

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

# THE VISION

The Newspaper  
of the New York  
Annual Conference  
of The United  
Methodist Church

August 2015

## Plan to Cut NY Church Energy Costs

BY REV. BILL SHILLADY

Let's reduce our energy costs and instead invest those dollars in mission!

Over the last few years, The United Methodist City Society has received a number of church requests for loans to install new heating plants. The UMCS has encouraged our local churches to contact the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) which can provide free energy audits and then loans at a reduced rate.

Recently, a better opportunity has come along. The UMCS has partnered with the BlocPower program that will provide a free energy assessment of your property, including the parsonage. State and local energy efficiency incentive programs cover the cost of the assessment, and as such, you can elect not to obtain a retrofit through BlocPower—or any entity for that matter.

The most important prerequisite for a free energy assessment is to send BlocPower a copy of the last 12 months of your church energy bills. This allows us to identify your historical energy consumption and determine the potential savings. The free 20-to-30-page assessment will identify the scope, costs and benefits of energy improvements at your site. Then it's up to the congregation and trustees to decide on an energy retrofit, and how it will be financed.

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Bishop Jane Allen Middleton tackles drywall with a pry bar.

## CABINET SANDY WORK WEEK

## Demo, Drywall & Spreading the Word



From left row 1: Sungchan Kim, Joseph Ewoodzie, Ross Williams; row 2: Sam Rosenfeld, Bishop Middleton, Bob Walker; row 3: Adrienne Brewington, Betsy Ott, Matt Curry; row 4: Tim Riss, Bill Clark and Ken Kieffer.

The words of the Peter, Paul and Mary classic, "If I had a hammer, I'd hammer in the morning..." was an oft-heard refrain as Bishop Jane Allen Middleton and 12 members of the extended cabinet recently took part in a Sandy recovery "week of service" in Brooklyn and Connecticut.

Despite the high temperatures that mid-July can bring, the team led by example as they cleaned out debris, demolished walls, put in new insulation, and hung and prepared drywall for painting. The group worked on the homes of two different families in Brooklyn. One family has been out of their home since the Hurricane Sandy hit on October 29, 2012. The other home is owned by a single dad with one child who had sought help to tear out basement walls and install new insulation and drywall. In Milford, Conn., they assisted with drywall and painting.

Rev. Tom Vencuss, conference coordinator of disaster response ministries, who heads up the Sandy recovery efforts, facilitated the week with his staff. When Middleton became interim resident bishop of the New York area in January, she quickly learned from Vencuss about the "desperate

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### 9/10–12 Local Pastor Licensing School

The Board of Ordained Ministry will hold its second licensing school for local pastors at St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, Conn. The four modules will meet on September 10–12, October 8–10, November 5–7, and December 3–5. Attending all four modules is necessary to complete the licensing requirements. Clergy instructors will train these soon-to-be pastors for a firm foundation for local church pastoral ministry. For further information about the school, contact Rev. Eileen M Daunt, local pastor registrar, at [Eileen.Daunt@nyac-umc.com](mailto:Eileen.Daunt@nyac-umc.com).

### 9/11 Traditional Methodist Beliefs Workshop

This workshop in Spanish with Pastor Xavier Vargas will meet from 6:30–8 p.m. at La Resurrección UMC, 456 E. 158th St., the Bronx. More information and registration details are available at [www.nyac.com/eventdetail/1840740](http://www.nyac.com/eventdetail/1840740).

### 9/16, 23, 30 Technology & Christian Values Webinars

Living as a Christian in a digital world calls us to rethink faith values and practices with new optics. This four-part webinar series from Drew University offers a new perspective on how to assess digital technology use, development, and expansion through a lens of Christian values. The first session will explore how to begin thinking theologically about technology. The next three sessions will consider specific ethical issues such as online activism, crowd source funding, blogging, etiquette; and sexting. Webinars are from 2–3:30 p.m., September 16, 23, 30, and October 7. Cost is \$20 per session. A .5 CEU credit is available. To register, go to: [drew.edu/techvalues](http://drew.edu/techvalues).

### 9/21 New Pastoral Care Class Forming

The Pastoral Care Specialist Training Program is accepting applications for a new class that will start September 21. The two-year training program, accredited by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, is designed to deepen the care ministry skills of pastors, priests and lay people. Classes meet from 9:15 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays at the Arumdaun Presbyterian Church in Bethpage. For questions or to receive an application, please contact Rev. Dr. Penny Gadzini at [pennygadzini@aol.com](mailto:pennygadzini@aol.com), or 917-287-0583. The program is also sponsoring its second “Mind and Relationship” seminar from 9:15 a.m. to 2 p.m. September 14 at the Arumdaun church. Rev. Dr. Joshua Jong will speak about addiction and

recovery; Gadzini will join with current students to discuss ministry with, by and for older adults. There is no cost and a light lunch will be offered.

### 9/26 “Methodism Matters”

Discover what Methodists believe and why it matters in this seminar from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Commack UMC, 486 Townline Road, Commack, N.Y. Sponsored by the Long Island East District with Superintendent Adrienne Brewington and guest speaker, Rev. Dr. Clayton Childers, program director for annual conference relations at the General Board of Church and Society. Call the district office at 631-366-2396 to register.

### 9/27 Installation of DS Riss

Installation of Rev. Timothy Riss as the new superintendent for the Catskill Hudson District, 4 p.m. at Reservoir UMC, 3056 State Route 28, Shokan, N.Y. Bishop Jane Allen Middleton and the cabinet will be in attendance; light refreshments will follow.

### 10/2–4 NEJ Leadership Conference



The Northeast Jurisdiction is providing a high-energy training opportunity for emerging leaders with the “See, Know, Love” conference at Hershey Lodge in Hershey, Penn. The keynote speakers for this transformational leadership conference will include:

- Fiona Haworth, a spirit-filled, hospitality-driven corporate executive who brings the best of the boardroom to the church
- Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber, a visionary, boundary-breaking Lutheran pastor
- Leaders from The Chapel, a United Methodist church that is revolutionizing discipleship

Costs include: \$25 for registration, and \$140 for the meal plan. Rooms are \$159 a night. Scholarships for young emergent leaders are available. For additional information and to register, go to: [www.nyac.com/eventdetail/1007904](http://www.nyac.com/eventdetail/1007904).

### 10/24 35th Annual Men’s Retreat

This one-day training event is intended to generate interest and increase effective men’s ministry in our churches. Congregational leadership teams are coached to develop a plan to reach more men, and enable their spiritual growth. The day begins sharply at 8 a.m. and ends at about 5 p.m. at the Olmsted Center, 114 Bayview Avenue, Cornwall-on-Hudson, N.Y. Cost is \$65 per person and includes training materials, breakfast, lunch and ice-cream social. For more information, contact Royston Bailey at 516-485-3723, or via email at [roystonbailey27@gmail.com](mailto:roystonbailey27@gmail.com); or Ernie Searle at [umc\\_nyac\\_umm@yahoo.com](mailto:umc_nyac_umm@yahoo.com). To register, find the form online at [www.nyac.com/eventdetail/1570149](http://www.nyac.com/eventdetail/1570149).

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

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## SANDY WORK WEEK

# Demo, Drywall & Spreading the Word

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need thousands of families still had for repair and replacement of homes.” She was also made aware that most of the programs would phase out by the end of 2015 and that UMCOR would soon be one of the last relief programs available. The \$3 million UMCOR grant that the NYAC received in 2013 is due to run out at the end of 2016.

The work week was intended to get out the word that the Sandy recovery is by no means completed and

that volunteers are desperately needed. In a follow-up to the week, Bishop Middleton sent out a letter to the conference on July 29 entitled, “Here I Am. Send Me!” urging a renewed commitment to the recovery efforts, especially as agencies begin to pull out.

“While it may be exciting to go to distant places to do mission work, there is a vast, needy mission field within the boundaries of New York Annual Conference! Sandy is a disaster in our own backyard and thousands of God’s children are waiting for our help,” Middleton wrote. (Read the entire letter at [www.nyac.com/newsdetail/1727696](http://www.nyac.com/newsdetail/1727696).)

In addition to Bishop Middleton, the team included district superintendents Tim Riss, Denise Smart Sears, Betsy Ott, Adrienne Brewington, Ken Kieffer, and Sungchan Kim; Sam Rosenfeld, Bob Walker, Ross Williams, Joseph Ewoodzie, Matt Curry, Bill Shillady, and volunteer Bill Clark.

The group stayed at the parsonage of the Sheepshead Bay UMC, and toured the United Methodist Far Rockaway Mission

and another home rebuild that is a collaborative effort between NYAC/UMCOR and Friends of Rockaway.

Bishop Middleton expressed surprise at the depth of suffering—emotionally, spiritually, physically, psychologically, and noted that it seemed similar to post-traumatic stress disorder.

“But at the same time I was amazed at the continuing ministry of many of the churches in the affected areas,” Middleton said. “The people of Bethany UMC in Brooklyn brought in a meal for us, and others

assisted us in real ways.”

The newest members of the cabinet—Director of Connectional Ministries Matthew Curry and Catskill Hudson District Superintendent Tim Riss—were both thankful for the team building that the experience provided.

“Our bishop has only been with us for seven months, there have been two new people appointed to the cabinet, and the loss of Bishop [Martin D.] McLee still weighs heavily on us,” Riss said. “To build relationships while helping others is just a good idea right now.”

Curry was most inspired by the homeowners he met and in conversations with the NYAC disaster response staff—even if their experiences of deep need were difficult to hear.

“I was reminded that the need for intentional, organized preparation around disaster response is absolutely vital to our conference if we are to meet the needs of our neighbors when the next disaster strikes,” he wrote in an email. “I was also reminded that there are tremendous

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Sungchan Kim cuts an outlet hole in drywall.



Above, Matt Curry and Tom Vencuss pull insulation from a ceiling. Below, Ross Williams and Betsy Ott prepare to hang drywall.



# Plan to Cut Energy Costs For Churches in NY

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BlocPower works with NYSERDA to determine if churches are eligible for a loan of up to \$50,000 at a 2 percent interest rate. They help identify reputable contractors and walk with each church through the process. After the retrofit is complete, the financing will be repaid as a surcharge on your electricity bill through a state-administered program called on-bill recovery financing. In theory, you will repay the retrofit cost through a portion of your energy savings. This assumes that weather patterns and your energy behavior remain similar to what they were during the 12 months prior to the retrofit.

Through the society's work with BlocPower, we have begun to explore the possibility of organizing an energy-purchasing cooperative for all United Methodist churches and institutions. A cooperative could save money by purchasing both gas and electricity in bulk from a third party supplier. Delivery and billing would come through the utility that current supplies your service. Non-payment of the energy bills will hold the same consequences as they do now.

By contacting BlocPower, we will begin to gather data on an energy cooperative. UMCS also recommends a group purchase of fuel oil through the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies.

For the City Society's part of this collaborative, all organizations that obtain free energy assessments through BlocPower will

be invited to participate in a bulk-purchase program that UMCS is chartering. UMCS will also negotiate with energy supply companies (ESCOs) to lower the price that you currently pay for gas and electricity. These prices would remain fixed for a period of 12 to 36 months, after which point, the UMCS will renegotiate to keep the prices low.

In order to do this, we need you to participate in the comprehensive energy assessment so that we can negotiate better rates. This will be a slow process as all the necessary information is gathered. We hope to be able to move to negotiations with a third-party provider by the spring 2016.

Please email me at [bshillady@umcitysociety.org](mailto:bshillady@umcitysociety.org), if you would like additional information about the energy cooperative.

Unfortunately, these programs are designed for New York State UM churches only, but we are currently exploring whether Connecticut has any similar program.

If you choose not to participate in the BlocPower program, you can still join the energy cooperative. UMCS would need a copy of your energy bills for the last year.

For more information about BlocPower, go to their web site, [www.blocpower.org](http://www.blocpower.org). You may also contact James Hendon at -347-974-2771, or email him at [james@blocpower.org](mailto:james@blocpower.org). Be sure to mention that you are a United Methodist organization, and Hendon will be able to send you the application.



Bishop Robert Schnase

## Schnase to Speak At Tri-District Retreats

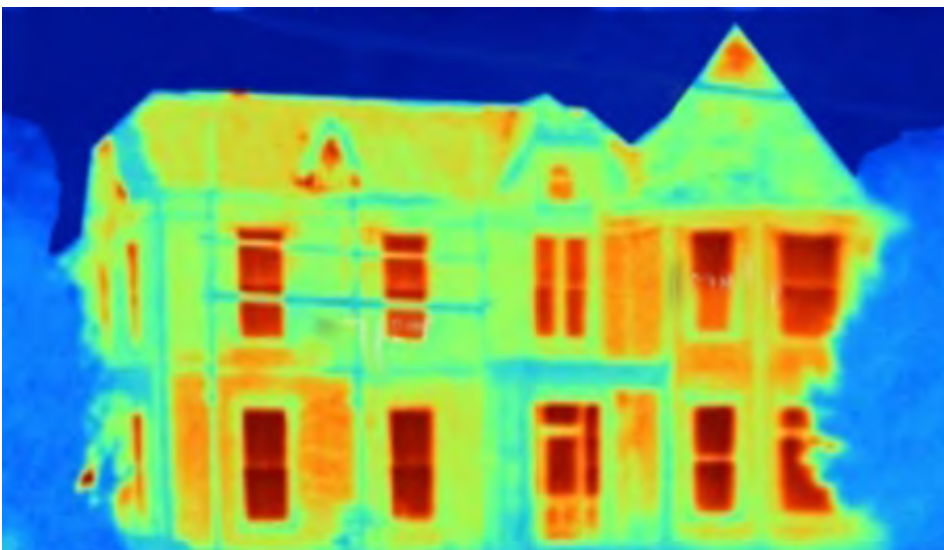
Bishop Robert Schnase, episcopal leader of the Missouri Conference, will be the guest presenter at the Bishop's Tri-District Retreats in September at the Stony Point Center. Schnase's appearance will mark his return for conference training; at the 2011 Bishop's Convocation he shared from his book, "Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations."

The three northern districts will meet from noon September 14 to noon September 15; the three southern districts from noon September 15 to noon September 16. The Stony Point Center is located at 17 Cricketown Road, Stony Point, N.Y.

In his latest book, "Just Say Yes! Unleashing People for Ministry," Schnase examines the systems and attitudes that restrain and control ministry. He encourages churches to break through the pervasive culture of saying "no" and instead give permission and see what happens. Early registrants will receive a free copy of the book.

Cost for the overnight retreat is \$130 for double occupancy; \$190, single occupancy and \$50 for commuters. Registration forms can be found at [www.nyac.com/eventdetail/1570252](http://www.nyac.com/eventdetail/1570252). Deadline to register is September 9.

For questions, contact Pastor John LeCain at 518-821-2816 or [John.Lecain@nyac-umc.com](mailto:John.Lecain@nyac-umc.com) in the northern districts, and Barbara Atchison at 631-366-2396 or [liedistrict@nyac-umc.com](mailto:liedistrict@nyac-umc.com) for the southern districts.



# A Long Journey “Home” for Burmese Refugee

*Started in 1999 by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Justice For Our Neighbors is a ministry of hospitality that welcomes immigrants by providing free, high-quality immigration legal services, engaging in advocacy for immigrants' rights, and offering education to communities of faith and the public. The national network of church-based, volunteer-supported clinics provides free legal advice and representation to vulnerable, low-income immigrants. The New York area site was one of the first JFON sites started in the nation. Currently JFON serves clients in the New York metropolitan area at four church-based clinics: Chinese UMC, in Manhattan, John Wesley UMC in Brooklyn, La Promesa Mission in Queens and Hicksville UMC on Long Island.*

*Laura Sonnenmark, who handles communications for the National JFON office in Springfield, Va., wrote this story detailing one immigrant's story for the May 2015 update.*

Kachin State, in the northernmost part of Burma, is a land of impenetrable jungle, rugged mountains, mudslides and malaria. It is also the land of jade, specifically a high-quality jadeite, much prized by neighboring China. Vast fortunes have been amassed from the gemstone, but the people of Kachin reap no benefit from the dangerous work of its extraction, nor do they see evidence of these huge profits in their daily lives. There is little investment in health care, education, infrastructure, or basic services in Kachin.

In a country whose name has long been a byword for oppression and brutality, the Kachin, persecuted for both their Christian beliefs and ethnicity, are conspicuous as an oppressed and brutalized minority. The Burmese military and the Kachin Independence Army have essentially been at war for 60 years,

but every Kachin is viewed as an enemy by the Burmese, particularly the young men.

**“They treat us as less than human.”**

Naw's first experience with the Burmese military came when he was just eleven years old. Caught passing out pro-democracy pamphlets in support of a student strike, he and several other boys were locked in a small, airless room. They were repeatedly beaten, threatened and starved for 11 straight days. When the boys were finally released, Naw had no difficulty promising to keep away from politics and war. From now on, he vowed, he would concentrate on studying and working with his father at the jade mine.

Naw may have been finished with war, but it was not finished with him.

The Burmese military frequently forced the people from Naw's village to labor for them. Sometimes that would entail carrying supplies, cleaning latrines, or constructing camps; other times, the soldiers would use Kachin civilians as human mine sweepers.

Naw was forced to labor for the army a total of four times, sometimes for weeks, sometimes for months. “We never knew for how long,” says Naw. “And we never knew where.”

When Naw was eighteen years old, he was again captured for forced labor and marched into the war zone. After two weeks of carrying heavy ammunition and living on reduced rations, they found themselves in the middle of a ferocious firefight between the KIA and the Burmese army. “We were surrounded by flying bullets,” he remembers. “Body parts and blood were everywhere.”

Naw and a few of the other prisoners managed to untie their ropes and escape to the jungle. Naw lived there for one month, living



**Naw and TJ in Washington, D.C., after his asylum interview. Naw's face is obscured to protect his friends and relatives still living in Burma.**

off of taro roots and fruit, trying to make his way home while keeping clear of soldiers. When he emerged, he was exhausted, malnourished, delirious with fever, and gravely ill from drinking contaminated water. But he had survived, and what he had learned in the jungle would be put to good use later.

**This was Naw's life. It was the life of everybody he knew.**

Sundays, of course, were for church.

That Sunday in July 1999—the Sunday that would change everything—started out like any other. It was morning. Naw was attending service, just as he did every Sunday. His father was a deacon of the church, his entire family deeply devout. The parishioners—mostly women and children—were singing a hymn. Their voices lifted in praise, they didn't hear the soldiers until they had burst through the door.

There were three of them and, as usual, they were rounding up people to be their beasts of burden. The pastor and Naw's father pleaded with the soldiers to allow them to finish their worship and

honor their Sabbath. The soldiers' reply was brief, but vicious: a rifle butt to the heads of both the pastor and Naw's father.

“I was young, I lost my temper,” Naw says softly and with remorse still raw nearly 16 years later. “I could not stand to watch these soldiers beat our pastor and my father.”

Naw and three of his friends fought back, attacking the soldiers from behind, trying to protect their elders. They didn't realize there were more soldiers waiting outside. They didn't realize it until these soldiers rushed into the church and started shooting.

Naw's father tried to shield his son. “Run!” he cried. It was the last word Naw ever heard from his father. It was the last time he saw his father alive.

Four boys ran, but only three made it to the safety of the jungle. One of Naw's friends was shot in the back as they fled the church. They left him where he fell. They did not look back.

Naw and his remaining friends hid all day and all night, emerging from the jungle early the next morning, creeping quietly to the

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# Immigration Ministry Aids Burmese Refugee

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home of one of their church members. The news that awaited them was even more terrible than they had feared. Fourteen parishioners had been killed inside the church. Naw's father had been carted off, beaten, tortured, and executed. His mother, never in the best of health, had suffered a heart attack. There was no way to go see her. His younger brother was alone in their parents' house, but Naw could not risk a visit. The soldiers went there several times a day, looking for him. They had a warrant for his arrest.

**Naw's father had told him to run. There was nothing left to do but obey.**

The boys spent another two weeks in the jungle before they could hop a freight train to the capital city of Rangoon. For 700 miles, they slept crammed into a car full of recyclable trash, afraid to venture out for food or other necessities. Once in Rangoon, Naw's mother sent him money and told him to go to Thailand, where other Burmese refugees were living.

Naw made his way to Thailand, but it was not the safe haven his mother thought it would be. The Thai government was actively deporting refugees back to Burma, and there were reports that Burmese agents were in Bangkok, searching for Burmese students to arrest. Naw had to stay indoors to avoid being caught—or worse.

"At that point, I did not know where to go or what to do," says Naw. "I did not want to live in this world anymore. My father was killed, my mother was sick, and my brother was in danger. I was the only one left to look after them and I was a fugitive from the Burmese government."

Naw had one relative living outside of Burma: an uncle in Richmond, Virginia. Naw was able to contact him, and his uncle began sending him money and trying to find people to help him.

Naw knew that he had to get to the United States. He had to find a way to get to his uncle and find a way to save what was left of his family.

An American veteran he met in Thailand advised Naw—poorly, as it turns out—to fly to American Samoa. There, he told him, Naw would be able to apply for asylum in the United States. Instead, Naw found himself caught in a legal limbo battle between the U.S. government and American Samoa. It seemed the United States didn't want any more Burmese refugees. American Samoa didn't want any refugees, period.

Naw was taken in by a Baptist church and

allowed to live on their grounds, while various relief groups tried to figure out what to do with him. It was yet another low point in the life of the young man. Months dragged on into years. He was a non-person, the only Burmese living on an island far from his birthplace. He was teaching himself English as fast as he could, but there was no one to talk to in his native tongue.

Meanwhile, the only communication he had with his mother and brother was through the occasional letter smuggled into Burma. He was lonely and scared and desperate. The Samoans were about to put him on a plane back to Burma.

**"He did not look like a lawyer."**

TJ Mills, staff attorney for Justice For Our Neighbors—New York, mostly serves clients in the greater New York area. However, due to his many years of experience in asylum cases, he is sometimes asked to assist in special cases in far-off places of the world. In 2002, he got a call from an acquaintance at the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees who knew about TJ's previous work with Burmese refugees in Guam. The UNHCR had just received a distress call about a lone Burmese refugee in American Samoa. The Pacific Gateway Center and the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention were willing to fund the trip. Was TJ willing to go?

TJ flew to American Samoa to help prepare Naw for his refugee interview.

"I never before in my life met a guy who is so friendly, so cheerful, and so hopeful," Naw remembers. "TJ did not give up. TJ did not give up," he repeats emphatically. "And he would not let me give up, either."

"There are a few cases when it becomes personal, and you just can't stop," explains TJ, smiling.

TJ spent a total of eight days in American Samoa with Naw, and the next 18 months laboring to obtain asylum status for him. Naw became a JFON-NY client and a friend. But Naw's case was a particularly thorny one.

Although U.S. immigration law does not apply in American Samoa, international treaty obligations do, and Naw met their criteria for refugee status. In September 2003, Naw was recognized as a refugee and granted permission to resettle—but in American Samoa, not in the United States. His only hope for reaching America was through the rarely-granted option

of humanitarian parole. TJ, ever diligent, made application after application and watched Naw grow more despondent each time his application was denied.

Finally, after five years of struggle, five separate applications, along with a campaign of petitions from Amnesty International, several U.S. Senators and Representatives, and the Attorney General of American Samoa, Naw was granted parole in July 2004.

It would be difficult to say with certainty which of the men was the happiest. "I just broke down when we got the notice," recalls TJ. "I don't do that often, but it was such a relief to have it over."

Once Naw had joined his uncle in Richmond, TJ helped him obtain asylum status and then his green card. Naw became a U.S. citizen in 2011, and immediately petitioned to get both his mother and brother to the United States. TJ and JFON-NY were with him every step of the way.

## The Mother and Son Reunion

Fifteen years after he left Burma, Naw was finally reunited with his mother.

"I just cried," admits Naw. "So many times I thought I would never see her again. I just... cried."

Today Naw is married—TJ was a guest at his wedding—and has a 15-month-old son named Matthew. Naw drives a truck for a living. He works long hours, rarely getting home during the week, but it's a good job. Naw has left many family members and friends back in Burma, and he worries about them constantly. Yet here in Richmond, he has his uncle, his brother, his wife, his child, and his mother. He is tremendously grateful for these gifts.

"My mom is able to carry her grandson," he says happily. "I never thought we would live to see this moment."

Naw falls silent, and when he speaks again, his voice is steadfast and as reverent as a prayer. "The Lord has blessed me," he declares, "and I am so thankful for what I have right now. I didn't think I would have the strength to go through everything, and the Lord gave that to me, too. Today I am alive through God's grace."

For more information about the New York Justice for Our Neighbors program, go to their web site at: <http://nyac-jfon.org/>.



# Every Child Deserves to Be Valued

**BY REV. WILLIAM TOWNSEND**

*Director of Spiritual Life*

You're going to end up in jail just like your father!

You're never going to amount to anything!  
Nobody is ever going to want you!

Imagine what it must be like growing up exposed to a daily barrage of such put-downs. Imagine how much worse it must be when those put-downs come from the very people who are supposed to love and encourage you.

Unfortunately, this is the experience of many of the young people who come into the care of the Children's Home. No wonder they aren't motivated to follow their treatment plan. No wonder schooling is seen as something to be avoided rather than as a chance to learn and to achieve. No wonder these young people find it difficult to formulate a vision of a bright tomorrow. Why would any person risk reaching for the stars when past experience tends to reinforce what he or she has been told, and is beginning to believe: "You'll never make it?"

In the midst of such negative comments, the words of the Rascal Flatts song, "My Wish," offer an alternative message.

*My wish, for you, is that this life becomes all  
that you want it to,  
Your dreams stay big, your worries stay small,*

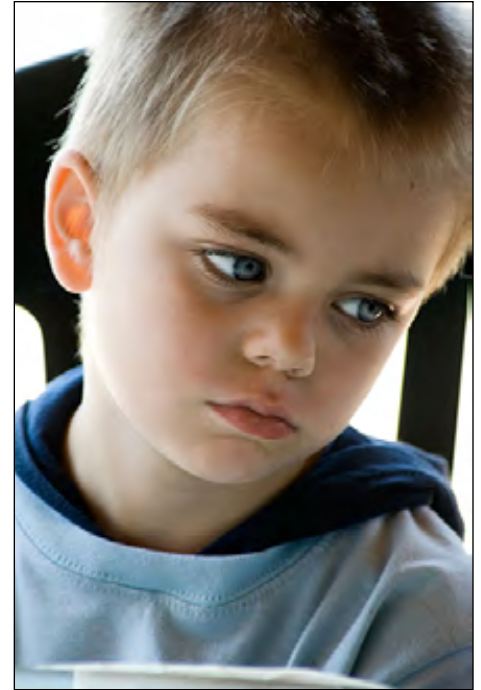


*You never need to carry more than you can hold,  
And while you're out there getting where you're getting to,  
I hope you know somebody loves you, and wants the same things too,  
Yeah, this, is my wish.*

My wish for all young people is that they would find the strength to rise to their full potential. My wish is that their potential would not be defined by the naysayers around them. My wish is that all children would develop a sense of hope—hope in themselves, hope in the goodness of people, and hope in a God who has a plan for their life.

One day in chapel we were discussing how people should treat each other. One young woman, the victim of unimaginable emotional and physical abuse, spoke up. "We should make every person feel like he or she is worth a million bucks as opposed to not worth a penny."

My wish is that every child that is touched by the ministry of the Children's Home leaves feeling like he or she is worth a million bucks.  
*For more information on the Children's*



*Home, call 607-772-6904 (or toll free 800-772-6904) ext. 131 or visit their web site at [www.chowc.org](http://www.chowc.org). To schedule a presentation about the Children's Home, please contact Margaret Tatich, ext 131. Please feel free to send donations directly, or use the New York Conference advance number 60-0588.*

## Celebrate "Hope Sunday" With Anchor House

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

Since 1967, God has used Anchor House to touch the lives of thousands of men, women and their families as they recover from the grip of addiction. This unique ministry of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church needs your support. We are asking that during the month of September you dedicate a small portion of one of your services as "Hope Sunday" in recognition of this great cause.

Every September, SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) sponsors National Recovery Month to increase awareness and understanding of mental health and substance use issues. We have created a special litany for your church use in honor of recovery month on the Hope Sunday you designate.

Perhaps there may be families or persons in your congregation who could use the help of Anchor House. If your congregation would like to help us transform lives through the love and hope of Jesus Christ, we would ask that you take a special offering on the Sunday you use the litany of hope.

Please make your offering check payable to Anchor House Inc. and mail it to: Anchor House, 1041 Bergen St., Brooklyn NY 11216.

If you need further information or you know someone in need of our ministry, please feel free to give us a call at 718-771-0760 for the men's

facility, or 718-756-8673 for the women's facility. Thank you for believing in the message of hope that will help Anchor House grow and be blessed.

The litany can be found on the conference web site at: [www.nyac.com/newsdetail/1816680](http://www.nyac.com/newsdetail/1816680).

Sincerely,  
*Alison King, MSW, CASAC*  
Administrator

### **Got an Event to Share?**

We welcome the opportunity to help publicize events that have a wide appeal to people across the conference in *The Vision*. To make it easier to publish your event, please send the information as a simple Microsoft Word document (.doc or .docx suffix). Do not send it as a completed flyer, poster or as a PDF. Your event information will most likely appear on the "Save the Date" page. Email the event details directly to [vision@nyac.com](mailto:vision@nyac.com), and be sure to include contact information. The deadline for all the remaining 2015 issues is the *first Friday* of each month, with posting to the web site approximately 10 days later.

# Committee Seeks Input for Next Bishop

*Dear Community of the New York Annual Conference:*

Greetings of Peace and Grace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We would like to express our deep gratitude to you for your prayers and your support for the New York Conference. With Bishop Jane Allen Middleton's strong leadership, our conference is doing well and moving forward. However, her interim term will be over soon and we need to prepare to receive the new bishop.

For the process of searching and getting the new bishop, the episcopacy committee has the responsibility of compiling the data for the profile of our conference/episcopal area. This is done to assist the Northeastern Jurisdiction as they seek to match the gifts and graces of episcopal leaders with the needs and aspirations of particular areas and assign episcopal leadership to the annual conferences.

The episcopacy committee of the NYAC has worked diligently so far and has reached out to the committees, boards and caucuses in our conference. Now, we would like to open this conversation to the public (wider circles and individuals) and include as many voices as possible. We welcome the opinions, ideas, insights and wishes from anyone who would

like to participate in this discerning process. For your convenience, we have set up a link on the NYAC web site so you can easily access a place to provide your input. Please use <https://ny-reg.brtaapp.com/2015ProfileofConferenceEpiscopalArea> to provide answers to the questions.

Feel free to write down your thoughts and comments as much as you can. We cannot overemphasize how important your input/response will be to this spiritual discernment journey. We will endeavor to keep all responses confidential.

For the efficiency of the time, we would like to receive your responses electronically via the link by September 12, 2015.

If you have any questions, please contact me at any time at, [Constance.Pak@nyac-umc.com](mailto:Constance.Pak@nyac-umc.com).

Thank you for your time and attention in this matter. We look forward to hearing from you soon. Blessings!!!

Sincerely,  
Constance Y. Pak,  
Chairperson

And the Members of the Committee on the Episcopacy



## Commissioned as Chaplain

**Rev. Michael Sparrow, left, was commissioned as a chaplain in the Navy Reserve on August 4. Sparrow, who was commissioned as a provisional elder in 2014, will continue to serve St. Mark's in Napanoch and Ulster Heights UM churches in the Catskill Hudson District. After Sparrow is ordained as a full elder, he will enter into active duty with the Navy.**

## Youth Nominations Sought For Ambassadors For Mission

Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie, conference mission coordinator, has invited all NYAC clergy to nominate one or two youths from their church for the youth ambassador's mission journey to Cochabamba, Bolivia, in February 2016.

The trip will focus on construction of the "Rios de Agua" church building, Vacation Bible School, and youth ministry. It provides an opportunity for the youth to strengthen their faith by sharing God's love.

Apply now by contacting: Ewoodzie at 914-615-2233, or by email at [jewoodzie@nyac.com](mailto:jewoodzie@nyac.com). For additional details go to, [www.nyac.com/vimprojectdetail/685551](http://www.nyac.com/vimprojectdetail/685551).

## NYAC's Fight Against Malaria Continues

**\$771,211.05\***: Total collected toward goal of \$1.2 million

**\$235,534.52**: Total collected in 2015

**\$61,215.60**: Amount collected at annual conference

**\$4,870**: Amount pledged at 2015 annual conference

**190**: Number of churches that have donated in 2015

During the Imagine No Malaria celebration at annual conference, Rev. Michael Barry, pastor of Stevens Memorial UMC, presented Bishop Jane Allen Middleton with the final installment of the \$50,000 pledge the church made in 2008.

Donations can still be made at [www.nyac.com/inm](http://www.nyac.com/inm). Also, pledge cards are still being accepted. Download the card at <http://bit.ly/1fauELC> and mail to: INM 20 Soundview Ave, White Plains, NY 10606. We have until May 2016 to complete pledges.

*\*All numbers are as of June 30, 2015.*



# Learning from the Dark Can Bring Insight

BY JIM STINSON

*Consultant on Older Adult Ministries*

One of my best memories of growing up in a crowded neighborhood in Brooklyn was the ride we took each summer at the end of June. We went as a family to a campground on Long Island, where we camped until school was ready to open after Labor Day in September.

It was a time of near total freedom. My siblings and I would wander around the “woods” picking berries with our friends, hang out in the tree house we had constructed over the years with bits of lumber we found, and otherwise just do whatever occurred to us on the spur of the moment.

Every afternoon, if it wasn’t pouring rain, we would head for the beach where we would stay until dinnertime. After dinner we would sit around a fire and kibitz, either at our campsite or that of a friend. Those are golden memories!

Among those memories are sitting in the campsite looking at the stars. We didn’t see many stars in Brooklyn—the street lamps and the lights from all the buildings hid most of them from us. On a clear night, when every star seemed visible, everything felt different. It was bright. No artificial light was needed. Everything we needed was right above us.

Unwittingly, I began to understand that darkness is not a bad thing. In fact, it often



makes our place in the universe clearer.

I have been spending a lot of time reading about what this understanding implies, particularly in the book, “Learning to Walk in the Dark,” by Barbara Brown Taylor.

Taylor reflects on so many ways that our (in)sight increases when we allow ourselves to linger in the darkness. We can learn a lot

about ourselves in the darker times of our lives (think sickness, death, disabilities or the death of loved ones), if we allow ourselves to grow from what we learn, rather than run from the uncomfortable realities we face.

Life is always a mixture of light and dark. The ancient creation stories all reflect this awareness, including the Genesis stories, which tell us the Creator separated night from day, having purpose for both.

These ongoing reflections cause me to ask, “What did I, what can I, learn from the darkness that I, like everyone else whoever lived, have faced? How did I, how can I grow from these experiences?”

It is causing me to say more emphatically than ever, that even though it often doesn’t seem right, that darkness and light are both part of my life. While I run from the darkness I may be running from a golden opportunity in which I might grow in wisdom and maturity. Which is to say, while dark times are not always welcome, I want to embrace them more fully, so that they



are more fruitfully a part of the full experience of life.

I offer that insight to you. As we relate to and care for the older adults in our lives, one of the more valuable things we can do with and for them is to walk with them during their dark times. And to do so, not seeking to provide answers (they will eventually find their own), but seeking to accompany them on their journey, allowing them to see that darkness is not always bad, but can be a time of enlightenment.

## Demo, Drywall & Spreading the Word

Continued from page 3

resources in our connection to meet these needs.”

Rev. Bob Walker, assistant to the bishop, recalled the difficulty of the work.

“The first two days were in the 90’s and very humid . . . we hauled 30 sheets of sheetrock into a backyard and down a narrow set of stairs. It was exhausting,” Walker said. “But at the end of the day we were ‘good tired’ with a feeling that we had made a positive difference in the lives of the homeowners.”

Rev. Betsy Ott, New York-Connecticut District superintendent, noted the importance of the timing of the current work—long after the media spotlight is gone and people are desperately searching for any kind of hope.

“I stood in the kitchen as the woman of the house sorted through piles of miscellaneous items on the kitchen counter,” Ott wrote in an email. “Each piece of debris was a memory and required a decision. Keep or throw away? It was emotionally exhausting

for her and she said she was finally able to do it because of the support of someone who simply stood by and talked with her.”

Ott shared another story about a homeowner who was trying to grasp exactly why her team was there. (He even went to Google to find out what a bishop was after being told about the presence of Bishop Middleton.)

The district superintendent told the man that as United Methodists we believe it is part of who we are to help people in that way. With a sense of wonder, the man responded, “What a different world it would be if everyone felt that way.”

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To volunteer to work, or to donate funds for the recovery, go to: [www.nyac.com/recovery](http://www.nyac.com/recovery) and click on the “volunteer” or “donate” photographs. Follow the progress on Facebook, too, at [www.facebook.com/UMLISandyRecoveryMinistry](http://www.facebook.com/UMLISandyRecoveryMinistry).



**Tim Riss, top, and Joseph Ewoodzie team up to cut drywall.**

# Middleton ‘Sends’ 15 Young Mission Fellows

GBGM—Enthusiasm and challenge marked the reception July 30 of 15 new young adult missionaries for service in the United States. The new Global Mission Fellows will work for two years in ministries that link faith and justice issues.

The young United Methodist men and women were commissioned, that is, appointed by the church, in a joy-filled service of worship at the chapel of The Interchurch Center, the current headquarters of the General Board of Global Ministries. Drum and saxophone accompanied the soon-to-be missionaries as they entered the chapel in a syncopated line, pausing in course to hear scripture readings that set the worship themes of water and the tree of life.

They were charged and challenged to see themselves as equipped by God for their work. “You have all you need,” was the watchword of the sermon by Bishop Jane Middleton, resident interim episcopal leader of the New York Conference, who presided at the commissioning.

The 15 include persons from 11 annual conferences, who are assigned to work sites in eight conferences. Global Mission Fellows are 20 to 30 years old, and typically are single, recent college graduates. The 2015 class has the distinction of including three couples: Kimberly and Gregory Bishop from Virginia, Caitlin and Andrew Kastner from Missouri, and Victoria and Nicholas Stanford from Michigan.

Global Mission Fellows is a two-year old program that builds on decades’ old precedents. It operates in U.S. and international components. Those who serve in the U.S. are called US 2s, and are placed through affiliates—regional church units, institutions, or organizations—that take primary responsibility for specific work, which can vary over the course of two years.

To date, more than 150 Global Mission Fellows have answered “yes” when asked, in this case by Bishop Middleton, if they believed they were led by the Holy Spirit to mission service. They further promise to do their work “in love and humility, with integrity and sincerity.” More than 50 others are expected to be commissioned for international assignments in late August.

As they approached the chancel, the young people removed their shoes, named something they were leaving behind in becoming missionaries, and then poured a pitcher of water into a common basin, symbolic of leaving behind one life and joining—through the water—the missionary community of faith and service. Things being left included “fear and doubt,” “the feeling of inadequacy,” “easy choices,” and “the comforts of home.”

## New Grants for Parish Development

The mission of the NYAC Parish Development Committee is to serve the churches of the conference by making loans and grants throughout the year. The funds assist churches with facility improvements, empower them to begin new ministries or continue fruitful existing ministries, as they seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

The committee is making available two new opportunities with the district capital grant and ministry needs grant. Both programs presume a matching grant from the church applying for the funding. Details for both these new grants can be found on the conference web site at [www.nyac.com/parishdevelopment](http://www.nyac.com/parishdevelopment).

On that page, information is also provided on how to contact your district parish development chairperson.

Bishop Middleton’s sermon, based on verses in Luke 9 in which Jesus sends out disciples as missionaries without baggage, told the missionaries they were chosen, empowered, and blessed by God for whatever lies before them. She asked them to repeatedly say to themselves, “God is with me!” Their message in all they do, the bishop said, is the message of God’s love. “There is no limit to the love of God manifest in Jesus Christ,” she declared.

The new US 2 Global Mission Fellows are, alphabetically, by home annual conference and placement:

- Kimberly Bishop, Virginia, to: Nome Community Center, Alaska
- Gregory Bishop, Virginia, to Nome Community Center, Alaska
- Jamie Booth, Kentucky, to St. Francis in the Foothills UMC, Tucson, Arizona
- Amber Feezor, Arkansas, to General Board of Church & Society, Washington, DC
- Kayla Flannery, Desert Southwest, to Detroit Annual Conference
- Sarah Hundley, Virginia, to Oklahoma Annual Conference
- Andrew Kastner, Missouri, to Young Adult Missional Movement of the Florida Annual Conference
- Caitlin Kastner, Missouri, to Young Adult Missional Movement of the Florida Annual Conference
- Emily Kvalheim, West Ohio, to Young Adult Missional Movement of the Florida Annual Conference
- Catherine Shaw, East Ohio, to Francis in the Foothills UMC, Tucson, Arizona
- Nicholas Stanford, West Michigan, Young Adult Missional Movement of the Florida Annual Conference
- Victoria Stanford, West Michigan, to Young Adult Missional Movement of the Florida Annual Conference
- Rachel Ternes, Rocky Mountain, to Central District, Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference
- Christina Trager, Peninsula-Delaware, to Virginia Annual Conference
- Chelsea Williams, North Carolina, to Detroit Annual Conference.

## JOB OPENING

### Social Justice Advocate

The New York Conference is seeking an organizer for social concerns and social justice advocacy and education. This is a part-time, paid position requires about nine hours per week. The coordinator will work primarily from home or on the road, and will be supervised programmatically by the Conference Board of Church and Society, primarily through its co-chairpersons.

The responsibilities of the coordinator include:

- Organizing the work of the CBCS around the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church.
- Coordinating joint programs with the NY Conference United Methodist Women, the Conference Task Force on Immigration, and other Conference boards, commissions, and racial/ethnic caucuses.
- Serving as a resource for local churches and districts
- Communicating with the General Board of Church and Society.

The ideal candidate will be passionate about social justice advocacy and have training in leading education and advocacy. Even if you do not see yourself as the ideal candidate, but have a passion for ministry of social concerns and justice, please submit your resume. Please email resume and cover letter to CBCS Chair Rev. Paul Fleck at [paul.fleck@nyac-umc.com](mailto:paul.fleck@nyac-umc.com).

## OBITUARIES

### Rev. Eli Samuel Rivera

Rev. Eli Samuel Rivera, who spent his ministry career in the Greater New Jersey and New York conferences working in Hispanic ministries, died on June 11.

He served as associate program director for mission and social witness, Hispanic ministries for NYAC in 1993–94, and as coordinator of Hispanic ministries (cross-conference) for the New York, Southern New Jersey, and Northern New Jersey Conferences from 1994 to 1998. He also served in several capacities at the General Board of Global Ministries from 1977 to 1993, finishing his career as executive secretary for congregational development at GBGM from 1998 until his retirement in 2004.

Rivera was a visionary who helped develop the Hispanic National Plan for The United Methodist Church. He was a member and strong supporter of MARCHA (Metodistas Representando la Causa de los Hispano Americanos).

He supported the ministries at Grace United Methodist Church, Manhattan, especially when the church was left homeless after a fire in 1983.

A funeral service took place on June 15 at Teaneck United Methodist Church in Teaneck, N.J. The Metropolitan District of the NYAC held a memorial service on June 28 at Grace UMC.

Memorial contributions may be directed to UMCOR, PO Box 9068, New York, NY 10087, or [www.umcor.org](http://www.umcor.org). In addition, MARCHA has established a memorial fund to honor his contributions; online donations may be made at [www.marchaumc.org/contribute](http://www.marchaumc.org/contribute).

Rivera is survived by his wife, Marie Rivera; and two daughters, Diana Rivera and Eileen de la Hoz. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Marie Rivera, 1766 Brookview Drive South, Jacksonville, FL 32246.

### Lucidia Arus

Mrs. Lucidia Arus, died on June 7, at age 73. She was the widow of the Reverend Angel Arus who served in Puerto Rico from 1951 to 1980. In 1980, Arus became a full member elder of the New York Conference.

His last appointment, prior to his retirement in 1997, was at First Spanish in Manhattan. Rev. Arus died in 2007. Surviving are their children, Samuel Arus and Jamie Arus.

## Conference Sues to Keep Church Property

UMNS—The Illinois Great Rivers Conference filed a lawsuit Aug. 6 seeking to keep property now used by a breakaway congregation.

The lawsuit, filed in Illinois' Pulaski County Circuit Court, asks for a permanent injunction that would bar the church from "occupying, possessing or otherwise exercising control over the real and personal property."

Ohio Chapel Church in Grand Chain, Illinois, formerly Ohio Chapel UMC, declared its independence from The United Methodist Church in March. The church told the conference it wanted to be "more self-governing," said Paul Black, the conference's director of communication ministries.

Neither the Rev. Tammy Horn, Ohio Chapel's pastor, nor the congregation's attorney immediately returned requests for comment from United Methodist News Service.

The Illinois Great Rivers case follows a highly publicized property settlement between the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and a fast-growing church that left the denomination. In that case, Wesley Church of Quarryville paid the

conference \$100,000 for the church buildings and land, along with an additional \$58,000 in other conference obligations.

One difference between those two cases, Black said, is that conference leadership "believes there is still viable ministry to be done there (in Grand Chain) in the name of The United Methodist Church."

Another difference is in application of The United Methodist Church's trust clause, part of the *Book of Discipline*, the denomination's law book.

The trust clause, which dates to 1797, states that local church properties are held "in trust" for the denomination, even if the church name is on the deed.

Black noted that in Eastern Pennsylvania, the departing congregation acknowledged, "that the trust clause applied."

The Illinois Great Rivers Conference's suit asks the court to declare that all property used by Ohio Chapel is held under the trust clause. It also calls for the conference to receive an accounting of all assets held by Ohio Chapel.

## United Methodists Join in Ferguson Protest

UMNS—About 75 United Methodists gathered at sundown Aug. 12 in Ferguson, Missouri, to offer peace and hope amid renewed unrest.

The interracial group of clergy and lay members came at the request of the Rev. F. Willis Johnson Jr., United Methodist pastor of Wellspring Church, and founder of the church's Center for Social Empowerment and Justice. The largely African-American church is roughly a block from the St. Louis suburb's police station.

Violence had erupted earlier in the week as demonstrators marked the first anniversary of the shooting death of Michael Brown, and with his community now in an official state of emergency, Johnson urged his colleagues to join him in nonviolent protest.

"We asked for United Methodist clergy, allies and people who are justice-minded to join us here in Ferguson so we might be a presence of peace," the Rev. Pamela Lightsey told those assembled in Wellspring's sanctuary.

Lightsey, who helped organize the event, is the associate dean of community life and lifelong learning at United Methodist Boston University School of Theology. She has been actively supporting Johnson's efforts for the

past year.

"As people of faith, we want to be in obedience to the One who is divine love, which means being concerned about our neighbor," she said.

The evening began with some time for instruction—the four steps to nonviolence outlined in the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Letter from Birmingham City Jail and a reminder of the potential risks involved in direct action. The Rev. Valerie Bridgeman, associate professor at Methodist Theological School in Ohio, a United Methodist seminary, then directed a time of song, prayer and Holy Communion.

Shortly thereafter, the group made its way to West Florissant Avenue where their voices soon joined with protesters from the community. They shouted: "This is what democracy looks like! This is what the clergy looks like! This is what theology looks like!"

"What would Jesus be doing?" hollered a protester several yards away, no doubt prompted by the mass of clergy stoles and collars.

"He'd be marching with us," a female pastor responded.