

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

THE VISION



February 2020



Kenyan schoolgirls are delighted to receive their "Days for Girls" kits; below, members of the Simsbury, Conn., UMC work to sew the washable kits.

Making Connections to Help Girls in E. Africa Stay in School

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY
Editor, *The Vision*

A chance meeting between a member of the Simsbury, Conn., United Methodist Church and a United Methodist pastor from Kenya resulted in health education and "Days for Girls" menstrual kits being delivered to 1,450 girls in the African country in just six months. Nearly as many boys also received the essential health education.

For some five years, the Simsbury church has participated in Days for Girls, a global initiative that strives to empower women and to keep girls in school by working to end the shame and stigma associated with a monthly period. The girls are educated about reproductive health and then given a kit of washable, reusable pads and two pairs of underwear so that they can attend school with dignity.



Anna Baker has been part of the Simsbury team assembling the kits and delivered some on a trip with the Youth Ambassadors in Mission.

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Preparing A Table That's Truly Open for All

BY REV. KAREN EILER

It was the first Sunday of the month, and for once, I was at my home church. It had been a while since I received communion. I felt a sense of happy anticipation at the prospect of this embodied experience of belonging to God in Jesus Christ, and to the beloved community.

I stood in line for a communion station, held out my hands, looked in the basket, and saw nothing but chunks of challah. Usually there are a few little individually-wrapped wafers on the side.

"Is there any gluten-free bread?"

The sweet young acolyte holding the basket looked panicked. He glanced over at the church leader holding the chalice next to him.

No. There was no gluten-free bread.

I had already resigned myself to not receiving from the cup, as I had watched everyone before me dip their bread in it. But even the Body of Christ was not for me that day.

The servers looked around for the pastor. I said, "Never mind. Forget it." Walked back to my seat, grabbed my stuff, and left the building. I managed to hold my tears until I got to my car.

This happened in my own church. I have lost track of how many times it has happened before, there and countless other places. It doesn't always make me cry, but I'd had a really hard week. I needed the sacrament that day.

But this is what makes me different from a visitor to your church: I will probably come back. I'm an experienced church person, dedicated to the community of faith, despite its flaws, foibles, and disappointments. A seeker who is not made welcome is more likely to slip out the door, never to be seen again.

Not feeling welcome

I serve in extension ministries, and I do a lot of supply preaching in the UMC and beyond.

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

3/5 Scholarship Application Deadline

Each year the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) offers financial aid to United Methodist students pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees. These scholarships and loans allow students of all backgrounds to earn their degrees and serve as the next generation of leaders for the church and the world. Instructions and applications can be found on the GBHEM website. The deadline for 2020 fall term scholarships is March 5.

3/25 Pre-Retirement Workshop

More details are to come on this 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. event for clergy at the White Plains conference center. Email [Sally Truglia](mailto:Sally.Truglia) with questions.

4/10 Conference Office Closed

The NYAC office in White Plains, N.Y., will be closed for Good Friday.

4/18 Bishop's Confirmation Rallies

Confirmands are invited to spend the day with Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton and their fellow students from around the conference. The day will begin at 9:30 a.m. and end mid-afternoon; there will be music, lunch, and other activities. Participants can choose between two locations:

- **April 18: Valhalla UMC**, 200 Columbus Ave., Valhalla, N.Y.
- **May 30: Hicksville UMC**, 130 W Old Country Rd., Hicksville, N.Y.

Contact [Jenna Johnson](mailto:Jenna.Johnson), youth ministries coordinator, by email with any questions. Register by clicking [here](#).

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.

5/3 Recognizing Older Adults

Choose this Sunday, or any Sunday in May, to honor the older adults in your congregation. Resources are available on the UMC Discipleship [website here](#).

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 Minnesota. The theme for the gathering is “... and know that I am God” from Psalm 46. For additional information, go to the [GC2020 official website](#). See *related stories on Page 4*.

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 2020

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 2020 are January 3, February 7, March 6, April 3, May 1, June 5, July 3, August 7, September 4, October 2, November 6, and December 4. Please send any stories, photos, ideas, or questions directly to vision@nyac.com.

2020 Openings, Appointments

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton and the cabinet have begun the 2020 appointment season and announced clear openings at seven churches. Clergy interested in serving any of these churches should contact the superintendent of the district in which the congregation is located.

The openings will be filled through the bishop and cabinet's usual discernment process; clergy who express an interest are not guaranteed preferential consideration.

Clear openings as of January 8 include:

- Crawford Memorial UMC, Bronx (MET)
- Union UMC, East Northport, N.Y. (LIE)
- Jesse Lee UMC, Easton, Conn. (CT)
- Gilboa and Harpersfield UMCs, N.Y. (CH)
- Pound Ridge Community Church, Pound Ridge, N.Y. (NYCT)
- St. Paul's UMC, Staten Island, NY (MET)

For additional information, follow the “[2020 New Appointments](#)” page on the conference website.

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|  <p>The Vision</p> <p>The News of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church</p> |
| <p>Bishop: Thomas J. Bickerton Communications Director: Lisa Isom Editor: Joanne Utley New York Conference of The United Methodist Church 20 Soundview Avenue, White Plains, NY 10606 Phone (888) 696-6922 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> |

Updates on Bahamas, Puerto Rico Recovery Efforts

The Bahamas

At the request of Bishop Theophilus Rolle and President Carla Culmer from the Methodist conferences of the Bahamas, three members of the New York Conference led disaster response workshops and training events, visited future volunteer response sites, and met with Rev Stephanie Gottschalk, director of Bahamas Methodist Habitat, to discuss options for inter-agency collaboration and the deployment of volunteer teams. The early February trip was a follow-up to the first NYAC trip in December.

On the first night, Tom Vencuss presented an overview of disaster response ministries; Wendy Vencuss led a discussion on disaster emotional and spiritual care (DESC) on the second evening; the third meeting focused on “next steps.” Rev Kristina Hansen assisted in each of the workshops.

More than 60 persons from both conferences, other faith-based organizations, and local communities were present. The mood was positive, energetic, and people came away agreeing to meet again to continue the process of developing a strategy for addressing the many needs caused by Hurricane Dorian. The NYAC will continue to support the churches and Methodist Habitat in this recovery.

Thousands of homes on Grand Bahama (Freeport) and Abaco islands were either severely damaged or destroyed as Dorian brought a 20-foot-plus storm surge and Category 4 sustained winds to many areas. Another concern expressed by church leadership is the need for emotional and spiritual care for persons and communities affected by the storm.

The NYAC has begun recruiting volunteer teams. Two teams are already scheduled for March and are full. Information and applications for additional teams will be posted on the website, sent through the mission e-blasts, and shared through our other social media platforms. Emotional and spiritual care teams are also being developed.

If you are interested in leading a team, contact [Tom Vencuss](#) by email at the conference mission office. Contact [Wendy Vencuss](#) by email for information on DESC training and teams.

Puerto Rico

Some 2,000 earthquakes have hit Puerto Rico since December 28—predominantly in the southwest municipalities, but also in other parts



Damage from Hurricane Dorian on Grand Bahama island.

of the island. The strongest was a 6.4 in early January, but multiple aftershocks continue daily, including one that registered 5.0 on the Richter scale.

More than 500 homes have been destroyed and many others structures (including schools, apartment complexes and public buildings) were damaged, according to recent reports. In addition, more than 8,000 people are currently living in municipal or “pop-up” shelter camps. Residents have lost homes or sustained damage, while others are simply afraid to remain in concrete structures.

In mid-January, Tom Vencuss, New York Conference (NYAC) director of missions and disaster response, traveled to Puerto Rico as part of a small United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) early assessment team. The group met with leaders from the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico (MCPR), and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) personnel. They also visited hard-hit areas, met with survivors and had discussions with Rehaciendo Comunidades con Esperanza (ReHace), the social response arm of MCPR, to plan a response.

Response organizations on the island include FEMA, the National Guard, Emergency Management, Puerto Rico Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster and others. In mid-January, a federal declaration was issued

making Puerto Rico eligible for federal disaster response aid.

The MCPR, through ReHace, has been a partner in this response effort from the outset. Due in part to its current Maria response effort, and the Methodist church’s presence throughout the island, ReHace has established 15 distribution sites for the reception and disbursements of emergency supplies.

Brigades of “Hope and Love” have been trained and sent to areas to provide spiritual and emotional care. On January 18, more than 80 persons took part in a psychological first aid training coordinated by the church; many are currently disaster case managers. Working with UMCOR, ReHace will establish and monitor a call-in center. All are mindful of the urgent need to find suitable housing for displaced persons as the hurricane season begins June 1.

No goods or supplies are needed or requested at this time. The situation is also not appropriate for volunteer teams. All volunteers will continue to be deployed to Maria-affected communities elsewhere on the island.

The NYAC Missions office continues to be the point of contact for all mainland-based volunteer teams deploying to Puerto Rico as part of the Maria recovery effort.

To volunteer for hurricane recovery work, contact [Tymera Jackson](#) in the conference office via email or by calling, 914-615-2248.

Conference Votes to Send Protocol to GC2020

BY GLADYS P. MANGIDUYOS
AND SAM HODGES

UM News | The Philippines Annual Conference Cavite has endorsed and sent to the 2020 General Conference legislation for an amicable separation of the United Methodist Church—the Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation.

The annual conference, meeting in regular session Feb. 12–14 in Tagaytay City, Philippines, also endorsed and forwarded the Christmas Covenant, another potentially key piece of legislation for the future of The United Methodist Church.

Both proposals were developed after the official petition deadline for the denomination's top lawmaking assembly, scheduled May 5–15 in Minneapolis.

However, a little-used part of the *Book of Discipline*—the denomination's policy book—lets annual conferences submit legislation later if they meet between 230 and 45 days before General Conference.

Other annual conferences are due to take up the protocol, but PAC Cavite, as the conference is known, appears to be the first to endorse it and send it on to General Conference.

The [protocol](#) is the work of a 16-member team of church leaders, representing progressive, centrist and traditionalist parts of the denomination. New York Area Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton was a member of the mediation team that agreed the longstanding divisions over same-sex weddings and ordination of LGBTQ people as clergy were tearing apart the UMC, requiring a separation.

The protocol would allow traditionalist churches—those who oppose same-sex weddings and ordination of noncelibate LGBTQ people as clergy—to leave with their properties. The new group would also get \$25

million in United Methodist funds.

The [Christmas Covenant](#) was proposed by central conference leaders, primarily in the Philippines. It's a plea for keeping the denomination intact and as unified as possible, but also calls for restructuring it into regional conferences, including a U.S. regional conference. Regions would be allowed to adapt the Book of Discipline to their contexts, with the hope that differences over doctrine and social issues could be reduced.

The Rev. Mark Holland, executive director of the advocacy group Mainstream UMC, traveled to the PAC Cavite session and spoke for the protocol.

“It keeps us out of court and keeps the United Methodist Church intact,” he said.

The Michigan Conference is to meet in special session March 7, to consider sending the protocol to General Conference. Michigan Bishop David Bard has said his goal is to help get the legislation to General Conference, not to have his conference consider whether to endorse it.

The Sierra Leone Conference, overseen by Bishop John Yambasu, will take up the protocol during a regularly scheduled gathering March 4–8. Yambasu organized talks last summer that led to the protocol team's formation.

The protocol has been endorsed by the governing boards of advocacy groups from traditionalist, centrist and progressive perspectives. Those groups, according to protocol team members, are the Confessing Movement within The United Methodist Church, Good News, Mainstream UMC, Uniting Methodists, Reconciling Ministries Network, UMCNext and the Wesleyan Covenant Association.

Various [other plans](#) for the future of The United Methodist Church also will be before General Conference.

Preparing for General Conference 2020

When the 2020 General Conference convenes on May 5, the New York Conference will be represented by three clergy and three lay delegates. An additional set of three each, who were elected to the 2020 Northeastern Jurisdictional (NEJ) Conference, will be designated as reserves in Minneapolis.

Those elected are:

- **2020 GC delegates**—Laity: Fred Brewington, Jorge Lockward and Gail Douglas-Boykin. Clergy: Noel Chin, Denise Smartt Sears, and Tim Riss
- **2020 NEJ delegates/GC Reserves**—Laity: Tiffany French Goffe, Ann Craig, and Karen Prudente. Clergy: Alex da Silva Souto, Sungchan Kim, and Adrienne Brewington

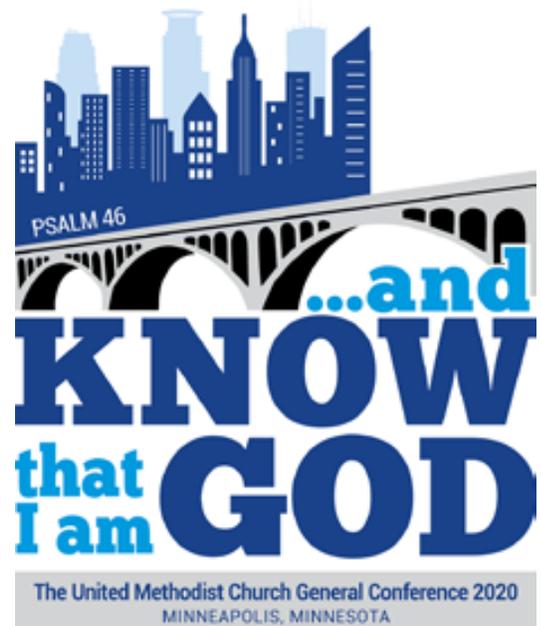
The number of delegates each conference elects is determined by the Commission on the General Conference through a statistical formula based on the number of clergy and professing lay members of each annual conference. The total delegate count has been set at 862 for the 2020 meeting, with representatives of the five U.S. jurisdictions and seven central conferences throughout the world, as well as churches with which the United Methodist Church has a concordat agreement.

Two websites have been created to provide information about the May 5–15 gathering:

- General Conference 2020 official page, click [here](#).
- Welcome page from the Dakotas-Minnesota Area host team, click [here](#).

The [Advance Daily Christian Advocate](#), which includes the conference schedule and legislation that will be considered, is available to read or download online in four languages.

The Upper Room will also be providing an online resource, “[Be Still and Know: 40 Days of Prayer for General Conference](#),” that may be used by individuals and church communities.



City Society Accepting Scholarship Applications

Applications are now being accepted for two scholarships offered by the United Methodist City Society.

The Urban Ministry Scholarship is available for those who have demonstrated experience and interest in urban ministry, along with some financial need. The scholarship is designated primarily to assist those planning to enter fulltime ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church with special interest in urban ministry.

All candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Membership in a church in the New York Conference
- Enrollment in a seminary approved by the University Senate of the UMC
- Full or part time seminary student for the academic year 2020–2021
- A certified or inquiring candidate, with an assigned mentor, in the candidacy process of the NYAC
- Proof of financial need

The application for the Urban Ministry Scholarship must be received by May 15 to be considered for a full year scholarship.

The City Society is also offering a limited number of “rolling scholarships” through December 31, 2020, if funds remain available. These scholarships are available to candidates who were unable to meet the May deadline.

The Rev. Dr. William M. James Family Memorial Scholarship, established by his estate and through the generosity of his friends, is intended for persons who will be attending an accredited institution of higher education, have leadership potential, and some financial need. Dr. James had hoped that this scholarship would encourage young people who aspire to be agents for the transformation of the world.

Applicants must be recommended by their pastor, a lay person who is a leader in their local church, and a teacher or professor.

All candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Membership in a United Methodist church in the NYAC;
- Enrollment at an accredited college or university approved by the scholarship committee;
- A fulltime student for the academic year 2020–2021

The James scholarship application is due on May 8, 2020.

Both applications can be found on the City Society website by clicking [here](#).

If you have any questions or need any further information, contact [Rev. Dr. Bill Shillady](#) via email or at 212-870-3094.

Register for Blueprint for Wellness Screening

Participants in the HealthFlex insurance program may register to take the Blueprint for Wellness (BFW) screening before July 31 at a Quest Diagnostics lab or at the New York Annual Conference.

The screening provides personalized data on 30 health factors at no cost to participants. The confidential results are mailed directly to the participant to share with their primary care provider. Clergy and spouses who are registered with VirginPulse may earn \$100 in PulseCash and up to 140 wellness points by completing the screening.

Advance registrations may be made by calling 855-623-9355 and indicating one’s employer group as HealthFlex or the United Methodist Church. To register online for either the lab screening or the annual conference option, go to www.wespath.org; click on “Health & Wellness Benefits” and log into the HealthFlex WebMD site, then select: “Quest Blueprint for Wellness.” Choose your desired location, day and time.

Any questions should be directed to [Sally Truglia](#) by email, or by calling 914-615-2220.

70 Days of Global Prayer Set for Korean Peninsula

A global prayer campaign for peace on the Korean Peninsula will occur from March 1 to August 15, lasting 70 days and engaging people worldwide to say: “We Pray, Peace Now, End the War!”

The campaign began with a preliminary live-streamed event in early February hosted by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva, with corresponding events the same day in Washington, D.C., and Seoul.

Representatives from the Korean Christian Federation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and from the National Council of Churches (NCC) in the Republic of Korea were invited to reflect on the significance of 70 years, and share their hope for the future. The campaign will also issue a clarion call for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula as part of a nuclear-free world.

“The ongoing 1945 division and the unfinished 1950 Korean War have become a socio-geopolitical ‘original sin’ against Korean people’s life security,” said Rev. Dr. Hong-Jung Lee, general secretary of the NCC in Korea. “We believe that the prayer campaign will be a key of peace to open the gate of God’s grace, a breath of peace to cultivate forgiveness and reconciliation . . . and a milestone of peace toward the God-recreating Korean *oikoumene*.”

A toolkit of resource materials, including prayers and Bible studies, will be available to bring a global dimension to the activities of the peace process, including advocacy material for social media plus a booklet, “70 stories of Love, Justice and Peace.”

The 70 days of prayer correspond with a commemoration of 70 years since the Korean War. Last November, the NCC in Korea decided to proclaim 2020 as a “jubilee year” marking 70 years since the Korean War. The NCC in Korea also vowed to continue its efforts for a permanent and solid peace regime and reunification, declaring a formal end to the Korean War and replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty.

‘Merging is a New Journey’

BY JENNIFER HARMER
Wappingers UMC

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NIV)

Throughout 2019, the United Methodist Church of Wappingers journeyed through a transition from being the church that they had always known to a merged congregation with the Poughkeepsie UMC. The decision came about after a great deal of discussion with District Superintendent Betsy Ott and the congregation members and, of course, intense prayer as a group and individually.

The Wappingers congregation will meet for a closing service at 1 p.m., Saturday, March 14. The service will start at the church at 9 S. Mesier Avenue in Wappingers Falls, N.Y., and then proceed to the Poughkeepsie UMC, 2381 New Hackensack Road. All are invited to attend.

This was not the outcome any of us at Wappingers thought would happen, but I, at least, have come to learn that merging is a journey that God is guiding us through. Please keep both congregations in your prayers. While it is a new journey, everyone is excited, and God is in charge, change is not always easy even if it is welcomed.



Courage, Conversation & Connection



Some 190 clergy and family members attended the Bishop's Convocation at the Kartrite Resort & Waterpark in Monticello, N.Y. Rev. J. Val Hastings explored clergy coaching and Rev. Dr. Greg Ellison offered techniques on leading difficult dialogues.



PHOTOS BY JOANNE S. UTLEY & LISA ISOM

Gluten-free Communion Bread for All

Continued from page 1

Over and over, when I ask about gluten-free communion, I am told, “Nobody here needs it.” When I say, “I need it,” they generally look at me as if I have suddenly stopped speaking English.

I am tired of being a weirdo.

I am tired of being singled out, making a fuss, causing others discomfort.

I am tired of telling the same people the same thing again and again.

Beyond communion, I am tired of being told there will be food after church or at a meeting, and finding bagels, donut holes, pizza, sandwiches, wraps, pasta salad, cake, and cookies. Or being told to just eat the green salad, and oh, pick out the croutons. (That would still make me sick.) Or having to leave and get my own food, while everyone else enjoys being together.

I don't expect people to know all about how to feed someone with celiac disease. I am happy to explain, happy to strategize, happy to plan menus and bring food.

But please don't say all are welcome at the table when there is nothing on it that I can eat.

Dealing with food restrictions

Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder, and the only treatment is to completely avoid all gluten, a protein found in some grains. So that means no wheat, barley, or rye, or anything made with (or even that has touched) wheat, barley, or rye. This includes all traditional communion bread, as well as obvious things like donuts, pizza, and pasta, and surprising things like soy sauce and some people's chili.

There are also people among us who have bad reactions to various foods. The most common trouble foods are dairy, nuts, soy, and eggs.

People with these food restrictions need communion bread that is made without wheat, barley, rye, eggs, milk, nuts, or soy. And they can't receive from a communion chalice that has already had “regular” bread dipped in it.

Yes, it is possible to make bread without these common allergens. And yes, many people think such bread is not worth eating. It doesn't taste right to them. It doesn't feel right. They don't like it.

But when they say that, what they are saying is: they don't care that I am excluded. As long as they get what they want, everything is fine.

We wouldn't want Jesus to catch us talking like that, right?

Making communion safe for all

So, here's how to make communion safe and welcoming for people with food sensitivities. There are three basic approaches:

1. Everyone always gets the same safe allergen-free bread. This is by far

the most welcoming approach for those with food sensitivities, since we get to be like everyone else for a little while. If communion is by intinction, everyone can receive from the same cup.

2. Set up a separate, easily identified communion station with allergen-free bread or crackers. It needs to have its own chalice and paten and linens, not shared with the wheat-containing bread.

3. Put a few allergen-free crackers on a separate plate or bowl on the communion table, with its own cover. Call people who have food sensitivities first, so that they can receive from the cup before it is cross-contaminated. (Individually-wrapped gluten-free communion wafers are a little depressing, but very convenient, and much better than not receiving communion at all.) Don't touch the allergen-free bread after you have touched the regular one. In this case, it's very important to thoroughly wash the chalice afterwards. And remember to call people for the allergen-free bread first, every single time, even if you think you know that nobody needs it.

For congregations who don't have anyone among them (that they know of) with food sensitivities, Approach #3 lets them be prepared to welcome a stranger with celiac disease. They can wrap up the consecrated crackers and save them for next time.

Approach #2 works for congregations who have people who need allergen-free communion, while others are unwilling to give up their favorite wheat-containing communion bread.

As for me, I long to be part of a church where all are welcome at the same table.

Grateful for change

Thank you to all of you who already attend to the concerns of those with food sensitivities, both at communion and at church events. I want you to know how much it matters. It's hard to have to worry, everywhere I go, that there won't be anything I can eat, or that someone won't understand or something will be cross-contaminated, and then I'll be sick and in pain for two days. I am grateful for your kindness. Thank you for paying attention to something that isn't a problem for you, but is for someone else.

If your church does not attend to the concerns of those with food sensitivities, I beg you to consider doing so. The communion table belongs to Jesus Christ—make everyone welcome there. Your ability to share the Gospel may depend on it.

I am delighted to report that the worship committee at my church has decided to offer all gluten-free communion beginning on March 1. Change is hard, and probably not everyone will be thrilled. But the worship committee has decided that the first words on their website—You are truly welcome here—need to be as true as they can make them, for everyone who shows up. May it be so!

NYAC Fulfills Apportionment Giving

The New York Conference was among 18 U.S. conferences that paid 100 percent apportionments in 2019, according to the General Commission on Finance and Administration.

Apportionments are the share each annual conference pays to support international, national and regional missions. Some conferences call the offering “ministry shares” to emphasize that the funds are investments in what the church does both at the local and global levels.

General church apportionments support bishops, ministerial education, most general agencies, general administration, and denomination-wide efforts such as the Black College Fund, ecumenical work and Africa University in Zimbabwe.

The other U.S. conferences are: Alaska, Baltimore-Washington, California-Nevada, East Ohio, Greater New Jersey, Illinois Great Rivers, Iowa, New England, North Carolina, Oklahoma Indian Missionary, Oregon-Idaho, Pacific Northwest, Red Bird Missionary, Tennessee, Upper New York and West Virginia.

Ten episcopal areas in the central conferences who also paid 100 percent are: Central and Southern Europe, Central Congo, East Congo, Eastern Angola, Eurasia, Germany, Liberia, Mozambique, Nordic-Baltic areas and the Davao area in the Philippines. Those episcopal areas encompass 35 of the 80 annual conferences in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.



Clockwise from above: Time to celebrate in Kenya after three days of “Days for Girls” instruction; piles of fabric waiting to be cut and sewn into the washable, sustainable menstrual kits; and Simsbury UMC members help train Rocky Hill congregants to make the kits.



Helping Girls Stay in School

Continued from page 1

So when the 19-year-old met Rev. Kennedy Mwita last February, a partnership was born.

Mwita, a former high school biology teacher, knew that girls were often forced to stay home for several days each month because they lacked money for sanitary products. When he learned that Days for Girls offered a sustainable solution to the problem, he immediately said, “Let’s get 2,000 kits to start.”

Jan Baker, the DFG team leader for the Simsbury chapter and Anna’s grandmother, knew that her group could work to fulfill that need because of funds already donated through the NYAC. That money and an additional \$6,000 the church would raise through an online fundraiser would be used to buy the kits from an enterprise in East Africa, one established through DFG’s commitment to sustainable employment for women.

“We’d never made 2000 kits, but we know that all things are possible,” she said.

Every month about 25 or 30 people gather at the church on a Saturday to cut fabric and sew together the kits. Baker said the group is “like a factory when we get together.”

The sanitary kits are bundled in a brightly colored fabric school bag that can be used every day for school. Inside the bag are eight washable pads/liners, two holders that attach to underwear, a waterproof carrying case for used pads. The girls receive a bar of soap and washcloth along with instructions on how to care for the kit.

Over the years Simsbury has sent kits with NYAC mission teams going to Ghana and Uganda. DFG sent 200 of their kits to refugee camps in Lebanon, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Somalia last year. One of the biggest challenges has always been getting the kits to the right places.

But the partnership with Rev. Mwita, a former district superintendent in Kenya, is managing to change that. He is able to connect directly with the schools nearby to convince them of the need for the kits and the mandatory health education that comes with them. He and his wife took the additional step of becoming DFG certified to instruct both the boys and girls.

When Mwita gets a new school to sign on, he contacts the Simsbury chapter with the number of students and they in turn place an order for kits in East Africa. Mwita is hoping to one day establish similar enterprises in Kenya that would make the kits among other things.

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OBITUARIES

Rev. Lawrence Charles

The Reverend Rev. Lawrence Noel Charles, 75, died February 10, 2020.

Rev. Charles was born on the twin-island state of Antigua and Barbuda in the Caribbean, to James and Hilda Charles, on February 24, 1944. After graduation from secondary school in Antigua, the family migrated to the United States and settled in Brooklyn.

Rev. Charles attended New York City Technical College, from which he graduated with an associate degree in graphic arts and advertising. He also attended the New York Institute of Technology, graduating with a bachelor of science in fine arts in 1974.

Rev. Charles served in the U.S. military and in the National Guard as a reservist from 1990 through 2001, and was called to active duty in Kuwait and Iraq in 1991. While recuperating from injuries sustained in Desert Storm, he resolved to respond fully to the call to enter the ordained ministry. He earned a master of divinity degree from New York Theological Seminary in 1996. He also completed a post-graduate certificate in pastoral care and counseling at the Blanton Peale Graduate Institute in Manhattan in 1997.

From 1998 through 2001, Rev. Charles was employed by the New York City Board of Education as a special education teacher where he taught children with special needs using drama and other fine arts.

From 1996 through 2001, he assisted in the ministries at John Wesley UMC in Brooklyn. He received his license to preach in June 2001 and was ordained an elder in the New York Conference in 2013. He pastored the following UM churches in New York: Stamford and Harpersfield, First UMC and St. Paul in Jamaica; and First UMC of Hollis. Rev. Charles retired from active ministry in 2016.

He volunteered regularly at Anchor House, a drug rehabilitation facility in Brooklyn. Twice monthly, he led Bible studies with residents and offered counseling. Once monthly, Charles conducted worship services at a Brooklyn nursing home. He loved to play soccer and dominoes, and he loved music, particularly calypso, reggae, gospel, and soca.

On June 30, 2007, Rev. Charles married Magdalene Nanlal, who he met while serving at Stamford and Harpersfield UMCs. In addition to his wife, he is survived by a brother, Aldrick (Debbie); and sisters, Myrna and Jean.

A funeral service will be held February 21 at 10 a.m. at First UMC of Jamaica, 162-10 Highland Avenue, Jamaica, N.Y. Interment will follow at the Calverton National Cemetery in Wading River, N.Y.

Rev. Gordon Bienvenue

The Reverend Gordon Raymond Bienvenue, 74, of Athens, Ga., died February 6, 2020, at St. Mary's Hospital in Athens. He was born on October 11, 1946, in Fall River, MA, the son of Raymond Bienvenue and Yvette Chouinard Bienvenue.

Following graduation from Monsignor Prevost High School in Fall River, Gordon attended the University of Massachusetts. He later received his master of science degree at Michigan State University and his doctorate in speech pathology and audiology at Pennsylvania State University. He served as a captain in the U.S. Army, stationed at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio.

In 1995, Bienvenue received his license to preach in the United Methodist Church. He attended Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., and in 2001 became an associate member of the New York Conference. He served the following UM churches: Germantown, Elizaville, West Taghkanic, and Glenco Mills; VanCortlandville Community, and Riverhead.

For a time, Bienvenue and his family lived in New Paltz and attended

the New Paltz UMC, where he often led adult Bible study classes.

Bienvenue retired in 2012 and moved with his family to Athens. There he was active with St. Gregory the Great Episcopal Church, leading the Rhythms of Grace service once a month, and teaching classes on icons.

He is survived by his wife, Katie Bienvenue; children, Blaise, Breton (Maria DiFrancesco), Danielle (John) Bray; and grandchildren, Giona Bienvenue and Dan and Sadie Bray.

A memorial service was held February 18 at St. Gregory the Great Episcopal Church, 3195 S. Barnett Shoals Road, Athens. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Bienvenue's name to [St. Gregory the Great Episcopal Church](#).

Rev. Ralph Lord Roy

The Reverend Ralph Lord Roy, 91, of Southington, Conn., died February 3, 2020, at the Hospital of Central Connecticut, New Britain Campus.

The son of Howard and Olive (Corliss) Roy, Rev. Roy was born in St. Albans, Vt. and raised in the nearby town of Swanton. He was educated at Mt. Hermon School, Swarthmore College, Columbia University, and Union Theological Seminary.

After his ordination as a United Methodist minister, he served the following churches in New York: Metropolitan Community and Grace in Manhattan, Greene Avenue, Knickerbocker Avenue, and Warren Street in Brooklyn. In Connecticut, he led Clinton, Milford, and First UMC in Meriden. Upon retiring in 1993, he served First UMC in Thomaston, East Berlin UMC, and First and Summerfield UMC in New Haven. Roy officiated at hundreds of baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals.

Early in his ministry, Roy was active in the Civil Rights Movement. In 1961, he was jailed as a Freedom Rider in Tallahassee, Fla. The following year, while working with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he led a prayer pilgrimage to Albany, Ga., which resulted in the largest simultaneous incarceration of clergy in American history.

He is survived by a daughter, Joyce (Raymond DePaola) Roy, of Enfield, N.H.; a sister, Erma Parker, of South Daytona, FL; special friend, Joan Bauder; and nine nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his wife, Margaret Finlay Roy, and three brothers, Wayne, Malcolm, and Howard, Jr.

A memorial service was held February 15, 2020, at the First UMC, 159 East Main St., Meriden, CT 06450. Burial will be in Swanton, Vt. at a later date.

Memorial contributions may be made to Memorial UMC, 23 Grand Avenue, Swanton, VT 05488; Grace UMC, 121 Pleasant Street, Southington, CT 06489; or First UMC, 159 East Main Street, Meriden, CT 06450.

To offer online condolences, visit the funeral home's website, www.dellavecchiafh.com.

Rev. Walter H. Everett

The Reverend Walter H. Everett, 85, of Lewisburg, Penn., died on January 31, 2020, at the Geisinger Medical Center, Danville, Penn.

He was born Sept. 13, 1934, in Asbury Park, N.J., a son of Arthur and Marion (Height) Everett. On May 9, 1992, he married the former Nancy Bellmeyer, who survives.

Everett was a 1952 graduate of Kearny High School, N.J., and later

UMC Hopes to Add 200 Missionary Churches in 2020

As a denomination, the United Methodist Church sends some 400 missionaries to serve in the United States and in more than 60 countries. Church support of these ministries means church growth, discipleship, agricultural skills, education, clean water and abundant health for all. These gifts are a mustard seed which moves mountains.

One of the key ways this support comes is through covenant relationships between a church and a missionary. Individuals and churches partner with a missionary to provide financial, spiritual and emotional support. This partnership creates a dynamic relationship

where the church and missionary pray for one another and communicate regularly.

For 2020, the UMC has set a challenge to establish new missionary covenant relationships with 200 churches across the connection.

Churches can choose to support a missionary with connections to the New York Conference, or one in a specific country, or one involved in a particular area of work. The possibilities are endless. On the General Board of Global Ministries website, is a [searchable list](#) of missionary names, countries of service, and project types. Also, on that page is the covenant relationship application form.

Churches may also consider hosting a missionary during their time of itineration in the United States. Missionaries are often available during the summer and fall to share their experiences with a church in worship services, youth group meetings, lunches and dinners, and gatherings of United Methodist Men or Women.

For additional information about covenant relationships or hosting a visiting missionary, contact [Jill Wilson](#) by email.

St. Paul's UMC Scouts are Seabound

When people hear the word scouting, they usually think about young people in troops or packs. But St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Northport, N.Y., has tapped into their Long Island Sound surroundings to charter a "ship," namely Sea Scout Ship 270.

The church, located on the north shore of Long Island, welcomed its first sea scouts—whose units are called "ships"—in May 2018. Sea Scouts, a program of the Boy Scouts of America—is youth led and adult mentored. Rev. Penny Gadzini, or "Skipper Penny" as she is known, leads this youth ministry. Gadzini, a native of Northport, is the pastor of St. James UMC in Lynbrook, N.Y.

The Sea Scouts are being taught the skills needed to plan and then embark on an annual "long cruise"—a multiple-day sailing adventure during the summer months. They are learning about teamwork, safety procedures, boat handling, marine ropework, ground tackle, navigation and weather in their regular Thursday meetings and in special training events at SUNY Maritime College and the United States Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, N.Y.

In their time together, the "ship" has participated in a blessing of the fishing fleet,



Skipper Penny Gadzini, far left, with members of Sea Scout Ship 270 during an outing to the tall ship Wavertree at South Street Seaport in Manhattan.

sailed on a racing sailboat, practiced navigation on a voyage across Long Island Sound, competed in the Crazy Boat Build and Race, explored the New York Harbor on the historic W.O. Decker tugboat, and learned maritime history aboard the 1885 cargo ship Wavertree.

The group is open to all young people ages 14–21; for additional information, contact [Gadzini](#) via email or by calling 917-287-0583.

Bringing Dignity To Schoolgirls

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The DFG health curriculum includes learning about and appreciation of the normal function of menstruation. The trainers teach practices such as proper handwashing, HIV prevention and self-defense to the most vulnerable children.

Baker noted that in the first of three distributions thus far in Kenya some of the girls confided to their teachers that they had already been trading sex for sanitary pads in order to stay in school. The girls were delighted to know they would no longer need to do this.

Mwita will be traveling to the United States twice in the upcoming months (including a May stop in Minneapolis for General Conference 2020). When he returns to Kenya each time, he'll be carrying two duffle bags filled with sanitary kits from Simsbury that will enable about 300 more girls to live healthier lives.

Baker is hoping that other churches across the conference will choose to join Simsbury in supporting this vital ministry. She estimates that the cost of getting a kit to each girl is \$15—an amount that includes the contents of the kit, the health education for both boys and girls and food during the training. Churches could choose to "adopt" a whole school for a one-time distribution or sponsor just a few girls.

"We won't stop until every girl everywhere has a chance to have dignity and an equal opportunity to stay in school and every young man has the knowledge to appreciate the women in his life as well as to stay healthy himself," Baker said.

Donations to the Simsbury effort can be made through their team page on the Days for Girls [website](#). Or by sending a check to the church made out to Simsbury UMC, and writing "Days for Girls" on the memo line. For additional information, contact [Jan Baker](#) via email.

A Lenten Message from NEJ Bishops

Grace and Peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ!

The season of Lent invites us, individually and collectively, to a deep assessment of and prayer filled reflection on our *faithfulness* and *fruitfulness*. At times, we use Lent to anticipate the coming of the resurrected Christ without taking the gift of these 40 days to also examine our faith; to intentionally concentrate on our faithful response as disciples. Lent is a journey we take with Christ and one another. It is a journey that helps us to focus on our discipleship formation beginning with the reminder of our shared humanity on Ash Wednesday; traveling through the days of searching and repentance to the eager anticipation of Palm Sunday, experiencing the solemn and sorrow-filled journey to the cross on Good Friday, and then celebrating the empty tomb on Easter Sunday.

As we begin this Lenten journey, “we are reminded of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew our faith. We invite you, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s Holy Word.”

Why do we accept this invitation and enter this kind of journey? We enter this journey because we are called to reflect on how our faithful response to Christ bears fruit in our own lives and in the lives of those around us. As Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice to bring us new life, we too are called to bring new life to our congregations, neighborhoods, and communities, called to live as resurrection people.

Our call to live as a resurrection people is especially important in these uncertain and anxious times. As our beloved United Methodist Church prepares for General Conference 2020, we know these practices of the Lenten journey will prepare our hearts, minds and spirits for whatever future God holds for the people of the United Methodist Church, and there is a future! While plans and legislation tend to consume our focus and tempt us from fully engaging in Christ’s mission, our God calls us to stay focused on our reason for being. No matter the result of General



Conference 2020, Jesus will be Lord, and the mission of “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” will continue.

As we move towards our Lenten opportunity and General Conference, we invite you to join us in a deep season of fasting and prayer. We invite you to an even deeper listening of God and one another. As we engage in conversation and discernment together, may a deeper respect and love for one another permeate all that we think, say, and do. Together, let us reflect and build upon our faithfulness to God so that we might experience the joys of fruitfulness that come with the journey of discipleship. For even in the midst of our current wilderness, God’s desire is that we might bear fruit to whomever God places in our paths and wherever

discipleship leads us.

So, let us travel this path together, allowing the fruit of the Spirit to be evident, knowing that if we do this, our future will be one where God’s people will not be shattered and bruised, but blessed and strengthened to be the community of faith God calls us to be. We, your NEJ bishops, united in love of God and one another, remain steadfast in providing spiritual leadership that unapologetically calls the Church to her mission and invites you to this faithful discipline.

While there is much uncertainty in many things, Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us of God’s unfailing certainty: “*For I know the plans I have for you,*” declares the Lord, “*plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*”

Yours in servant leadership,

The Bishops of the Northeastern Jurisdiction

Bishops Thomas Bickerton, Sudarshana Devadhar, Latrelle Easterling, Violet Fisher, Peggy Johnson, Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Ernest Lyght, Marcus Matthews, Jane Middleton, Jeremiah Park, John Schol, Sandra Steiner-Ball, Peter Weaver, and Mark Webb

OBITUARIES

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earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Drew University. He spent his entire life as a Methodist minister serving in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. While serving in the New York Conference he pastored Woodrow and Wesley UMCs on Staten Island, Stamford and Harpersfield UMCs in New York, Jesse Lee UMC in Easton, Conn., and the UMC of Hartford.

Everett lived his life caring for others and believed strongly in the acceptance and forgiveness of mankind. This passion towards helping others is evident in his active pursuit of eliminating the death penalty and involvement in the organization Murder Victims’ Families for Reconciliation (MVFR).

Known for his sense of humor, Everett was an avid fan of the New York Mets and Giants, as well as University of Connecticut teams. For many years, he was a member of the Kiwanis Club, and most recently, the Sunrise Rotary Club in Lewisburg.

In addition to his wife of 27 years, he is survived by four children: Wayne W. Everett, and Janna (Daniel) Marazita, both of Connecticut; Michael (Susan) Nogan of Maryland, and Mary Jo (Michael) Shields of South Carolina. He is also survived by one sister, Carolyn Hooper of Florida; and eight grandchildren, Shea, Daniel Jr., Casey, Sean, Zachary, Jessica, Garrett and Ann Caroline.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by a son, Scott Everett; a twin brother, Arthur Everett; a sister, Harriet Bloemeke; and Nancy’s son, David Nogan.

A memorial service was held February 7, 2020, at Beaver Memorial UMC, Lewisburg with the Rev. John Dromazos and the Rev. Terry Pfeiffer officiating. Burial will be held privately at the convenience of the family.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Pennsylvania Prison Society, 230 South Broad St., Suite 605, Philadelphia, 19102, or at www.prisonersociety.org.