophobia

Council of Bishops President Bishop Ken Carter has called for United Methodists to help end white supremacy and xenophobia which he says is fuels a culture of violence.

In a response released on August 6 in the aftermath of the mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, Bishop Carter commended the statements of Bishop Gregory Palmer and Bishop Earl Bledsoe to the people of their residential areas. He noted that the carnage following these acts of violence is reminiscent of the mass shootings in Sandy Hook, Orlando, Sutherland Springs, Charlotte, Las Vegas, Parkland, Charleston and Pittsburgh.

“Underneath the violence is a culture of white supremacy and a fear of immigrants (xenophobia). These are expressions of our sinful nature [that] deny the image of God that is in every person. Christ died for all, and in this he loved us and gave himself up for us,” he said.

Bishop Carter echoed the voice of Bishop LaTrelle Easterling of the Baltimore-Washington



Bishop Ken Carter

Conference, condemning the president’s disparaging comments about Congressman Elijah Cummings and his district in Baltimore.

“The use of the presidential role granted for the purpose of serving an entire people for white privilege does great harm to us.” Counterterrorism experts believe the president’s racial rhetoric is fueling an incipient and violent white nationalist movement in our nation,

Carter noted.

He urged United Methodists in the United States who may be on opposing sides of the issue to contribute to a civil dialogue.

“We are in desperate need of leadership that does not pit us against each other. And we are in need of a dialogue that is deeply rooted in our discipleship in the way of our non-violent Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Carter reminded United Methodists that Jesus is calling all to love their neighbors. “To love our neighbor is to work for a church that does not exclude anyone, that welcomes immigrants, that reckons with the systemic realities of racism and that honors the faith of people across the political aisle from wherever we are sitting.”

He called on “our brothers and sisters in Europe, the Philippines and Africa to intercede for us in this struggle, that we would be faithful, non-violent and courageous in our discipleship.”

To read, Carter’s full statement, click [here](#).

Isom Named Communications Director

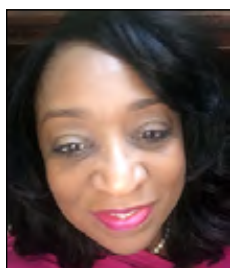
The New York Conference welcomed Lisa Isom as communications director on July 29.

Isom, a self-described “lover of words,” has more than 15 years of management experience in multi-channel communications and marketing. She has developed long-range digital communications and media relations strategies; directed enterprise internet, intranet and microsite builds; authored and edited content for digital and print mediums; managed content producers for a range of communications vehicles; devised guidelines for social media marketing; and managed large-scale digital campaigns.

She is a member of her church’s mission ministry and leads its media ministry’s marketing and communications efforts.

The author of numerous books on marketing and management, Isom has also written for numerous publications including *Fortune* magazine, *The New York Times*, *The National Law Journal*, *The American Lawyer*, *Essence*, and *Heart and Soul* magazines. She has also spoken at industry conferences and other events focusing on the risks and rewards associated with digital communications, marketing and brand building.

Isom can be reached via [email](#), or by calling 914-615-2218.



Lisa Isom



One-on-one conversations give Mission u participants an opportunity to share ideas and talk about their faith journeys.

‘Mission u’ Explores Radical Discipleship

Some 174 people from across the New York Conference gathered for three days of study, fellowship, and worship at “Mission u” from July 26–28. The group was joined at the Hilton Stamford Hotel by 46 others for the Saturday “sampler” session. The annual weekend is sponsored by the United Methodist Women (UMW) and the conference Board of Laity.

The overall theme, “Radical Discipleship: Then and Now,” prompted an exploration of the gospel of Mark on what it means to live a life shaped by the life and teachings of Jesus as well as looking at the lives of UMW foremothers who lived a life of radical discipleship.

The geographic study resource, “Women United for Change: 150 years in Mission” by Ellen Blue, celebrated the UMW’s 150 years in mission. For the second year, the gathering also explored how faith informs the use of personal finances in the “What About Our Money? A Faith Response” study. The youth and children present also studied the Gospel of Mark, helping them to define who Jesus is to them.

The Mission u leadership team for 2020 is Rev. Jeffrey L. Hooker as dean, Elise Boykin as assistant dean and Noel Mugaviri of First UMC of Jamaica as youth dean.

YAMs Tackle Repair Work, Share the Love In Ecuador

BY TOM AND WENDY VENCUSS

Twelve youth and four adult chaperones traveled to Ecuador as part of the New York Conference Youth Ambassadors in Mission (YAM) program. YAM provides young adults between the ages of 15 to 19 a valuable and spiritually enriching cross-cultural mission experience.

More than 200 youth have participated in the YAM ministry since its inception in 2005 serving in Antigua, Bolivia, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana and Haiti. While in Ecuador, Sara Flores, a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries, served as the team's host.

The team started off at a local church in Atacucho, repairing walls damaged in the 2016 earthquake as well as painting the worship area and several classrooms.

The real work was engaging with children and youth from the local community in a three-day Vacation Bible School. The church sits in a poor neighborhood and its pastor has a tremendous heart for serving the community, especially children. The YAM team led or assisted with music, games, arts and crafts, and generally shared their hearts with the community. At the end, many hugs and tears were exchanged, with some of the children following the van as it pulled away from the school. The team hopes to maintain a connection with the Ayacucho church and community.

From there, the team traveled to San Juan de Pastocalle. The morning was spent painting in a local Methodist church and school. Bishop Silvio Cevallos of the Evangelical United Methodist Church of Ecuador and other leaders of the church and school also visited.

In the midst of all of the work, there was also time to share in worship, shop at local markets and do touristy things including a visit to the Equator Museum, a chocolate factory and zip-lining across forested valleys—a first for almost everyone. It was both beautiful, exciting and a great way to end the week.

One of the highlights of the trip was evening devotions/debriefing. Discussions sometimes went on at length as the youth shared stories about their life and faith experiences, and their understanding of the role of the church in their lives and community. The conversations offered a genuine critique (both joys and concerns) of



Wendy Vencuss, above right rear, joins the YAM team in leading the singing during a three-day VBS program. The Ecuadorian children formed an easy bond with members of the team.

The 12 youth on the YAM team included:

- Steve Brandon, Fenimore Street UMC, Brooklyn
- Jordan Butler, Village Church, Bayville, N.Y.
- Kyla Golding, Adrian Harewood, and Leah Townsend-Brown, New Rochelle UMC
- Justin Lewis and Ahriana Williford, Newman Memorial UMC, Brooklyn
- Sy'rai Ryan, and Claude-Amen Sayi, Grace UMC, St. Albans
- Matthew Charles, Kyla Osbourne-Browne, and Zaria Whyte-Davis, Butler Memorial UMC, Bronx

the church today.

Wendy and I want to thank the young people who took part in this mission team. They were amazing. Our thanks go to two of our chaperones, Robin Livingston of Grace United Methodist Church in St. Albans, Queens, and Loric Townsend of New Rochelle UMC. We would also like to thank the churches and districts who supported their youth in this endeavor. The importance of experiences like this cannot be overstated.

We are already planning the 2020 YAM mission journey. Information will be available shortly. In the meantime, local churches can encourage their youth and support our YAMs by inviting one or more to speak to your church, to your youth, or share their experiences at special events.

Young Adults Called as Missionaries

Apply to become a Global Mission Fellow with the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). Global Mission Fellows:

- Are young adults ages 20 to 30.
- Have a bachelor's degree (or equivalent life experience).
- Commit to two years of service.
- Serve "with," not to or for others.
- Feel called to address roots of injustice.
- Speak conversational English.

[Applications](#) will be available online starting on September 15.



Have Mission, Will Travel

The summer months took members of the New York Conference on the road for a variety of mission programs. Clockwise from above, members of a team sponsored by the Katonah UMC warms up with a bit of dancing before a work day with the Appalachia Service Project in West Virginia; members of a U.M. ARMY Northeast team led by Rick Sloan of the Centerport UMC build stairs to the second floor of a home in Bristol, Conn., and a group from Simsbury, Conn., UMC spent a week repairing homes through the Red Bird Mission work camp program in Kentucky.



Upcoming Opportunities for Mission, Training

Puerto Rico Teams Forming

The conference's commitment to helping the people of Puerto Rico recover after Hurricane Maria remains strong and new teams are still being formed. Individual volunteer cost is \$650 which includes airfare. Email the contacts listed below for additional information:

September 25–October 2: Email [Barb Adams](#), Poughkeepsie UMC, N.Y.

October 17–24: Email [Jill Wilson](#), Prospect UMC, Bristol, Conn.

Early Response Team Training

Early response teams (ERT) are the first to go into disaster-affected areas after an "all clear" is given. These teams are a first critical step in the recovery cycle. To schedule an ERT training session, email [Art Mellor](#) of the New Paltz UMC.

Disaster Response Forums

In recognition of national preparedness month in September, three Disaster Response Forums have been scheduled around the conference:

September 28: Prospect UMC, Bristol, Conn.

October 19: St James UMC, Kingston, N.Y.

November 2: Grace UMC, Baldwin, N.Y.

Workshops will include training for early response teams, disaster care, team leadership, CPR/first aid, Narcan administration, and Connecting Neighbors. More information will follow and online registration will be required.



A group of young women chat with Secretary Clinton, at left, and Rev. Bill Shillady, at right. The six attended Camp Olmsted thanks to scholarships given in Clinton's name.

Campers Get Visit from Hillary Clinton

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phone interview from the camp. "But I learned that there are rules . . . certain ways to handle problems and that I have to take responsibility."

The camp experience has also made a big difference for 13-year-old Narvarro, who lives in The Bronx.

"Camp has taught me so many things, given me new adventures," she said in the same phone interview as the other girls. "The staff makes camp so much better." And Navarro added that having to wake up at 6:30 a.m. and be ready for the dining hall just 20 minutes later will help her navigate the transition to earlier wake-up times for high school this fall.

During Secretary Clinton's visit, she interviewed the young women and then they got to ask her the questions. Their inquiries ranged from ones about how Clinton chose to go into politics and whether she would run for president again to how is she able to balance family obligations with everything she does for the country.

Bianca Martelli of Cornwall on Hudson remembered that Clinton offered some good advice to the group.

"Try your hardest to succeed. Inspire others who are younger than you, and remember that everyone is important . . . your vote counts," the 11-year-old Martelli said.

Two years ago, Secretary Clinton spoke at a fundraiser for Camp Olmsted sponsored by the United Methodist City Society (UMCS) at Riverside Church. More than \$30,000 was raised at the event to provide scholarships for the 2018



Campers perform some dance routines for Secretary Clinton and New York-Connecticut District Superintendent Tim Riss among others.

camp season. An additional \$80,000 from the event was set aside to establish a permanent scholarship fund with the goal of help young women realize their potential as leaders who can change the world.

Following her meeting with the six young women, Clinton—along with Camp Director Mastura Medina, UMCS Associate Executive Director April Callender and UMCS Executive Director Bill Shillady—was greeted by all the campers. She shared the following encouraging words with them:

"I am a United Methodist. And I know the United Methodist City Society has supported the camp for a very long time. It is exciting to see all of the campers and the staff here. Because I just had a chance to meet with about 6 of the young women who are here and they told me how much this experience means to them and I wish I had time to hear from every one of you, what coming to the camp, first as a camper then as a counselor and staff member means to you because it was really wonderful to hear

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Court Docket Reflects Busy Conference Season

BY LINDA BLOOM

UMNS | Reaction by United Methodist regional bodies in the U.S.—as well as the Council of Bishops—to the Traditional Plan adopted by the 2019 General Conference dominates the fall agenda of the denomination's top court.

The Judicial Council has an 18-item docket to consider when it meets October 29–November 1 in Evanston, Illinois. August 19 is the deadline to submit briefs and make requests for oral hearings.

Two items are from the Council of Bishops regarding questions about legislation passed at the 2019 General Conference in St. Louis.

The bishops are asking for a declaratory decision on “the constitutionality, meaning, application and effect of certain petitions adopted as the Traditional Plan,” specifically asking five questions about the effects of the plan “that need to be addressed for the benefit of The United Methodist Church.”

The bishops also requested a ruling about the effective date of a new paragraph in the Book of Discipline about the disaffiliation of local churches over issues related to human sexuality.

Eleven of the docket items are automatic reviews by the church court of decisions of law made by nine bishops during the 2019 annual conference season. Most of those also relate to the Traditional Plan. In addition, there are four requests for a decision by the top court directly from annual conference voters.

One bishop's ruling is connected to a recent Judicial Council decision on her previous decision about the eligibility of two clergy candidates in the Baltimore-Washington Conference married to persons of the same gender.

The top court said Bishop LaTrelle Easterling overstepped her authority during the 2018 conference session by ruling that two individuals married to people of the same gender but approved by the conference's Board of Ordained Ministry were not eligible for ordination and commissioning.

In Decision 1368, the Judicial Council reversed part of her decision “since it violated the separation of powers by intruding on the responsibilities and rights of the clergy session.”

During the 2019 conference session, the Rev. Robert Barnes questioned the clergy session's voting process to approve the commissioning and ordination of the same two candidates affected by Easterling's previous decision.

The bishop ruled that the clergy elections on May 29 were properly handled. Two days later, Easterling commissioned Tara Cressler “TC” Morrow as a provisional deacon and ordained the Rev. Joey Heath-Mason as a full elder. Both Morrow and Heath-Mason are in same-sex marriages.

Several bishops ruled out of order resolutions that sought to withhold funds from the complaint process for clergy accused of violating church restrictions related to homosexuality.

A resolution of nonconformity with General Conference approved June 15 by the California-Pacific Conference was ruled “unconstitutional, null and void” by Bishop Grant Hagiya because it denies clergy the right to trial and appeal.

Bishop Laurie Haller ruled that an Iowa Conference resolution expressing disapproval with the Traditional Plan cannot prioritize in a way that eliminates funds for fair process proceedings.

Bishop Karen Oliveto found three of eight action items on a Mountain Sky Conference petition called “All are Welcomed” to be “contrary to the Book of Discipline and out of order.” Those items include “refusing to comply with the strict requirements of the Traditional Plan,” not enforcing punitive and exclusionary policies” against gays and lesbians and their supporters and taking no disciplinary action against clergy who conduct same-sex unions.”

In two decisions of law from the Upper New York Conference, Bishop Mark Webb ruled that it was permissible to express disagreement with General Conference but not to restrict funding or “impose an immediate moratorium on any punitive action related to LGBTQ clergy and same-gender weddings.”

A New England Conference resolution setting a procedure for local churches considering disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church was upheld by Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar.

Bishop William T. McAlilly found a request for a decision of law about a resolution on inclusion in the Tennessee Conference to be moot and hypothetical.

Several rulings focused on the aspirational, non-binding nature of a resolution.

Central Texas Bishop J. Michael Lowry ruled that a resolution on the transparency of funds used for church trials was aspirational and legally before the conference, as was an amended resolution on “What's Next” for the conference.

North Texas Conference Bishop Michael McKee ruled that a resolution supporting a One Church Conference was aspirational.

The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, however, asked Judicial Council to decide whether the conference's resolution considering itself to be a One Church Conference in spirit would be considered aspirational or legal.

The Alaska Conference wants to know whether the option of withdrawing from the denomination as an annual or missionary conference is provided for in the 2016 Book of Discipline or by previous Judicial Council decisions.

In other docket items, the Western Pennsylvania Conference asked for a declaratory decision on the principle of legality related to a conference's administrative matters, the Desert Southwest Conference is asking Judicial Council to rule on possible violations of the separation of powers found in church law, and Erik Seise is asking the court for a review of his administrative appeal.

Celebrate 20 Years of Helping Immigrants

The New York Justice For Our Neighbors (JFON) will be marking 20 years of transforming lives through immigration legal services with an anniversary gala on October 17. The event will be held from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at Christ Church NYC UMC, 524 Park Avenue, Manhattan.

Tickets are \$75 per person, and sponsorships are available at five levels: \$125 sustaining, \$500 bronze, \$1,000 silver, \$2,500 gold, and \$5,000 platinum.

The evening will include client testimonials, volunteer recognition, words from Pulitzer Prize winning graphic series writer Jake Halpern of the *New York Times*, and musical excerpts from the cantata, “Manos Indocumentadas” (Undocumented Hands), which was recently performed at Carnegie Hall.

To purchase tickets or a sponsorship, send a check to NY JFON, 475 Riverside Dr., #1505, NY, NY 10115, with “Gala” in the memo line. You may also purchase tickets [via Eventbrite here](#).



OBITUARIES

Rev. James A. Warren

Reverend James A. Warren, 83, of Middletown, N.Y., died on July 25, 2019.

Warren was born in Parkersburg, W.Va., the son of Clyde and Chessie Warren. In 1954, he graduated from Parkersburg High School, where he was a member of the acapella choir and the West Virginia All-State Chorus.

In 1962, he graduated magna cum laude from Alderson Broaddus College in Philippi, W.Va. While there, Warren served as president of the student body, and was a member of Alpha Psi Omega Dramatic Fraternity, the Silver Key Honor Society, and the college choir. He received the Hugh D. Pickett Award for excellence in writing. In 1965, he graduated from the Divinity School of Yale University with a master's degree in biblical theology.

Warren was appointed to Rocky Hill Methodist Church in Rocky Hill, Conn., from 1965–1974. In 1970, he was named “outstanding young man of the year” by the chamber of commerce for his work in establishing the Rocky Hill Mental Health Commission, the Rocky Hill Youth Center as well as his work as executive treasurer of the Connecticut Council of Churches, and his work for World Hunger. He continued his work in the New York Conference as director of stewardship, secretary to the council on finance, district mission society, and a director of the Foundation of the New York Conference. For many years, he was a member of the Silas Deane Lodge of the Masonic Order.

In 1974, he was appointed to the South Trinity UMC in Meriden,

Conn., and served as president of the interfaith council and worked to establish a relationship between the Methodist and Catholic Churches in the area. From 1977–1985, Warren served the Trinity UMC in New Britain, Conn., where he established a luncheon program for the elderly, initiated faith-sharing programs between Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish, and many Protestant congregations in the community.

He was appointed in 1985 to St. Paul's UMC in Middletown, N.Y., and retired in 2001 following a medical leave of absence.

He is survived by the mother of his four children, Barbara; sons, Eric (fiancée Maria), James (Lexy), Marc (Jaime), daughter, Alison (Rob); grandchildren: Jonathan, Colton, Randy, Natalia, Julia, Julianna, Kayla, Marc Jr., Kyle, Dylan, Tyler, Christopher, Nicole, Jocelyn, and Keaton; and five great-grandchildren, Chase, McKenna, Reese, Jayden, and Kevin.

He is also survived by a sister, Sally Swiger, but was preceded in death by a brother, Clyde Warren, Jr.

A funeral service was held July 30 at Rocky Hill UMC in Rocky Hill, Conn.; burial followed in Rose Hill Memorial Park, Rocky Hill. Memorial donations may be made to the Rocky Hill United Methodist Church. Condolences may be shared on the funeral home [website](#).

Rev. Bernice F. West

The Reverend Bernice F. West, 92, of Livingston, N.Y., died July 13, 2019.

West, who was called Bea, was born on March 20, 1927, in Wappingers Falls, N.Y., the daughter of Manuel and Mabel Fernandez. She was employed in various capacities throughout her life including helping to establish the library at Vassar College, work for a real estate broker, and as a legal secretary. She also worked for a several years as an activity aide at the former Adventist Home in Livingston.

In 1984, West was licensed to preach as a local pastor and served congregations in Holmes, Wicoppee, Dover Plains, and Wingdale; in 1993 she was ordained an associate deacon. Although she retired in 1997, she continued to lead churches in Germantown, Elizaville, West Taghkanic, and Glenco Mills from 2004 until 2013. She also was a member of the Germantown UMC choir. In West's later years, her daughter, Judi Bathrick, a certified lay servant, took her mother to her various churches and assisted in her ministry.

In addition to Bathrick, West is survived by four other children, Nancy Sommerville, Deborah Boseman, Anthony Leggio, and Michael West, as well as many grandchildren and even more great-grandchildren. Also surviving are two brothers, Manuel and Robert Fernandez. She was predeceased by her two husbands, Vincent James Leggio and Thomas West, as well as by her son, Vincent J. Leggio and a brother, Richard Fernandez.

A funeral service was held July 17, 2019, at the Elizaville UMC. Interment of her ashes will take place at a later date. Donations in West's memory may be made to the Elizaville Food Pantry, 740 County Route 2, Elizaville, NY 12523.

Laurie Granger

Laurie Granger, 74, the wife of Rev. Robert Granger, died July 4, 2019, in Eugene, Ore. She was 74.

Rev. Granger served in the New York Conference for 21 years at Shady UMC, Town of Esopus UMC and Overlook UMC in Woodstock, N.Y. He retired in 2003, but served Coxsackie UMC from 2006 to 2008.

The couple eventually moved to Oregon.

New Gift Card Scam Targets Worshipers

The Federal Trade Commission issued an alert on July 29 about a new spin on gift card scams. The alert read:

“This time, scammers are pretending to be a pastor, rabbi, priest, imam, or bishop. They're asking worshipers for gift card contributions for a worthy cause. Appeals are often made by email, but we've heard people are also getting texts and phone calls, too.

The bogus emails often include the name of the local pastor and a legitimate looking email address. But a closer look should raise some red flags. For example, the email address isn't the one normally used by the church, and the service provider is different, too. The message may begin with a simple “Hi,” but doesn't include a recipient's name. There also may be spelling errors, including the pastor's name.

The imposter asks you to buy a popular [gift card](#)—frequently, iTunes, Google Play, or Amazon—and then asks for the gift card number and PIN on the back of the card. Those numbers let the scammer immediately get the money you loaded onto the card. And once that's done, the scammer and your money are gone, usually without a trace.

If you or someone you know paid a scammer with a gift card, report it as soon as possible. Call the card company and tell them the gift card was used in a scam. Here is [contact information](#) for some of the gift card companies that scammers use most often. Then, tell the FTC about it at [ftc.gov/complaint](#). Your reports may help law enforcement agencies launch investigations that could stop imposters and other fraudsters in their tracks.”



NEWSDAY PHOTO

Rev. Wendy Modeste, above, is flanked by trustees Greg Goodrich and David Timmoney in the sanctuary of the Bay Shore UMC which is undergoing a major restoration.

Bay Shore Church Restoration Fed by Prayer

Continued from page 1

in 1893, an 1867 Gothic Revival-style church building that was repurposed as the fellowship hall, and a two-story, education wing built in 1959.

In an effort to assess the condition of the church and parsonage, Modeste encouraged the church to hire an architect to conduct a survey of what needed to be done. With that report in hand, a general contractor could be hired to oversee whatever work might be done and to determine the cost.

"I told the trustees not to worry about the cost of architect's survey," Modeste said. "I didn't want to rely on just us figuring that we knew what needed to be done . . . The trustees didn't know me, but they supported the effort."

When the costs came back, the amounts seemed staggering to some: \$250,000 for repairs to the church and \$100,000 for the parsonage.

"It might as well have been a \$1 million," Modeste said.

Beth DeCarbo, a former trustee who now lives out of state, remembered voicing her skepticism about being able to raise that amount of money.

"At a trustees' meeting, I recall saying, 'You

think somebody is going to back up a truck full of money just to help us out? It's not going to happen,'" she wrote in an email.

But Modeste continued to put her trust in God and guided the congregation to move into a new vision of the future. The church steeped the process in prayer and worked to pay all their bills and eventually their full apportionments. The pastor had also developed a two-point vision for the church's future. The first was restoration and the second, building the congregation.

"People come in, but don't stay when they see things falling apart," she said. "I told the church we were going to fix this place and they'd say, 'Pastor, we don't have any money.'"

But then Long Island Head Start approached the church about starting an Early Head Start (EHS) program in their education wing. Head Start would guarantee recruiting the children and the church would manage the program and hire the staff. The church had its own preschool which was started in 2012, but struggled to recruit students.

"This was something to help the church move forward . . . it's good ministry for the community," Modeste said, adding, "It took

the stress off because we didn't have to go out looking for children."

A \$45,000 loan from the New York Conference was secured by the church to refurbish a second-floor space in the education wing for a second Head Start program which leases the space 10 months of the year.

The church, which has existed for more than 200 years and is the oldest one in Bay Shore, also offers the community a weekly soup kitchen serving hot meals, a thrift shop, and a meeting space for numerous organizations and 12-step groups.

Modeste recalls the day in 2016 that Finance Committee chair Thomas Wilson got into pulpit to share some good news for once.

"I know I usually come to say we have no money, but I'm here to tell you we paid all our bills," he told the congregation.

All along, the church prayed to discern where God was leading them.

In October 2016, Dale Dowd, who has attended the Bay Shore church since she was six, got an urgent early-morning call from Modeste to "come to my office . . . we need to pray."

And pray they did, using the book, "Draw the

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People from six of Bay Shore's churches gather at the United Methodist Church for soup and sandwiches before one of the weekly community ecumenical Lenten services. The exterior of the church was repainted in November 2018.

Bay Shore Church Restoration Fed by Prayer

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Circle: The 40 Day Prayer Challenge" by Mark Batterson. The pair circled three concerns in prayer: the church leaders, the congregation, and the restoration of the church and parsonage. When the 40 days were over, they continued to meet each weekday morning to pray, sometimes inviting others to join them.

Modeste and Dowd "strongly encouraged all of us to ask God's help through prayer and scripture, which bolstered our morale and efforts," said DeCarbo. "We leaned on each other when there were rejections and setbacks."

And there were a few setbacks when the church began to apply for grants to pay for the much-needed renovations. A few of the applications were rejected, others received no response at all. Modeste told her congregation, "We will not be discouraged, we're going to trust God."

Through the connections the pastor had made within the community, the church quietly began to publicize the plans and that soon brought a promise of \$50,000 from the Chamber of Commerce. The Catholic church down the street included the appeal in their worship bulletin. And then the local media heard about the campaign and newspaper and television reporters came to tell the story.

A random donation from a retired Bay Shore businessman provided \$75,000 for the project with the promise of another \$25,000 if the church could match it.

"People began walking into my office with checks as small as \$25 and as large as \$500," Modeste said. One man stopped in after driving by the church to suggest that the building needed a paint job. He ended up sending a check for \$50,000.

DeCarbo soon changed her original assessment of the fundraising possibilities.

"Clearly, I was wrong . . . checks and personal notes were coming in from across Long Island. We could see God's hand in this response!"

The church launched its campaign in December 2017 with an open house explaining the restoration plans. Another round of grant applications followed and began to bear fruit. As of July 2019, the church had raised \$485,254, with \$113,321 coming from community donations and \$124,469 from the congregation. Grants from the Park Avenue Trust Fund, the United Methodist City Society, and the New York Landmarks

Conservancy make up the rest.

Dowd noted that there is a new vitality in the congregation.

"People are amazed, they're waiting expectantly and asking when is sanctuary getting painted," Dowd said. "Some thought they would never see the day. The older members are seeing it through to the end.

"It is a miracle," she said. "Everyone would say that this church was going down . . . slowly but surely we started getting money, but not the way we expected," Dowd said. "I've grown my faith in a way I never expected . . . more has happened in this church in last five years than in whole 47 years I've been here."

"We are invigorated," Board of Trustees President David Timmoney told a local news outlet. "We couldn't have gotten this far without the community."

The restoration work is being carried out in phases. The exterior of the church was painted at the end of last year, and over this spring the parsonage got a new roof, outdoor lighting, windows and siding. Inside the pastor's home, the electrical system has also been updated and the kitchen and bathrooms are being renovated. Plans are in place to refurbish the driveway, sidewalk and porch, too.

As the church found success in their fundraising efforts, they decided to expand the scope of the restoration to include the entire church. That plan will result in a new roof on the education wing and updates in the thrift shop and a basement meeting room. The last stage of the project will be the sanctuary with its vaulted ceiling and stained-glass windows. The restoration of the stained glass alone is expected to cost about \$182,000. These additions have brought the total projected restoration budget to \$760,000, more than double the initial estimate. With the \$485,254 that has been raised that leaves approximately \$274,000 to go.

Many credit Modeste for inspiring the physical and spiritual changes at the church.

"Pastor Wendy has an incredible gift, such a love for people," Dowd said. "You can't be in her presence without feeling the love of God."

The pastor, in turn, would spread the credit to the trustees and across the congregation.

"This is such good work because we're working together. It's amazing the support that I have here, it's every pastor's dream," Modeste said. "Even if you have the vision, you can't do it all yourself."

Improper Voting at GC2019 Voids Key Vote

Continued from page 3

authorized delegate, including voting lists, attendance lists, travel reimbursement forms and visa information.

Delegates to the multinational General Conference are equally divided between lay and clergy. The 2019 General Conference was to have 864 delegates, but 31 were absent—primarily because they were unable to get visas.

Behind closed doors, the commission developed new registration and credentialing procedures to safeguard against unauthorized votes at future gatherings. The press release said these include the requirement that credentials come with a delegate's photo. The next General Conference will be May 5–15, 2020, in Minneapolis.

Altogether, the commission spent more than three hours of its August meeting at First United Methodist Church in Lexington, Kentucky, closed to outside observers. At the conclusion of the meeting, despite earlier promises to report out its work, the commission did not report any details of its decisions.

The group did not publicly say how it planned to fix the identified problems.

“The Commission on General Conference heard and acted on the task force's recommendations,” said the Rev. Gary George, commission secretary and member of the East Ohio Conference. “Recommendations falling within the scope of the task force's responsibilities are forthcoming.”

He added that recommendations “outside the scope of the Commission on General Conference are being referred to appropriate bodies for their consideration.”

Finally, he said, a press release would come out on Aug. 10, after commission members had begun their journeys homeward. He added that a full report on recommendations is expected early next week.

The press release said the commission has identified 19 changes to make the credentialing and voting process more secure, including issuing credentials that include photos.

The Book of Discipline urges open church meetings “in the spirit of openness and accountability” and “great restraint” in closing doors to the public.

Paragraph 722 makes some exceptions, including for “communications with attorneys.” It was under this exception, the commission voted to go into closed session.

The paragraph also says: “A report on the results of a closed session shall be made immediately upon its conclusion or as soon thereafter as is practicable.”

Bickerton insisted there were good reasons for the commission's reticence about its decisions. He said the commission is consulting with its attorneys in what it says in its recommendations.

“We have to maintain strict confidentiality or the integrity of those further investigations goes into jeopardy,” he said.

Campers Get Visit from Hillary Clinton

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how meeting people, working together, finding relationships that really matter to you and skills that you develop over your time here has affected the lives of each and every one of you.

“So, I'm just glad to be here, to have a chance to see you in person, to thank the staff for running this wonderful camp and to really wish that you have a great rest of the session and that whatever you do next starting in the fall will be

really enriched by this experience for you. Thank you for letting me come visit today.”

After the “Taco Tuesday” lunch with the campers and staff, Clinton toured the rest of the facility with Medina and Facilities Manager Tom Lindemann. When the trio returned to the dining hall, the campers presented a few performances they had learned for their parents' day program the previous weekend.

As she was leaving, Clinton noted to the staff

that the campers had “just radiated joy.”

The secretary's next stop was a New York hospital to meet her third grandchild, Jasper Clinton Mezvinsky, who had been born just the day before to Chelsea and Marc Clinton-Mezvinsky.

For more information about Camp Olmsted's retreat programs or summer camp, contact the United Methodist City Society by calling 212-870-3084 or [via email](#).

Bishops Offer Ecumenical Grants, Scholarship

The Council of Bishops (COB) is seeking applications for the following programs:

2020 Local Initiatives Grants

Three grants of \$1,000 each to groups for special projects designed to strengthen ecumenical and/or interreligious relationships. Preference will be given to groups within annual conferences elected to lead in Christian unity and interreligious relationships. Projects selected will be ecumenical and/or interreligious in both invitation and goals.

The application deadline is September 13. [Applications](#) are available to download online.

Ecumenical Institute Scholarship

The Ecumenical Institute was founded by The World Council of Churches in Switzerland in 1946 as an “ecumenical laboratory,” bringing

together students of ecumenism from across the Christian community.

A scholarship is available for one student to participate in the “complementary certificate in ecumenical studies” through the Bossey Institute in conjunction with the University of Geneva. A total amount of \$10,000 will be sent to Bossey on behalf of the chosen student.

Applicants for this scholarship must be active UMC members, between the ages of 22 and 30, preparing for vocational ministry in the UMC, and be accepted by Bossey into the program. [Applications](#) are available to download online and must be received by the COB' office no later than September 13.

Any questions about these programs should be directed to Rev. Dr. Jean Hawxhurst via [email](#).