

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

THE VISION



October 2019

Who Builds a Church in Such a Time? Walden UMC Does

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY

Editor, *The Vision*

When the shovelfuls of dark, rich earth were turned over, a long-prayed-for dream of the Walden United Methodist Church came closer to being realized. In early September, the church consecrated the site where a new sanctuary will be built, fulfilling their adopted mantra, "Who builds a church in such a time as this?—We do!"

Wearing hardhats adorned with stickers declaring, "Caution: God at Work," Pastor Scharlise Dorsey, Catskill Hudson District Superintendent Karen Monk and other members of the congregation broke ground for the 3,500-square-foot structure in the village of Montgomery in Orange County, New York.

Dorsey is hoping that the eight-acre property will eventually also provide spaces for outdoor ministries, family gatherings and relaxation that allow people to "see God in this rural setting." The new location is about 1.5 miles from the former church in downtown Walden. The villages of Montgomery, Walden and Maybrook comprise the Town of Montgomery.

"This location in Montgomery [will give] us an opportunity to 'fish' in other waters," said Dorsey, who has served the church since July 2018.



Pastor Scharlise Dorsey turns over the dirt as Walden UMC broke ground for a new church.

A Long, Winding Road

Times are good now, but things weren't always so rosy for Walden UMC. The initial decision nearly 12 years ago to sell the former church property was a difficult one.

"The congregation voted 51 to leave and 44 to stay," recalled Alice Amthor, the Walden

finance chair. Criticism over the decision to leave the building ended up dividing the congregation and some families left. Amthor, who joined the church 40 years ago with her husband Arnold "Buddy" Amthor, said she had watched the congregation dwindle and the

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Catskill Hudson Celebrates New Superintendent Monk



Ken and Judy Coddington present a globe to District Superintendent Karen A. Monk.

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY

Editor, *The Vision*

The Catskill Hudson District celebrated the installation of their new superintendent, Rev. Dr. Karen A. Monk, with a joyous, late-afternoon celebration at the Overlook United Methodist Church in Woodstock, N.Y., last month.

It was a spirit-filled day that included inspiring worship, a memorable sermon, uplifting music, great fellowship and a special offering of more than \$2,000 to benefit the work of the United Methodist Committee on Relief in the Bahamas.

The pews were filled to capacity and the

voices of a massed district choir filled the air as Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton introduced Monk as a person of integrity with a deep love for people.

"She lives out a life of inclusion," he said. "I've never been more confident in my choice." Monk assumed her new role on July 1.

In one of several moments of levity, Monk said that on the day that Bishop Bickerton called about the appointment, she didn't immediately recognize the phone number that appeared on her caller-ID. She answered with a somewhat tentative "hello." But the days since have affirmed that this appointment was the right

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

10/19 “Are You a Ready Church?”

The role of the church in disaster preparedness and response is critical to the wellbeing not only of its members but to the communities in which they serve. With this in mind, the Missions office will offer workshops at the following churches:

- **October 19:** St. James UMC, Kingston, N.Y. Register [here](#).
- **November 2:** First Church Baldwin, Baldwin, N.Y. Register [here](#).

Depending on the location, the workshops may include: Connecting Neighbors, early response team basic and re-certification, disaster emotional and spiritual care, basic tool use and safety, team leader training, CPR/AED, and Civilian Emergency Response Team. For additional questions or information, email [Tom Vencuss](mailto:Tom.Vencuss@nyac.org) at the NYAC Missions office.

10/24 “Blessing of the Construction”

The United Methodist City Society and Bronx Pro Developers invite NYAC clergy and laity to join in a blessing for construction of the new Trinity-Rev. William M. James Senior Complex, on the former site of Trinity UMC in the Bronx. The 2 p.m. event will be a special time of prayer and celebration for the \$88 million affordable housing project to be built at Washington Avenue and E. 166th Street. Those planning to attend should [register online](#).

10/26 United Methodist Men 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.

10/26 ‘Joyful Preaching’ Seminar

Join Rev. Susan Sparks—trial lawyer, turned standup comedian and Baptist minister—to learn how humor can transform preaching, strengthen pastoral care, and inspire hope and reconciliation. Sparks is senior minister of Madison Avenue Baptist Church. “Joyful Preaching: Laugh Your Way to Grace” is sponsored by Union Theological Seminary, 3041 Broadway, New York, N.Y. The event will also feature Dr. David Carr, professor of Old Testament, and Shola Adegbite, doctoral student in New Testament. Tickets are \$50; the event includes lunch and light refreshments. [Register online](#) for the 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. event.

10/31–11/2 CrossRoads Anti-Racism Training

This three-day event at the Center at Mariandale in Ossining, N.Y., provides training for both clergy and lay leaders on the church, district and conference levels to address the on-going challenge of racism. It is sponsored by the Conference Commission on Religion and Race and is open to NYAC members, United Methodists from other conferences, and persons not affiliated with the UMC. Lodging and meals will be provided. Check the [event details](#) to register and determine if you are required to complete this training.

11/9 Faith, Activity, Nutrition Program

The Abundant Health Ministry is sponsoring this event geared to those interested in gaining the skills, knowledge and resources needed to successfully implement health and wellness programs at their local churches. The goal—increase health-related interest, awareness and activity among people of all ages—is now more important than ever. By the end of this day-long program, attendees will be able to take back proven ideas and resources designed to help them. [Register online](#); the cost is \$25 and includes breakfast and lunch. For more information, email [Wendy Vencuss](mailto:Wendy.Vencuss@nyac.org), or call her at 860-324-1429.

11/16 Laity Convocation

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

11/17 UM City Society Annual Meeting

Rev. Dr. Lakeesha Walrond, president of the New York Theological Seminary, will be the guest speaker when the society gathers for its 181st annual meeting at the Church of the Village, 13th Street and 7th Avenue. The event begins at 3:30 p.m.

11/28–29 Thanksgiving Closing

The conference center in White Plains will be closed for the holiday.

12/24–25 Christmas Closing

The conference center in White Plains will be closed for the holiday.

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The **Vision**

The News of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church

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
 Find us on Facebook:
[New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church](http://www.nyac.com)
 And on Twitter: [@nyacumc](https://twitter.com/nyacumc)
 Website: www.nyac.com
 Vision e-mail: vision@nyac.com

5 Musts for Effective Leadership in Changing World

BY DORIS K. DALTON

In order to lead our congregations and be successful in our ministry settings, clergy are expected to be specialists and experts in many different fields. From biblical scripture, theology, homiletics and Christian doctrine to pastoral counseling, sociology, psychology, mental health and so much more, we need to know it all.

It's no wonder we become oversaturated with information to the point where our bandwidth is full.

It feels like we're overworked, but still viewed as underachieving simply because there's no time to do it all or learn everything. We schlep ourselves to a one-day training, sit in the back of the room with friends and trade text messages about the presentation, and then take continuing education unit (CEU) certificates and training materials home to sit on a shelf. When our mental gates are down, we cannot learn, no matter how much new information and valuable training is given to us.

Getting Off the Hamster Wheel

How do we recognize when we are stuck? How do we develop the self-awareness to examine our role in our congregational dynamics and ministry systems to accurately pinpoint the support and leadership training we actually need? Sadly, there is no one-stop shop or magical unicorn answer for clergy leadership development.

But there is a framework and mindset that leaders can develop to meet these challenges. Consider the leadership qualities outlined below, designed to help every deacon, elder and pastor develop and grow to effectively meet the shifting landscape around them.

To be an effective leader today, you must be:

1) Adaptive

There are countless leadership articles online that extoll the virtues of being an adaptive leader. Read them and you may come to believe that being adaptive is about being flexible when it comes to dealing with new ideas or changes at your workplace.

In one of my first ministry settings, the common mantra among the leadership team was "Be flexible so you can bend but you will not break." This mantra became an easy cover for conducting ministry programs without plans for sustainability or measurements for success. It also encouraged us to accept last-minute change without question. Our overly flexible, yet unquestioning culture led to brilliant ministry program proposals that became one-time projects, leadership burnout and fewer

opportunities for success.

Bottomline: Adaptive leadership requires a strategic and thoughtful approach to understanding where your congregation is now, where your congregation needs to go and how you can get there. Clergy who are adaptive can extract their congregation's core values, determine the best path to the future and then begin to bravely lead the congregation to that path well into the future.

2) Curious

The proverbial expression "curiosity killed the cat" is an old cautionary phrase used to warn people from asking unnecessary questions and to be satisfied with unfulfilling answers. In our rapidly shifting social and political landscape, we may feel oversaturated with new information. Our responses may turn from "Why?" to "What now?"

My favorite questions always begin with "why" because they invite us to pause, reflect and consider alternatives. A "why" question opens us up to discovery, exploration and reaffirms our Wesleyan commitment to "move on to perfection." Curious "why" questions also give us the freedom and humility to investigate, wonder, and consider what else could be going on under the surface.

I remember sitting through tortuous church finance meetings and hearing the same defensive responses at each one. These defenses became increasingly animated, loud and threatening. Not surprisingly, they produced the desired effect of retreat and silence. I knew there was something else going on. After asking curious questions, I found that the defensive responses related to a number of things, from compounding fears to recently losing a loved one to cancer. This gave me a way to address those fears with compassion, love and an invitation to heal.

Bottomline: Curiosity is not just asking a question, it is a leadership skill that can help us discover the root of the problem and explore new ideas. Curious questions open us to imagine possibilities, cross bridges and offer alternatives to fear in others, and most importantly, in ourselves.

3) Interculturally Competent

At the age of 12, I preached my first trial sermon on The Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20 during a local youth speaker's tournament. I spoke about being called to preach

God's good news to all the world and going to places that made me uncomfortable.

Decades later, that sermon and Jesus' commission to "go into all the world and make disciples of all nations" is still extraordinarily relevant for all of us. We have many opportunities to encounter and celebrate cultural diversity from the pulpit to the pews and beyond in our communities. Yet, our nation, our denomination and our local communities are experiencing great cultural rifts and disagreements, making it harder for us to fulfill Jesus' commission. It's easy to become uncomfort-

able with the prospect of going into the world and making disciples of all nations. Who wants to be caught in the crosshairs of cultural conflict and found unintentionally saying or doing the wrong thing? So instead of leaning into intercultural competency, we develop a tendency to take several steps back.

Bottomline: Intercultural competency is a capability to shift perspectives and appropriately adapt behaviors to cultural commonalities and differences around you. Everyone has some degree of this capability and all of us can develop that capability with intentional learning and practice. Leaders who develop their intercultural competency capabilities are better able to equip their congregations to value cultural difference and lead responsive and relevant ministries that bring the Good News to all in their communities.

4) Self-Reflective

Clergy are an over-evaluated group of professionals. We receive annual evaluations from our district superintendent, our Staff-Parish Relations Committee and a near-constant flow of evaluation from our congregations through feedback, suggestions and critiques.

How do we process these evaluations? We tend to absorb these critiques and then repeat them to ourselves, giving ourselves a steady stream of self-criticism and negative self-talk. Many shove them into the back corner of their consciousness and do their best to forget about them. Still others sift through them, focusing on every wrong thing they've done without considering every good thing they've done. We need healthy ways to process the feedback without rejecting it or contorting our true selves to meet everyone's expectations.



IMAGE BY PIRO4D FROM PIXABAY

5 Musts for Effective Leadership in Changing World

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I once asked a colleague in ministry for help. I was frustrated about not being taken seriously at ministry team meetings. When I asked what he saw, my colleague said my obstacle was the way I came into every meeting. I often rushed in without the documents needed to support my work and passed out excuses for not being better prepared. After some reflection, I put forth the effort to address my weak time management skill because I wanted my work to be taken seriously. I wanted to show up as a better leader, so I shifted my working style.

Bottomline: Self-reflective leaders strengthen their capacity for emotional intelligence, are able to align their leadership goals with their leadership styles and develop resiliency to stay motivated. Self-reflection is an honest and open look at your strengths, your weaknesses, where you are leading in your ministry and where you

are struggling to lead. Practicing self-reflection gives us the permission to identify our hotspots, our triggers, where we have strong proficiency and where we need to find outside help.

5) A Difference-Maker

Each of the qualities above will help leaders be more effective in their ministries. Yet, adopting only one or two of the leadership qualities but not the others makes a leader's effectiveness short-lived or potentially irrelevant in their context. Put them all together and we have a leader who can be a potential difference-maker. A difference-maker is a leader who asks the right questions, can competently interact with difference and honest reflection about themselves. A difference-maker can cast a vision for a future with hope, and lead their congregation through a healthy process of growth and change. A difference-maker will

lead their congregation members to become difference-makers in their own communities, connecting neighbors and strangers to the God who saves, heals and provides.

Bottomline: We have a unique opportunity to lead our congregations to become difference-makers. In order to lead them, we must be difference-makers first. Pause for a moment and remember when God called you into ministry. The places and spaces where we minister now are very different from the places and spaces where we began our ministry journey. The world is ever changing, but God's calling remains the same. It is God's calling that helps us be difference-makers in our congregations and communities. Let us become the leaders that God has called us to be.

Doris K. Dalton is director of leadership development and intercultural competency for the New York Conference. [Email her](#) any questions about leadership development.

FAN: Creating Active, Healthier Churches

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

—1 Corinthians 10:31

Want to begin or jump-start health and wellness programming at your church? The Abundant Health ministry's first-ever Faith, Activity and Nutrition (FAN) Outreach Program on Saturday, Nov. 9 can help.

The program goal—increase health-related interest, awareness and activity among people of all ages—is more important than ever as churches work on the front lines to combat preventable health conditions, such as diabetes and obesity.

Throughout this daylong event, attendees will explore proven ideas and resources designed to help them:

- Create a healthy church environment.
- Enlist pastor and leader support.
- Increase opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating at church.
- Successfully get FAN-focused messaging out to church members.
- Set healthy guidelines and policies that apply to all ages.

The program runs from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with activity breaks throughout. A light breakfast and healthy lunch will be served.

[Online registration](#) is available; the cost is \$25. Please direct any questions to [Wendy Vencuss](#), the NYAC Abundant Health coordinator.



Pop-Up Coffee, Donuts at Memorial

Church member Sheila Collins, right, gets a coffee from associate pastor of outreach ministries Marissa Jaikumar and Jeff Cirelli, left, at a pop-up coffee bar in the narthex at Memorial UMC in White Plains. The church worked with Cirelli, the head roaster at Big Bang Coffee Co. in Peekskill, N.Y., to create a temporary café in early September, with the hopes of making it a permanent addition. Rev. Siobhan Sargent is looking to provide a place to relax over coffee and donuts for those who meet in the church each day and for the nursery school parents. With a location just a couple of blocks from White Plains High School, Sargent also hopes to create a safe afterschool place where teens can do homework and even staff the café.

Catskill Hudson Celebrates New DS Monk

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move, she explained.

“I am overwhelmed by the beauty and joy of the Catskills, and by the love in this room,” she said. “It’s a beautiful day.”

Embracing the Landscape and Methodist History

A Texas native, Monk has spent much of her pastoral career in the New York Conference serving in the Catskill Hudson District, most recently at the Kaaterskill/East Jewett Charge for 16 years. She came to New York City to attend Union Theological Seminary and discovered the Catskills in a weekend trip out of the city.

“It was like coming home to a place I had never been,” she said, adding that she specifically asked to be appointed to the region. Located in southeastern New York State, the Catskills are home to a varied landscape that includes mountains, streams, dairy farms, and ski trails.

“Tucked in the hills and valleys are our churches, from white clapboard to brick. We people called Methodists have deep roots here . . . [Francis] Asbury was here,” Monk said, adding that while Asbury met people in taverns, today the churches of the Catskill Hudson District are reaching out to people through potlucks, food pantries, warming centers and clothes closets.

“We care, and we march and advocate. We seek to welcome all,” Monk said in a sermon framed by passages in 1 Corinthians and Mark 16:1–8. Monk spoke of the need to embrace the differences in people with love because “we are bound in the Spirit.”

Signs of Superintendency

After Bishop Bickerton led the gathering through the covenant service for Monk’s installation, lay and clergy members of the Catskill Hudson District presented some of the symbols of her new role—a red stole, a globe, the books of Discipline and Worship, and a basin, pitcher, and towel. There was also basket of homegrown items from the region, including maple syrup, honey and pumpkins; and a basket with maps and a GPS for the car.

A combined district choir led by Kent Brown performed “How Great Thou Art” and “We Are Blessed” and soloist Patricia



Above, the all district choir performs; below, District Superintendent Monk and Bishop Bickerton preside over communion.



Dell offered a powerful rendition of “My Tribute.” These are unpredictable times for the church, but Monk says she holds out bright hope for tomorrow. “We’re more beautiful by our differences . . .,” Monk said. “We will persevere.”

Missed the official installation of Rev. Dr. Karen Monk as the New York Annual Conference’s Superintendent of the Catskill Hudson District? You can take a look of pictures and the unedited video of the installation service on the New York Annual Conference Facebook and Instagram pages.



Streamers added to the festivity of the groundbreaking; at right, Catskill Hudson District Superintendent Monk offered a word of encouragement to the gathering.

Who Builds a Church in Such a Time? Walden UMC Does

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building deteriorate over the years.

“We put on a lot of Band-Aids,” she said. “We couldn’t afford to be there. The heat bills were very high, the bricks needed to be repointed.” The cost of needed repairs on the old structure was estimated at \$2 million.

Tony Zirilli, co-chair of the church’s building committee and former youth director, credited former pastor, Rev. Kent Jackson, with helping the church “face the fact that the building was crumbling . . . that old buildings are tough places to practice safe sanctuaries.” In late 2008, after Jackson and Zirilli had made a pitch to then Bishop Jeremiah J. Park and his cabinet, the church was awarded a \$100,000 grant to explore how they could expand their ministry presence to Montgomery village.

Zirilli, said he showed the property—church, parsonage and four-unit apartment building—at least 30 times to prospective buyers. A \$1 million deal for the property fell apart in 2008 when the real estate

market went bust. Eventually, they split the parcel and sold the apartment building in June 2010; the church and parsonage were sold in 2014.

Since that sale, the church building has been somewhat neglected and the owners have been cited for non-payment of taxes, Dorsey noted. “That’s been a hurtful reminder to parishioners,” she said.

But excitement about the construction of a new building may be helping to heal some of

those wounds. “Many thought they would never see this day . . . the groundbreaking brought things more into perspective,” Dorsey said.

“The groundbreaking was very emotional,” Amthor said. “A group of us had worked for this for so long . . . it’s through the blessing of God and our prayers.” She noted that about 75 people turned out for the ceremony, several of whom they have not seen in a while.

Zirilli echoed that sentiment noting that since the September 7 groundbreaking, three families that had not been in church for quite awhile have come to the Sunday worship services the church has been holding at St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Walden.

“I love how as I talk to people how encouraged they are to get involved, especially my older youth group kids who now have kids of their own,” Zirilli said. “The pastor has great ideas and things she wants to do. I can’t wait to get into the new church to start some of these new ministries.”

“She’s just what we

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Members of the congregation join Pastor Dorsey and District Superintendent Monk in prayer before putting their shovels to work.

Construction Blessing Oct. 24 for Trinity-James Housing

The official “Blessing of the Construction” for the Trinity-Rev. William M. James Senior Complex is scheduled for 2 p.m., October 24 at the former site of the Trinity United Methodist Church in the Morrisania section of the Bronx.

The a 12-story affordable senior housing project—made possible by a joint venture between the United Methodist City Society and Bronx Pro Group—is slated to be completed in fall 2021 at the corner of Washington Avenue and East 166th Street. The \$88 million project was funded through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative, bond financing and the low income housing tax credits.

The 154 apartments in the building will include 33 one-bedrooms, 120 studio units, and a superintendent’s unit. Forty-seven of the studios will be set aside for formerly incarcerated seniors. The Trinity-James Building will be home to individuals and families earning 60 percent or less of the area’s median income.

The complex is named for Rev. James, who led a revitalization of the church when he served as the pastor there from the mid-40s to the early 50s. In another nod to the past, architectural elements and stained glass from the Trinity UMC will be placed throughout the building. Also planned is a United Methodist presence in the 5,600 square feet of space set aside for special leasing. The new building will include community space, an exercise room, outdoor gym, indoor greenhouse, and a garden.

The Fortune Society will operate a social services space in the building to provide support for formerly incarcerated residents, including on-site counseling, peer support to assist with re-entry/recovery and case managers to help tenants remain stably housed and healthy.

Those planning to attend the blessing and the reception afterward should [register online](#).

Have questions? Contact Rev. Dr. William Shillady, executive director of the City Society, by [email](#) or at 212-870-3094.

Does Church’s Property Insurance Measure Up?

BY ROSS WILLIAMS

Did you know that being adequately insured is probably the single-most important action a church can take to protect its assets, people and ministries from unforeseen events?

It’s true. All it takes is one uninsured incident to result in significant financial costs and potentially, the closure of a church’s doors. The good news is that making sure your coverage actually works to protect church assets and property doesn’t need to be difficult.

Below are a few simple tips to help church trustees, treasurers, finance chairs and pastors guarantee that their church carries adequate property and casualty insurance on its buildings, vehicles and operations:

Get property and casualty insurance coverage directly from an insurer or through an agent. It is crucial that your church policies meet the [minimum insurance requirements](#) set by the New York Conference. It’s also key to understand when an Umbrella Policy is needed. For instance, if your church operates a preschool, you must have an Umbrella policy. Note too, that the General Church recommends an Umbrella policy for any church with more than 500 members.

Make sure your policy includes adequate coverage for “bonding” of anyone who handles money as required by *The Book of Discipline*. Bonding (also known as “fidelity” coverage) is typically included in your package policy. How do you know how much coverage is needed? Think about the volume of funds that flow through the church and the amount of money that could be misappropriated before being detected. Churches with robust internal controls, need a lower

amount of coverage versus those with lax financial controls.

Review your policy regularly to see if updates are needed. Part of this assessment includes a look to see if there are accurate values for the costs to rebuild church structures and replace contents. It is important that these values are periodically updated to reflect changes to structures and local costs of construction. If this hasn’t been done in a while, request a site visit from your insurer to update such values.

Shop your insurance around every few years and buy only what you need. This ensures that your premiums are competitive in the marketplace and eliminates possible redundancies. For instance, workers compensation insurance continues to be provided by the New York Conference to all churches and church-controlled preschools. Participation in the group policy is required; churches and church-controlled preschools should not purchase this coverage directly. (See accompanying sidebar for information on regional insurers)

Permanently retain insurance policy documentation, even if expired. This is especially important for certain claims (such as sexual molestation), which can surface years or decades after your policy has expired.

Report claims to your insurer immediately. Many insurers have time-limits for reporting beyond which they will not service a claim.

Ross Williams is chief financial officer and director of administrative services for the New York Conference. Feel free to [email him](#) questions you may have about your church property and casualty insurance policy.

Resources: Local Insurance Agencies

Each church should do its own due diligence when selecting an agent or insurer. This is not a complete list and the New York Conference does not recommend one over the other.

[Church Mutual Insurance Company](#) (NY & CT)
800-554-2642

[Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services](#) (NY & CT)
Kevin Barry
914-697-6033
kevin_barry@ajg.com

[National Church Group](#) (NY & CT)
Beth Allesandra
800-456-6624, extension 407
balessandra@ncginsurance.com

[United Methodist Insurance](#) (NY & CT)
866-203-0777
info@umins.org

[Emery & Webb Inc.](#) (NY & CT)
Stuart Walker
800-942-5818, extension 1148
swalker@emerywebb.com

Fred Morris Agency (NY)
1980 NY-112, Coram, NY 11277
631-403-4452
fmgroup27@yahoo.com

Allan Twitty Insurance Agency (NY & CT)
113 Birchbrook Rd., Bronxville, NY 10708
Thom Iannicari, CIPA
914-715-2991
thom4insurance@gmail.com

Inter City Agency Inc. (NY & CT)
Nicolas Estevez
Lake Success, NY 11042
718-279-7719
nick.estevez@intercityagency.com

GC2020 Petition Deadline is Passed, What Next?

BY HEATHER HAHN

UM News | The deadline to submit legislation to the 2020 General Conference is now in the rearview mirror. So what is ahead?

The coming months will provide a fuller picture of what options will be before delegates when The United Methodist Church's top lawmaking assembly [meets May 5–15](#) at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

A big focus of the coming assembly will be dealing with the fallout of this year's special General Conference. The contentious gathering has led to varied proposals for the denomination's future in light of its still-unresolved debate over homosexuality.

But getting legislation into a format that is readily accessible for a multinational and multilingual denomination takes time.

By denominational rules, the Advance Daily Christian Advocate—which contains the petitions and reports requiring General Conference action—must be distributed to delegates at least 90 days before the assembly begins. That date is February 5 for the 2020 gathering.

"It's a pretty safe bet that we can have it ready in advance of that 90-day publication date," Brian Sigmon, the editor of the Daily Christian Advocate and its advance edition, told the Commission on General Conference at the group's August meeting.

He and other General Conference organizers hope to have the Advance Daily Christian Advocate available online for download as soon as the materials are finalized.

As of September 19, General Conference staff said it was still too soon to know an exact date.

The entire Advance Daily Christian Advocate must be available in the four official General Conference languages—English, French, Portuguese and Kiswahili. Typically, about 1,000 petitions are submitted for consideration at a regularly scheduled General Conference.

Proposals coming to GC2020 include legislation to add five more bishops to Africa, to revise the Social Principles, to create a new structure for U.S. decision-making and to establish the 2021–24 general church budget. All four of these proposals were drafted by international church bodies.

United Methodist News also confirmed that petitions have been submitted for at least three plans for the denomination's future. These three plans were all drafted in the United States. In

alphabetical order, these include:

- [The Indianapolis Plan](#), submitted by the Rev. Kent Millard and assembled by a group of centrists, traditionalists and progressives. This plan includes provisions for separating into different denominations depending on views around homosexuality.
- [New Forms of Unity](#), submitted by the Texas Conference's Bishop Scott Jones. Under this plan, an annual conference could become a self-governing church or join an existing one. Jones first began working on the plan with the Michigan Conference's Bishop David Bard. Bishops do not have a vote at General Conference.
- [The UMCNext Proposal](#), assembled by a group of centrists and progressives. This proposal lifts restrictions related to gay ordination and same-sex weddings, while allowing local churches that disagree to depart and organize into new forms of Methodism.

However, this is not a comprehensive list of the options that will be before the delegates to reorganize or divide the denomination and its assets. Individual United Methodists also can submit legislation, and some already announced plans to do so ahead of the deadline.

During the shortened special General Conference, delegates considered plans that contained multiple petitions as a package. But General Conference organizers have decided that won't be the case at GC2020, at least not initially.

Rev. Abby Parker Herrera—General Conference petitions secretary—has the task of giving numbers to each properly submitted petition and assigning it to one of 14 legislative committees or the Standing Committee on

Central Conference Matters. The legislative committees deal with different subject matters and related sections in the Book of Discipline, the denomination's policy book. The standing committee deals with proposals that affect United Methodist regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.

These committees are the first stop where legislation is debated, refined and possibly approved to go to the full General Conference plenary for a vote.

So if a plan has multiple petitions that deal with different sections of the Discipline, those petitions will first head to the committees that handle those sections. If petitions coming from multiple committees need to be considered together, the Committee on Agenda and Calendar can schedule that, said the Rev. Gary Graves, General Conference secretary.

There is also a Committee on Reference, which meets at the start of General Conference and considers requests to reassign petitions to different legislative committees.

The Book of Discipline requires all valid petitions to receive a vote in legislative committee, and all petitions approved by a legislative committee to receive a vote in plenary.

The 2020 General Conference will have 862 delegates overall, equally split between clergy and laity. Of the 2020 delegates, 55.9 percent will be from the U.S., 32 percent from Africa, 6 percent from the Philippines, 4.6 percent from Europe and the remainder from concordat churches that have close ties to The United Methodist Church.

As the meeting approaches, Graves and other General Conference organizers urge continued prayers for all staff and volunteers working diligently to prepare.

Judicial Council Sets 2 Open Hearings

Two oral hearings have been set for October 30 during the fall meeting of the United Methodist Judicial Council at the Hilton Orrington Hotel in Evanston, Ill. The hearings, which are open to the public, are at 9:30 a.m. for Docket 3 and 11 a.m. for Docket 4. Both dockets involve requests from the United Methodist Council of Bishops related to actions of General Conference 2019 and may be found on the [docket webpage](#) for that meeting.

As soon as practicable following its meetings, the decisions of the council are posted on the United Methodist Church website. The council will meet from October 29–November 1.

Beth Capen, a layperson in the New York Conference, is one of the nine members of the Judicial Council.

Input Needed on 2020 Global Mission Plan

Visioning “Global Mission” for 2020

All persons currently engaged in NYAC global mission initiatives, local churches with global mission projects, or those interested to know more about global mission opportunities are invited to a daylong discussion, “Visioning NYAC Mission for 2020.” The goal of the October 26 event is to envision a strategic plan for the New York Conference global missions ministry.

The agenda will include discussions around the following questions:

- What does effective “mission” look like? What does development look like? What is a true mission partnership?
- The current state of NYAC global missions
- What are the possibilities and challenges for global missions? (The gathering will break into mission-specific groups to discuss plans and ideas.)
- How do we make those possibilities a reality—mission journeys, communication, funding, etc.?
- Setting the agenda for Global Missions 2020

Small breakout groups will discuss NYAC-Mozambique Partnership; Mountains of Hope for Haiti, Caribbean Mission Partnership, including the Bahamas; Ecuador; youth missions including Youth Ambassadors, UMARMY and the Appalachia Service Project; Puerto Rico “church to church” connection with Maunabo; Nicaragua; and others as identified.

[Register online](#) for the gathering that will meet from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Conference Center, 20 Soundview Ave., White Plains, N.Y. Lunch will be provided.

Hurricane Dorian—Bahamas Update

UMCOR International Disaster Response (IDR) has deployed a person to the Bahamas to meet with church leadership and do an initial assessment of the situation. When this is completed, a more comprehensive

plan will be created including, possibly, the deployment of volunteers.

As the Bahamas remain in an emergency and early assessment phase no volunteer teams are being received. Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton, the NYAC Missions office, and our Caribbean Mission Partnership remain in contact and are monitoring the situation as well.

All early response teams (ERT) and recovery volunteers are encouraged to help in ongoing efforts in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, the Carolinas, and Puerto Rico. For more information, contact [Tom Vencuss](#) in the missions office.

January Mission to Haiti

A dental-medical based team will be traveling to Haiti from January 4–12, 2020. **More details will be available soon. For initial information, email [Wendy Vencuss](#).**

Youth Ambassadors

The 2020 Youth Ambassadors in Mission (YAM) team is slated to go to Jamaica from **February 15–22**. This opportunity is for youth who are currently enrolled in their freshman to senior years of high school. More details will soon be available. For initial information, contact new Youth Ministries Coordinator [Jenna Johnson](#).

“Church-to-Church Program

The NYAC Missions office is piloting a concept called, “Church to Church”, in which volunteers from one local church assist another church with repairs and other volunteer-friendly needs. This will allow our current ERTs and disaster volunteers some local hands-on work, provide for new volunteer opportunities, and offer cross-conference connections. Our first project was at First Spanish UMC in Manhattan. For more information, contact Tom Vencuss in the missions office.

OBITUARY

Rev. John J. Blossom

The Reverend John J. Blossom of Guilford, Conn., died on September 15, 2019, after a short illness while on a New York Conference-related trip to South Korea. His wife, June-Ann Greeley, and son, Christopher Blossom, were at his side when he died.

Born in Springfield, Mass., Blossom spent most of his childhood and teen years in New Jersey. He returned to New England to attend Connecticut College in New London, and spent much of the rest of his life on the Connecticut shoreline. While in college, Blossom met his future wife.

Blossom majored in American literature and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English, but his first career path led him into the tech industry and its interface with financial agencies and corporations. During that time, John authored the book *Content Nation*, which has now become a prophetic analysis of the complexities of the contemporary cultures of social media and big data.

He had long felt a call to the ministry and decided to follow that calling toward ordination in the United Methodist Church. He graduated from Hartford Seminary with honors and received a Master of Divinity degree (with honors) from Yale Divinity School. He was commissioned as a provisional elder at the June 2019 New York Annual Conference.

Blossom had been serving as pastor of South Meriden Trinity UMC

and the UMC of East Berlin. He was involved in interfaith conversations among clergy in Meriden, local environmental concerns, immigration outreach, and developing programs for children.

He enjoyed a range of interests and passions. While in college, he became a driving force in building and managing the campus radio station. A life-long Yankee fan, Blossom also enjoyed sailing, birding and gardening, and jazz and the blues. He was working on a novel about Downeast Maine.

Blossom was an explorer who had recently journeyed to Africa and Puerto Rico on church-related service trips.

In addition to his wife and son, Blossom is survived by his father, John Kenyon Blossom of Springfield, Mass., and a sister, Anne B. McManus of West Springfield, Mass. He was pre-deceased by his mother, Louise “Jill” Steiner Blossom.

A funeral service was held September 28 at First UMC in Meriden, Conn. Interment was at Alder Brook Cemetery in Guilford.

Donations in memory of Blossom may be made to the following: United Methodist Committee on Relief (checks should be made payable to NYAC with “UMCOR-John Blossom” in the memo field; mail to Fran Collins, NYAC, 20 Soundview Ave, White Plains, NY 10606, or donate to UMCOR [via Paypal here](#)); The [Connecticut Audubon Society](#), 314 Unquowa Rd., Fairfield, CT 06824; or the [American Chestnut Foundation](#), 50 North Merrimon Ave., Suite 115, Asheville, NC 28804.

Walden UMC Builds Anew

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needed,” Amthor said of Dorsey. “She’s a no-nonsense person.”

Pastor Dorsey is also seeing some increased financial support in recent months to cover the estimated \$680,000 cost of construction.

“The congregation was at a standstill when I arrived,” she said. “But there has been some movement and we’ve raised \$200,000.” Instead of needing a mortgage, five families stepped forward to pledge a total of \$150,000 that will be locked in as collateral for 10 years.

Building a Community-Minded Church

The property with its two existing structures was in foreclosure when the church purchased it in 2011. Initially, the house on the site was deemed to be a teardown, but has since been totally renovated to serve as the parsonage. The other building (what had been a three-car garage) became the office, a chapel for Wednesday night worship, and room for Bible studies, Sunday School and youth group.

In addition to an open space for worship, the new building will include a social hall, kitchen, two Sunday school rooms, bathrooms and offices. The plan is to also include “state of the art” audio and video systems in the sanctuary.

District superintendent Monk noted that not having a church home for several years has prompted the congregation to think outside the box in terms of future ministries.

“They’ve had to think about how to be a church without a building,” she said. “They see this building not as a church to serve a congregation, but as a place to serve the community.”

Dorsey said the church was intentional about building a one-story



The site for the new church was quickly cleared so the foundation could be set.

space in order to be fully accessible. “We wanted a church that is more community minded,” she said about the design. “We wanted a church that is inviting, and able to adapt to the needs of the community.”

Construction is expected to be complete by Easter 2020. Once the sanctuary is finished, the current office building will be repurposed as meeting space and for health and wellness focused ministries, like a food pantry, Dorsey said. A trailer on the property has been holding furniture and items removed from the former church seven years ago to be used in the new as symbols of continuity and to honor the congregation’s history.

“I like to see this building project as a sign of hope . . . as a revival of United Methodism in our community,” Dorsey said.



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4/24–26 2020 Youth Retreat

Quinipet Retreat and Conference Center on Shelter Island, N.Y., will host youth from around the conference. Stay tuned for additional details.

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 November 1 and December 6. Please send any stories, photos, ideas, or questions directly to vision@nyac.com.

Open Enrollment Oct. 30–Nov. 14

BY SALLY TRUGLIA

In a few short weeks, it will be time for clergy to check their HealthFlex WebMD accounts and choose an insurance plan for 2020. The basic plans and coverage options are the same; however the rates have increased for some plans and decreased for others. Open enrollment is from October 30–November 14.

One significant change in 2020 is that Wespeth has terminated its agreement with UBH / Optum for behavioral health services. (They will continue to provide our prescription drug plan.) Instead, Wespeth has contracted with Blue Cross Blue Shield, effective January 1, 2020, to provide behavioral healthcare needs. Basic coverage will remain the same, but participants should review the list of providers. The HealthFlex Exchange plan treats behavioral health office visits with parity—meaning in-network and out-of-network are paid at the same rate—but in-network providers are always preferred.

There is also a minor change to the 2020 dental plans. Although CIGNA will remain the dental provider, Wespeth has eliminated the Passive PPO1000 plan and added a dental HMO plan.

When you login to HealthFlex WebMD, click

on the “HealthFlex Details and FAQs” link to view videos, see coverage details for each of the six plans, and review incentive and wellness programs. Alex, the animated advisor on the HealthFlex WebMD page, can help review your options. Remember that Alex will generally point you in the direction of the lowest monthly cost plan, not necessarily the best coverage plan for your family.

You must determine which plan is best for your family, not based solely on the monthly premium, but also on the estimated out-of-pocket costs. Lower cost plans will have higher out-of-pocket costs for provider services. It is important to recognize and arrange to pay for higher out-of-pocket costs if you choose a lower premium plan. Carefully review the benefit coverage and everyday costs for the plan you are considering. Making pre-tax contributions to a medical flexible spending account (FSA) or a health spending account (HAS) will help cover any out-of-pocket costs.

For questions about open enrollment and other benefits, [email Truglia](mailto:sally.truglia@nyac.com), the NYAC human resources and benefits manager, or call her at 914-615-2220.