

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

THE VISION

November 2019



Dave Clegg chats with a voter on the campaign trail for Ulster County district attorney; below, Clegg offers the benediction after his ordination as a deacon at the 2016 New York Annual Conference.

Deacon Clegg Looks to Bring Compassion to DA's Office

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY
Editor, *The Vision*

When someone suggested to Dave Clegg that he consider pursuing deacon's orders in the United Methodist Church, he was surprised to discover how well the role connected to his life and work as a lawyer.

"It's funny how well it all fits," said Clegg, who has practiced law in Kingston, N.Y., since 1981. "A deacon is called to a ministry of justice, compassion, and service."

"In my understanding of the Gospel . . . and of John Wesley, too . . . we need to be active in the world, helping the poor, vulnerable, widows and orphans. I've always seen it that way. The position of a deacon spoke to me so deeply—being the bridge to people who need care."

Clegg is now hoping to bring that care and the ideals of compassion and justice to the office of the Ulster County district attorney.



He ran against Republican Michael J. Kavanagh, but at press time, the results of the November 5 election were a virtual dead heat with each candidate claiming 49.9 percent of the vote. The contest will finally be decided sometime after

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CELEBRATING JFON Asylum Seekers, Refugees at Heart Of Mission to Serve

BY CHRISTIE R. HOUSE

Have you ever heard of NYJFON? Surprisingly, for many in the New York Conference the tireless work done by this United Methodist immigration ministry is a mystery. Yet for two decades, New York Justice for Our Neighbors (NYJFON) has stepped in to help the most vulnerable members of the immigrant population.

On the national level, all JFON offices together—numbering 50 clinics across 17 sites in 15 states—handled a total of 13,000 cases last year, according to Rob Rutland-Brown, director of the National JFON office headquartered in Virginia. Two of the New York area JFON sites were among the first legal clinics to be established by United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

With this success in mind, NYJFON recently commemorated its 20th year of providing legal advice to immigrants at a gala dinner at Christ United Methodist Church in Manhattan.

New York JFON's director, Rev. Paul Fleck, applauded the work of the staff, particularly three attorneys who spend time listening to clients and sifting through bureaucratic tape and legal loopholes to try to serve those in need of resolution and justice, all at no cost to their clients.

"JFON performs life-transforming ministry every day," said Fleck. "The attorneys are like small bulldogs with a bedside manner. They represent their clients in a hostile environment, while treating them with dignity, caring, and love."

Celebrating 20 Years of Mission & Outreach

The 100 or so dinner guests at the October 17 event included JFON staff from the four legal clinics in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens

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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](#).

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 theme for the event, which begins at 3:30 p.m., is “Celebrating Children.” All congregations from the Long Island East, Long Island West, Metropolitan and the New York-Connecticut districts are the members of the Society. Each church is entitled to be present and to vote during the meeting. [RSVP online](#) to attend.

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.

4/24–26 2020 Youth Retreat

Quinipet Retreat and Conference Center on Shelter Island, N.Y., will host youth from around the conference for “Converge,” a weekend of worship, workshops, and plenty of good food. Early-bird registration is \$110 and includes housing, programming, a T-shirt, meals on Saturday and breakfast on Sunday. Cost is \$120 after February 28. [Additional details](#) will be available on the NYAC calendar. Questions? Contact Dana Sarikaya by email at Dudkewic81@gmail.com.

5/5–15 2020 General Conference

The quadrennial gathering of United Methodists from around the world will take place at the Minneapolis Convention Center in Minneapolis, Minn. The theme for the gathering is “. . . and know that I am God” from Psalm 46. <https://gc2020welcome.org/>

6/11–14 New York Annual Conference

Laity and clergy will gather at Hofstra University to do the work of the conference, and to celebrate its ministries and mission. The gathering will begin on Thursday afternoon and conclude Sunday afternoon.

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 final deadline for 2019 is 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</p> <p>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 And on Twitter: @nyacumc Website: www.nyac.com Vision e-mail: vision@nyac.com</p>

Linking Wesleyan Heritage to Social Justice Today

The conference Board of Church and Society (CBCS) has launched a new initiative, “Wesleyan Justice: Our Heritage, Our Future,” to provide local churches with a deeper understanding of a Wesleyan approach to social justice. The first step in the initiative is to train a group of people to work with local congregations.

According to Erika Panzarino, CBCS

program coordinator, trainers will meet with local churches and their leadership to discuss social justice principles, Wesleyan theology and ways to implement justice ministries in their communities.

People interested in becoming trainers may [register online](#) for the free training sessions on November 19 or January 21 from 6 to 9

p.m. at the conference center in White Plains, N.Y. Dinner will be provided. The board is also seeking assistance with translations of the training materials to make the program more accessible.

For any questions or to schedule a trainer to meet with your congregation or leadership team, please email Panzarino.

Capen Defies Age-Stereotypes, Tests Body, Spirit in Miles

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY

Editor, *The Vision*

Earlier this month, 82-year-old Reverend John Capen ran in the TCS New York City marathon. It was his fifth marathon in just six weeks and his 151st overall. Although Capen had hoped to match his time in last year's race, recurring plantar fasciitis slowed him down to just a few seconds over nine hours. Still, few would argue that his time and commitment to the sport aren't worthy of notice.

Capen has found that as one of the oldest runners on any course, he's often the top finisher in his age category.

"Of the 24 who were over 80, I was the slowest, but there were 19 official finishers slower than me," Capen said after the NYC race. The oldest woman to finish was 87; the oldest man was 83. Sometimes he has even finished after the official race is over at the 10-hour mark.

But Capen—who has served both the Athens Federated Church and the High Hill UMC in the Catskill Hudson District since 2008—takes his finish times as they come.

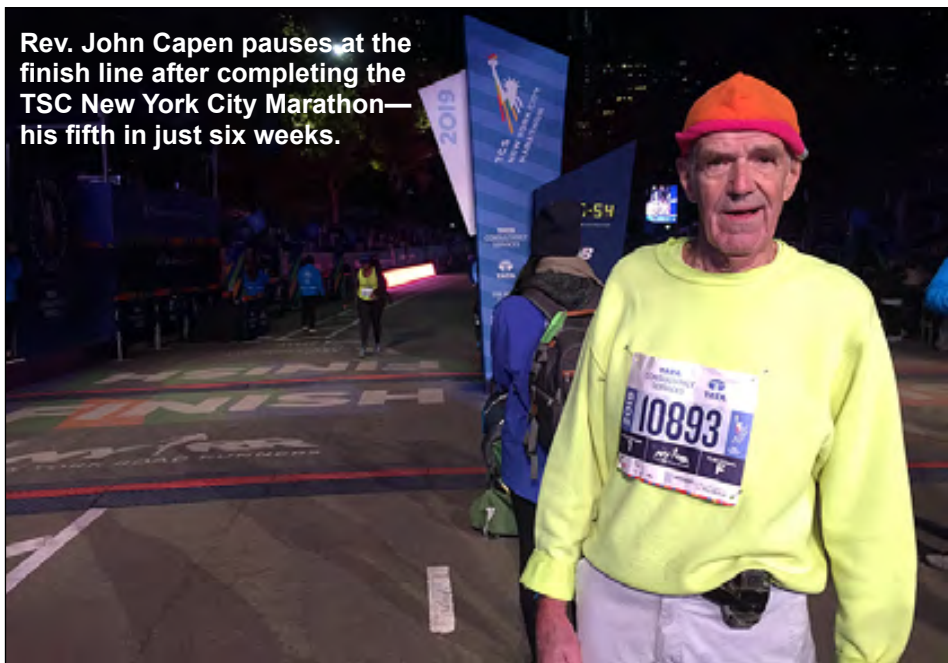
"Even if I don't make eight hours that's alright, there will be other marathons," he said before the NYC race. "Finishing is a matter of being patient and going slowly enough. I'm 82! I don't worry about rushing anymore."

He admits that he's run more than a few of the marathons as a "bandit," meaning he was not officially registered. His first NYC marathon in 1987 was as a bandit, and he's run without a number in Boston 31 times, including the 2013 race that was disrupted by a terrorist bombing. He made the cut in the NYC race through a lottery system and can count himself among the official finishers.

Making Up for Lost Time

Surprisingly, Capen didn't did not start

Rev. John Capen pauses at the finish line after completing the TCS New York City Marathon—his fifth in just six weeks.



running until he was 38-years old, but he has made up for lost time. In 2015, Capen set his mind to run 12 marathons a year to help hit his goal to put in 2,000 miles a year. He went one better in this year and will end the year with 13 marathons.

He tries to run every day, putting in about 5.5 miles. But some days it's "just the 2.5 mile run to the corner store to get coffee and come back." Capen has even taken to running multiple races over the span of just a couple of days. Back in August he ran three races in just five days. He competed in Sterling, Colorado, and Sundance, Wyoming, before flying back to New York for the Sri Chinmoy Marathon in Rockland Lake State Park last August—travels that involved a lot of driving and naps in his car.

His lead-up to the NYC marathon included September and October races in Southampton,

N.Y.; Bristol, N.H.; Hartford, Conn.; and a Monster Mash at the NASCAR track near Dover, Del.

Chit-Chatting with God

Losing Beatrice, his wife of 60 years, last year was like "hitting the wall in a marathon—mentally and emotionally . . . a marathon of the body depends on a marathon of spirit." Thankfully, Capen says the running allows him some solitary time with God for prayer and meditation, to mull over what's going on in his life and the lives of his family and congregations. "It's great to be able to chit-chat with God while you're out on the roads," he said, adding that tackling the long distances can also be a challenge for the spirit.

Ever the pastor, Capen offered a sermonette, "The Marathon of the Spirit," at the ecumenical service in the worship tent before the marathon.

Harvey, Bickerton Elected to Council of Bishops' Posts



Bishops Bickerton, left, and Harvey, right, talk with Bishop John Schol at the 2019 General Conference.

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C. | Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, the area bishop of the Louisiana Conference, was elected president of the Council of Bishops during the recent meeting of the bishops at Lake Junaluska Assembly. Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton was elected president-designate.

Also elected were: secretary, Bishop Tracy Malone; executive secretary, Bishop Bruce Ough; ecumenical officer, Bishop Sally Dyck; and past president, Bishop Ken Carter.

The current officer holders are Bishop Carter, president; Bishop Harvey, president-designate; and Bishop Mande Muyombo as

secretary. The new officers, who will serve for two years, will take office at the end of the May 2020 General Conference. Muyombo was elected chair of the Connectional Table.

The executive secretary serves as the operations officer of the council and works closely with the secretary to monitor actions of the council and executive committee. The ecumenical officer is responsible for relationships with other churches and/or ecclesial bodies. Both serve four-year terms and take office on September 1, 2020. Bishop Marcus Matthews and Bishop B. Michael Watson are the current holders of the positions.



Above, worshippers gather for a tent revival at Center Moriches UMC; below, an evening under the stars on the front lawn.

Making Unconventional Space for God on Long Island

BY SHARON PIZZO

Pastor, Center Moriches UMC

Like the protagonist in the 1989 movie, “Field of Dreams,” some are attracted to the notion “if you build it, they will come.” Center Moriches United Methodist Church has heeded the call of God to do just that.

The Lord had inspired me with the conviction that if my church created a space for God to move in, God would enter in. For the past two years, Center Moriches UMC has held tent services on the front lawn for two nights in early fall. Our ecumenical churches were invited to join us using their gifts and graces for praise and worship, to bring a timely message, and to engage our community on our beautiful front lawn. The Spirit of the Lord is apparent and ever present and the events have been well attended. The purpose is always to glorify God and to reignite the fire of the Holy Spirit in our churches. An altar call is made for those who choose to invite Jesus Christ into their heart. An opportunity for aftercare is also extended to those who are unchurched.

Center Moriches UMC has also created a space for praise and worship on the lawn billed as “An Evening under the Stars.” Our worship band partners with other churches to give rise to blended worship styles. Nearly 200 people attended this year with many reaffirming their faith, and some coming to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Our church was blessed with a donation of 108 Bibles that we were able to place in the hands of those who didn’t have one of their own.

Truly, when you pray and take action under the Holy Spirit’s direction to create a space for God to move in, miracles do happen. To God be the glory!



Recognizing the Need for Older Adult Ministries

BY CLARIS SKERRITT

Deaconess

A survey by The National Institute on Aging reveals the effect that longer life spans will have on society and the need to create support systems for this growing population. The church will need to answer the call to provide safe spaces, resources and support, opportunities for faith enrichment, and social activities that will enhance wholeness and the quality of life in this older segment of the population. Today, approximately 45 million Americans are age 65 or older. By 2030, one in five Americans will be older than 65; that’s a percentage that will include 73 million Americans.

The Commission on Older Adult Ministries is reorganizing itself to focus on creating intentional ways to care for and nurture the older adults across the New York Conference. The commission is tasked by the *Book of Discipline* to strengthen the older-adult ministries in local churches and the districts. Clergy and lay persons in all NYAC churches will have the opportunity to become familiar with intergenerational learning methods with the help of professionals and volunteers.

While developing these ministries and programs, the commission will consider all the various aspects of life—medical, physical, mental, and spiritual needs. They have outlined their guiding principles as “recognize, refocus and rethink.”

- **Recognize:** The aging process starts as soon as we are born and the years begin to multiply. It’s a natural progression that must be acknowledged and supported in our faith communities. People all too soon reach a point in life when the concerns about gray hair, loss of hair, and forgetfulness are real. But this is only another of life’s transitions—we lose something to gain something else. Older adults are enjoying God’s gift of long life and still have so much to offer.
- **Refocus:** Relationships are key to any successful ministry, including one by, for and with older adults. The commission will utilize the connectional nature of the UMC to draw on resources from the denomination’s general boards, jurisdictions, conferences, and connectional ministries. The commission members will work to create partnerships for ministry in local churches, districts, and across the NYAC.
- **Rethink:** What kind of ministries or activities will appeal to older adults? What support is needed, and what support can older adults offer to others? Some like to learn through spoken or printed words while others may be visual learners. How might information be presented differently through video or audio, signs or posters, and large-print pamphlets or brochures?

If you or your church are passionate about ministry with older adults, please contact one of the commission members to share your stories. It’s important for us as a commission to develop and seek resources to improve the quality of life of older adults as they continue the journey home in a safe and worshipful manner.

For additional information, email any of the following Commission on Older Adults members: [Sonia Jermin](#), [Clariss Skerritt](#), or [Douglas Osgood](#).



GOD'S GIFT OF LONG LIFE



Above, rooftop work included preparation for waterproofing; below, members of the team take a photo break in the 90° heat in Puerto Rico.

Poughkeepsie UMC Volunteers Help in Puerto Rico Recovery

BY BARB ADAMS

Two years after Hurricane Maria swept across Puerto Rico, a group of 11 volunteers (dubbed Team #284) spent a week rebuilding in two communities with the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico and ReHace, a disaster management project on the island.

The group—which included members from the Poughkeepsie United Methodist Church and the Dutchess County affiliate of Habitat for Humanity—split into two crews and worked on a home in Arroyo and one in the mountains of Guyama. They braved 90-degree-plus heat to prepare roofs for waterproofing, install new stormproof windows, replace interior and exterior doors, and paint walls, all areas requiring much needed attention to make the homeowners feel safe and secure again.

On Sunday, the team took a break and joined in worship at the local Iglesia Metodista. Despite the challenges of a language barrier, the rousing and moving service filled everyone with the Holy Spirit. Later that afternoon, the group hiked in the mountains of Patillas and took a refreshing plunge at the Church Azul swimming hole; a moment to take in the



natural beauty of the island along with the gracious kindness of its people.

In shared times of prayer and devotions, each member expressed a profound appreciation for their time in Puerto Rico and a commitment to return someday. The delicious (and abundant) island food, the welcoming and gracious people, and the joy of being disciples of Jesus in a community that had suffered so much provided a life-changing experience that would be remembered by all long after they returned home.

Team members included Barb Adams, Reverend Jody Spiak, Johel Dongo, Colleen Snavely, Glenn Peterson, Mike Pike, Mike Giordano, Tammie Jean-Baptiste, John Bisson, Courtenay Caramico and John Hicks.

GBCS Releases Revised Social Principles

CHICAGO—At its final meeting of the quadrennium, the board of directors of the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) introduced the Revised Social Principles to the entire church.

The document is now pending approval of the 2020 General Conference.

“Today is the culmination of an eight-year journey that began when the 2012 General Conference first called the General Board of Church and Society to revise the Social Principles to become more globally relevant, theologically sound, and more succinct,” said Bishop Sally Dyck, resident bishop of the Chicago Episcopal Area and president of the board of directors. “Church and Society faithfully stewarded the process, fulfilling the mandate of the General Conference.”

The new document consolidates six sections into four. The principles in the Nurturing Community are incorporated into the Social Community, while principles from the World Community section are integrated throughout.

Each section is introduced by relevant scriptural passages and excerpts from John Wesley’s writings.

“We didn’t always agree on every Social Principle,” said Randall Miller, the Vice President of the board of directors and Chair of the board’s Social Principles Revision Task Force, “but we celebrated our agreements, and understood how the Social Principles represent how we want to be in relationship with each other and with the world as United Methodists.”

First adopted by the United Methodist Church in 1972, this is the first time the entire Social Principles document was revised as a whole. During this revision, United Methodists from the Central Conferences participated actively throughout process, offering specific recommendations on how the document could be a resource for ministry in congregations across Africa, the Philippines and Europe.

The writing team included over 50 members from Central Conferences in the Philippines, the Congo, West Africa, Central and Southern Europe, and Northern and Eurasia, in addition to the five U.S. Jurisdictions. Thousands United Methodists crossed borders to read and give feedback on draft versions of the document.

To read the Revised Social Principles in one of seven languages, please visit www.umcjustice.org/sp2020.

Asylum Seekers, Refugees at Heart of JFON Mission

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and Long Island; volunteers, honorees, Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton and cabinet members of the New York Conference, recently resettled Syrian refugees, and supporters from churches and mission ministries engaged in welcoming immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

Keynote speaker, Jake Halpern, a journalist, bestselling author and the winner of a 2018 Pulitzer Prize, drew from his family's story, which included victims and survivors of the Holocaust. He also shared his own experience of trying to gain the trust of refugees in Syria in order to tell the story of how families and communities have been affected by the war's devastation.

"Even in the darkest of times, people find ways to trust one another," Halpern said. "If we can take these stories and share them, make one more person see the humanity in the situation, we have succeeded. Summon all your strength to continue doing what you are doing."

Tenacity with Grace Works Small Miracles

NYJFON lead attorney, TJ Mills, introduced the family of Abdullah Abdeen, a native of Syria, who now helps the ministry with Syrian translation. Mills explained how Abdeen had arrived 10 years ago from his homeland and JFON helped him apply and receive asylum. Mills then worked to bring over Abdeen's wife and family. Then his brother Mohammed came. About six months ago, his sister, Hanadi, her four kids and eventually, her husband arrived.

While the image of Mill's case work with this family—coming one after another—drew giggles from the guests, trying to get visas for any asylum-seekers or refugees from "banned countries" such as Syria, Libya or Somalia, has been no laughing matter.

Only six percent of people from countries recently banned from travel to the United States by the current administration succeed in getting a visa. After the Abdeen family drew a good lottery number, and then had to figure out how to get to Jordan to submit the paper work, NYJFON worked with the family to accomplish the impossible. The family, sitting at the front table, greeted the guests in person.

Rutland-Brown announced to the gathering that NYJFON has been chosen as one of three JFON sites to take part in a pilot program



The arrival of the extended family of Abdullah Abdeen from Syria, second from right, serves as a success story for NYJFON's ministry with immigrants.

for asylum case work and resettlement. The UMCOR board of directors recently approved \$1.8 million in grants for a new partnership with Church World Service (CWS). Over three years, NYJFON will receive \$300,000 of this funding for legal work, while CWS receives a grant for case management.

Prayer & Advocacy for JFON

The gala continued with excerpts from "Manos Indocumentadas" (Undocumented Hands)—a narrative cantata on immigration by Edith Alomar and Jorge Lockward—performed by the Mimesis Ensemble led by Katie Reimer. Reimer, on piano, was joined by a cello, a clarinet and four voices.

The evening concluded with remarks by Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton, who celebrated his family's immigrant connection through his great-grandfather, a Syrian immigrant to the United States. Bishop Bickerton noted that he has tracked the number of times immigration policies have changed in the past three years—

the count is 48 so far.

"I think JFON's work has gotten much harder today," he said. "And I accompany that thought with prayers." Bishop Bickerton invited the members of the New York Annual Conference to join him in praying, along with advocacy, building relationships with one another and financial support for the work of NYJFON.

Rev. James Law, pastor of Chinese UMC in Manhattan, received a founder's award at the gala and the coordinators from the first two clinics in New York were also honored; Diane Larrier of John Wesley UMC was presented with the Lilia Fernandez award, and Sue Lee from Chinese UMC received the Helen Shum award.

To volunteer for, or donate to, this vital ministry, go to the [NYJFON website](#).

About the author: Christie R. House is a member of St. Paul and St. Andrew United Methodist Church in Manhattan and a long-time staff member of the General Board of Global Ministries/UMCOR communications ministries.

Church Exit Plan Already in Effect, Court Says

BY LINDA BLOOM
UM News

Legislation setting special provisions for United Methodist churches deciding to leave the denomination took effect immediately at the end of the special General Conference last February, the church's top court has ruled.

In making that determination, the Judicial Council at least temporarily bypassed the assertion from a Commission on General Conference investigation that [improper voting](#) meant the vote to substitute parts of Petition 90066, the disaffiliation petition, was null and void.

The court decided to hold the request submitted by the Council of Bishops on the question of improper voting to its next session. In Decision 1386, the Judicial Council noted that "because of our inability to get the information requested during oral argument" it would be best to reschedule the case.

On a related matter, the Judicial Council issued no opinion on the "constitutionality, meaning, application or effect" of certain petitions of the Traditional Plan, also adopted in February.

"The votes of the council members were insufficient to declare unconstitutional any of the provisions before us," the court said in [Memo-randum 1390](#). At least six of the nine members of Judicial Council must agree in a vote on constitutional issues.

"Our rulings on the constitutionality, meaning, application or effect of the various provisions will await the specific facts of applications of these provisions in cases to come before the council after January 1, 2020," the court said, referring to the request from the Council of Bishops for clarity on five questions related to the Traditional Plan.

This decision and other rulings were released after the close of the court's October 29–Novem-

ber 1 meeting, which included two October 30 oral hearings. Warren Plowden, first lay alternate, participated in the meeting because Judicial Council member Lidia Romao Gulele was unable to attend.

In Decision 1385, the Judicial Council found the proposed effective date on the disaffiliation language had never been in question even after the original Petition 90066 was amended by the minority report. "The body clearly understood that only those specific changes in the minority report were before it," the decision said. "The prefatory language remained unchanged before the General Conference. The effective date of Para. 2553 is the close of the Special General Conference."

The full roster of [Decisions 1380 to 1399](#) from the October meeting can be found on the Judicial Council website. Or read the [full version](#) of this story on the NYAC website.

Church Ratifies Women's Equality Amendment

BY HEATHER HAHN
UM News

After a revote, United Methodists around the globe have [amended the denomination's constitution](#) to proclaim "men and women are of equal value in the eyes of God."

The newly adopted measure also commits United Methodists to work toward ending discrimination against women and girls.

"While we still have much progress to make, this is an indication that we as a church do acknowledge and embrace women at every level of the church," said Bishop Tracy Smith Malone, president of the United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women. She also leads the East Ohio Conference.

The amendment now has received 92.2 percent of the annual conference votes submitted to the Council of Bishops. Ratification of the amendment was announced November 6 during the bishops' meeting in Lake Junaluska, N.C. The revote took place after the Ask the UMC and UM News teams reported incorrect wording in what was initially sent to annual conference voters.

The new amendment takes effect immediately, and the United Methodist Publishing House plans to issue the addition to the *Book of Discipline* as soon as possible. The Discipline contains the constitution and other church policies and teachings. This will be the Discipline's new Paragraph 6.



Raising Up Future UMC Leaders

The United Methodist Church believes that every person has the right to education and that the responsibility of educating young people rests with the family, faith communities, and the government. On United Methodist Student Day, we have the opportunity to support scholarships and low-interest loans that help young leaders achieve their dreams. Your contribution on November 24 will be joined with those of millions of other United Methodists to provide scholarships to deserving recipients. This offering has raised more than \$400,000 and helps more than 300 students a year. Give through your local church or [online](#) with [umciving.org](#).

Celebrating New Life in the Bronx!



“Even though no longer a church, this building will be a sanctuary, a sanctuary to many seniors, providing them with a beautiful home . . . in church terms, this is a true resurrection, where something that was dead is now being brought forth to life.” With these words, Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton offered a blessing on October 24 for the construction of the Trinity-Rev. William James Complex on the former site of Trinity UMC in the Bronx. The 12-story building, a collaborative project of the United Methodist City Society and Bronx Pro Group developers, will contain 154 affordable housing units for seniors as well as offices for social services and space for a UM ministry. Completion of the building is expected in 2021.



New Book Explores Attacks on Early Methodism

A new book by a retired New York Conference elder examines the wide-ranging written attacks made on early Methodism in 18th Century pamphlets. “Outside Looking In: Early Methodism as Viewed by Its Critics,” by Donald Kirkham, references more than 600 pamphlets that came from all sides—the episcopacy, clergy, other Christian groups, universities, Wesley’s ex-preachers, ex-Methodist laity, the Calvinist branch of Methodism, and the secular community.

Kirkham served several churches in Connecticut before being appointed district superintendent there. Since retirement, he has served as pastor emeritus of Stratford UMC. For more than 30 years, he taught Methodist studies as an associate professor at Yale

University Divinity School.

According to a press release, Kirkham presents a more nuanced view of the emergence of Methodism by examining the extent, nature, and reason for resistance to the movement. Anti-Methodist pamphlet attacks took place in the context of other forms of hostility: mob violence, antagonistic articles in newspapers and periodicals, criticism in novels and plays, and verbal assaults from pulpit and press.

New Room Books, an imprint of the UMC’s General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, published the book. It can be purchased from the [GBHEM website](#), or at a 50 percent discount by [emailing](#) Dr. Kirkham.



OBITUARIES

Rev. Wilmert Wolf, Jr.

The Reverend Wilmert “Bill” Harry Wolf, Jr., 85, died October 21, 2019, after a long struggle with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Wolf was born in Winona, Minn., on July 8, 1934, to Rev. Wilmert Wolf and Sarah Staffeld. He was educated in Naperville, Ill., at North Central College and Evangelical Theological Seminary. Further education included Boston University School of Theology and Mansfield College, Oxford University.

Elected a full elder in the Illinois Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1960, Wolf served churches in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania before coming to New York in 1965. He served at West Hempstead, Island Park, Grace UMC in Newburgh, and Valhalla before being appointed superintendent of the Long Island East District from 1995 to 2001. After retiring in 2001, Wolf served St. Paul’s UMC in Middletown and Hankins UMC, both in New York. After moving to Pennsylvania, he served Elm Park UMC.

Wolf often served as chaplain of the fire departments in the communities he served. He was also a member of the Rotary and Kiwanis, and was involved in many social justice issues. He loved world traveling, reading, and leading study groups and youth groups.

He is survived by his wife of 43 years, Marianne Hunt; a daughter, Karin Snodgrass; a step-daughter, Christy Wyrzten; two sisters, Sarah Shoemaker and Priscilla Heim; and a brother, Paul Wolf. His daughter Suzanne predeceased him when she was 18.

A celebration of Wolf’s life will be held at the convenience of the family. Condolences may be sent to Marianne Wolf, 108 Pollock Dr., Pittston, PA 18640, and to Karin Snodgrass, 29W300 Iroquois Court N., Warrenville, IL 60555.

Donations in Bill’s memory may be made to UMCOR, either [online](#) or through the New York Conference (make checks payable to “NYAC” with “UMCOR—Bill Wolf” in the memo field, and mail to NYAC, 20 Soundview Ave, White Plains, NY 10606).

Blessings and prayers to the Wolf family at this time of loss.

Martha “Marty” McGonagle

Martha “Marty” McGonagle, 88, died on September 2, 2019. The widow of Rev. L. Lester McGonagle, she was a resident of Florida Presbyterian Homes in Lakeland, Fla.

She was born in Vermont and graduated from Boston University. Shortly after graduation, she undertook a short-term mission trip where she met her future husband.

Rev. McGonagle served 42 years in ministry, pastoring New York churches in Lake Mahopac and Mount Hope, Buchanan and Boscobel, Lynbrook, Community UMC in North Yonkers, and Hyde Park. In retirement, the couple moved to Florida and continued to serve at the College Heights UMC.

Martha was a loving, kind, faithful, devoted Christian. She enjoyed volunteering and helping people her whole life. Marty continued to volunteer after her husband’s death in 2015.

Martha was predeceased by her loving husband of 60 years, Lester, and her son, Stephen. She is survived by her sister, Hildegard; daughter, Becky; and five grandchildren, Kristin, Alyssa, Lindsay, Brendan and Joel.

A memorial service took place September 14 at College Heights UMC in Lakeland.

A New York celebration of her life was held November 9 at the Chapel at Union Valley Cemetery in Mahopac, with Rev. Martha Epstein officiating. Interment took place immediately following the service.

JOB OPENINGS

Kingswood Campsite Administrator

The NYAC Camping & Retreat Ministry is seeking applicants for the position of [Kingswood Campsite](#) administrator. This part-time position is responsible for serving as the point of contact for Kingswood, including phone calls, emails, reservations, marketing, and attending committee meetings as needed.

The ideal candidate is familiar with the Kingswood facility in Hancock, N.Y., has strong initiative, and is friendly and welcoming. Proficiency in Microsoft Office, simple graphic design and the ability to edit web pages are desired. There is no office associated with this position; the administrator works from home for approximately 10 hours per week; pay is \$18–\$20 per hour. [Email](#) a cover letter and resume to apply.

Music/Choir Director

Cornerstone Community Church in Norwalk, Conn., is seeking a music/choir director to lead an adult choir and bell choir, and to accompany the congregation in Sunday worship and special services. This is a paid position and requires approximately 12 hours per week. Interested persons should contact Rev. Elizabeth Abel at pastor@come2cornerstone.org.

Native Immersion Program in Okla.

An opportunity to learn more about Native United Methodists and experience their culture and traditions is being offered by the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC). The fourth annual Native immersion experience to be held March 11–15, 2020, in Oklahoma City.

“The immersion experience is important because it teaches you so much more than books can,” said Rev. David Wilson, OIMC superintendent, adding that participants come from all over the United States. “Meeting people face-to-face and learning about our ministries in the OIMC help people to better understand who we are as Native United Methodist.”

The experience is concentrated on three tribal areas around Oklahoma City and will include visits to the Oklahoma History Center, Standing Bear Park in Ponca City, the Washita “massacre” Battlefield Site in Cheyenne, and OIMC churches.

The registration is \$225 per person which includes meals and entry fees. OIMC provides a bus for the area tours, but participants are responsible for transportation to and from Oklahoma City and booking their rooms at the Best Western Plus Saddleback Inn and Conference Center at the group rate

“We have had a wide variety of participants including both lay and clergy, volunteers, and United Methodists who just have a heart for Native ministries,” said Wilson. He says if any participant needs assistance with the fee to contact the OIMC office. Register online by February 27, 2020. For more information contact the OIMC office at 405-632-2006 or via email at Dwilson@oimc.org.

Clegg Follows Faithful Path in Law Practice

Continued from page 1

November 18, when a tally of all the absentee ballots is to begin, according to the county Board of Elections.

Focus on Restorative Justice

Clegg, who was ordained a deacon in 2016, ran as a progressive on a reform platform calling for the use of restorative justice and diversion programs instead of incarceration for nonviolent offenders. “Rehabilitation, treatment, compassion, and restorative justice will make the community stronger, better, and safer,” Clegg said, noting the racial injustice that has long existed in the criminal justice system.

He lamented the fact that the predominant response to the opioid crisis has been to put people in jail rather than in treatment. Ulster County has had one of the highest per capita rates of opioid use in the state. Clegg said he believes that the district attorney needs to be a leader for justice in the community. “A lot of organizations need to come together to bring about restorative justice,” he said. “We need to intervene, to support and follow up with people,

rather than incarcerate them.”

In his law practice, Clegg has taken on corporate abuse and polluters, and defended victims of domestic violence. He also has served as chair of the Ulster County Human Rights Commission. In his appointment as a deacon to St. James UMC in Kingston, he oversees the church’s outreach ministries, preaches occasionally, and serves on the board of trustees.

Through the Rising Hope program, he taught theology courses at the Woodbourne Correctional Facility and helped those who were incarcerated prepare to return to their communities.

Responding to the Call to Ministry

Clegg first felt a call to ministry when he was a 17-year-old Lutheran and even went to college to pursue that call. But his opposition to the Vietnam War did not set well with the church.

“That experience led me to become a lawyer . . . I thought I could change the world that way,” Clegg said.

Eventually he was drawn to the United

Methodist Church because they “talk the talk and walk the walk.” And then he realized that he “could put back the calling that never left me and combine my legal practice with the work of a deacon.”

As for his campaign for district attorney, Clegg said before the election, “I feel like I’m doing what I’m called to do. I don’t know if I’ll win or lose, but I know that the conversation is important. We’ve been overly punitive, we’ve overly incarcerated people—especially when it comes to the war on drugs. That’s a waste of life, money and resources.

“I feel very good about what I’ve had opportunity to talk about in public,” he said. “It’s everything I believe in—to put people in treatment, to make them functional in society and to rehabilitate outside of jail.

“The big thing for me is bringing compassion into the DA’s office,” Clegg said.

Clegg was previously one of seven Democratic candidates for New York’s 19th Congressional District in the U.S. House. He lost the primary in June 2018 to Antonio Delgado, who went on to unseat incumbent John Faso.

Understanding Church Authority & Financial Transparency

BY ROSS WILLIAMS

Conference CFO/Treasurer

I often receive questions about the authority of church leaders over financial matters and access to financial statements, systems, meetings and records. Listed below is guidance on these topics from *The Book of Discipline* (BOD) and other UMC publications. The *Book of Discipline* is [available online](#).

One of the hallmarks of our denomination is a structure and practice of openness, transparency and inclusion with respect to almost all church matters. Transparency with financial matters builds trust between the congregation and the various committees and leaders that are elected to govern the church. Full transparency can result in greater financial stewardship through the assurance it provides that monetary gifts are being used appropriately. Sometimes, but certainly not always, a reluctance to share financial information can point to more serious problems such as the desire to exert control or poor management of scarce resources. In the worst cases, it can be an attempt to conceal theft or fraud.

Meetings: The BOD (§ 722) requires that meetings generally be open. Per § 258.2.e, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee is the only committee that is required to be closed.

An example of the need for a closed session might be a discussion by the Board of Trustees

of negotiations to purchase real estate (any real estate purchase or sale must ultimately be approved by the charge conference, pastor and district superintendent).

Financial Records: Per BOD § 258.4.d, all financial statements of the church and all its organizations and accounts are required to undergo an annual audit. Included in this are the work of the church treasurer / financial secretary, trustees, preschool (if controlled by the church), memorial or endowment funds, outreach ministries, etc.

Generally speaking, no church entity should keep financial records secret. This does not mean that certain sensitive information, such as salaries and financial gifts, cannot be kept private.

Churches are generally incorporated under religious and not-for profit corporate law in their home state and must comply with local statutes.

Stewardship Records: Details of financial giving by members should be kept private and only shared with those that have “a need to know.” Those having such a need are the financial secretary, the pastor, and sometimes the finance committee.

A concern sometimes raised is that a pastor’s ministry may somehow be biased if they are aware of such details. In reality, an individual’s financial discipleship is part of their faith jour-

ney, and both are a vital component of pastoral ministry.

Authority of the Pastor: The pastor is the “servant leader,” of the church, leading the people in worship, prayer, and to faith in Jesus Christ by supervising and organizing the church to be effective in mission. The pastor should be aware of, and responsible for, everything related to church business.

The BOD § 244.3 states: “The pastor shall be the administrative officer and, as such, shall be an ex-officio member of all conferences, boards, councils, commissions, committees, and task forces, unless otherwise restricted by the Discipline.” The pastor’s authority is not all-encompassing. They are subject to oversight by the Pastor/Parish Relations Committee and to other checks and balances.

For example, while the pastor has a right to question all financial matters of the church, they should play no role in personally managing them. While the exact boundaries of pastoral authority may be hard to define, my personal opinion is that no one person—clergy or laity—has the authority to make unilateral decisions of significance for the church in isolation.

To read more about the authority and membership of church committees, go to [Ross Williams’ blog](#) on the NYAC website.