

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

THE VISION

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of the New York
Annual Conference
of The United
Methodist Church

February 2016

Walking In The Legacy Of Dr. King

BY RALPH LORD ROY

Dr. King appeared tired and hot but welcoming as we approached his cell in the city jail of Albany, Ga. It was the summer of 1962 and Rabbi Israel Dresner and I, who had been imprisoned together the previous year as Freedom Riders, had arrived to attend his trial for leading a public protest without a permit. Dr. King's accusers portrayed him as a dangerous radical and, as expected, he was found guilty. We were surprised, however, when the judge announced that he could go free. His fine had been paid anonymously. The Albany Movement was convinced that the city fathers hoped that, once released, Dr. King would leave town. Fortunately for us, he stayed.

I had met Dr. Martin King Jr. twice in New York City—where I was a Methodist pastor at the time—but only to shake his hand. During our stay in Albany, Ga., we were privileged to become personally acquainted with this courageous national leader, who was a superb orator, fighter for justice, apostle of reconciliation and peace, and fellow minister.

When we would join him for lunch he wanted to escape the heavy pressures upon him, if only for a brief time. We would share jokes and he would toss his head back and laugh. We talked some theology, focusing upon Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, professors of mine in seminary who King happened to admire. He was interested, too, when he



Rev. Ralph Lord Roy, front right, stands at the head of a line of clergy members arrested after a 1962 prayer pilgrimage in Albany, Ga.

COMMENTARY

discovered that Bob Brightman was my close friend at Swarthmore College. Bob's father, Dr. Edgar Brightman, had been a favorite professor of King's at Boston University. By then, Bob had become a Methodist minister in the New England Conference.

While in Albany, we confronted the evil of racism head on. As but three examples: we were "chased out" of Lee County one night by gun-waving vigilantes; Rabbi Dresner and I spoke at two rural churches, both of which were soon burned to the ground; and on Sunday morning I was turned away at three Methodist churches when

an African-American and I walked together toward the sanctuary.

One day, Dr. King asked us to return to the north and organize a prayer pilgrimage to aid the Albany Movement's protests against racial segregation. Our headquarters was at Grace Church on West 104th Street in Manhattan.

On August 28, 1962, some 75 of us, including 54 ministers and nine rabbis, stood before the Albany City Hall in Georgia. About half were from the New York area, half from the Chicago area. A prayer was offered. A psalm was read. We were ordered to disburse. When we stood our ground, we were loaded into police wagons as 300 onlookers cheered.

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Time for Rest & Learning At Bishop's Convocation

Clergy and spouses took time for some learning and respite during the Bishop's Convocation in mid-January. Featured speaker Deb Clifford, a leader in the Simsbury United Methodist Church, worked with clergy to develop skills in leadership and coaching. This year's gathering at the Villa Roma Resort in the Catskills also featured Dr. Mackie Norris, who worked specifically with the spouses to improve their health and well-being.

Bishop Jane Allen Middleton welcomed the group at the first session on January 12 and reminded them of the importance of nurturing and empowering the members of their churches.

"Don't think you need a lot of equipment for this," she said. "You are the equipment. There is awesome power in being sent by Jesus."

Clifford, who works with pastors and laity alike to create vital congregations, said that good coaching "multiplies the Spirit which in turn multiplies the ministries." She shared that a good coach knows how to:

- Ask great questions that elicit the other person's input and ideas
- Listen with empathy, and watches for non-verbal cues
- Deliver effective feedback that shows appreciation for a job well done, or redirects undesirable behavior.
- Hold others accountable to

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

2/20 Immigrant Welcoming Training

Join the journey to become an immigrant welcoming community where churches will be equipped to travel from mercy to justice, from service-only to incarnational friendship, from ministering to be transformed alongside. This event, sponsored by the NYAC Immigration Task Force, is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the NYAC Learning Center in White Plains. Breakfast and lunch will be provided. Register by February 8 at www.nyac.com/eventdetail/2122536. For more information contact: Bruce Lamb, assistant coordinator, Social Justice, Engagement and Advocacy bruce.lamb@nyac-umc.com

2/20 Lay Servant Training Begins

The Long Island East District will hold training sessions for local church and certified lay servants at the Westbury and Hamptons Bays churches on February 20, 27, and March 5, 12 and 19. Contact the LIE District office at 631-366-2396, or liedistrict@nyac-umc.com.

3/5 Archives and Records Workshop

This workshop at the John Street UMC in lower Manhattan will help churches organize and protect their records. Archivists Beth Patkus and Leslie Reyman will introduce participants to basic archival concepts through hands-on activities and provide tips for protecting records from flooding and other disasters. The workshop from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. includes a lunchtime talk on John Street's history by Rev. Jason Radmacher, as well as a chance to view the church's museum and historic sanctuary. A light lunch will be provided at noon, and a \$15 donation will cover costs for lunch, meeting handouts and a tote bag. To register, go to: www.nyac.com/eventdetail/3737697.

3/12 Contemporary Worship Conference

Jesse Lee Memorial UMC in Ridgefield, Conn., will host this one-day conference with special guest, Jacob Park, a worship leader and guitarist-singer-songwriter at Christian Assembly Foursquare Church in Los Angeles. Registration fee is \$40 for the 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. event that will include lunch. There is a \$10 discount for groups of four registering from the same church. For details or to register, go to: www.jesseleechurch.com/events/contemporary-worship-conference.

4/4-8 Pastors/Spouses Health Clinic

Twice a year, New York Methodist Hospital in Brooklyn opens its

doors to 12 clergy and/or spouses for a four-day clinic in which major diagnostic tests and consultations are made available. This April clinic is currently full, but they are accepting names for the waiting list. Please contact Rev. Elizabeth Braddon at elizabeth.braddon@gmail.com, indicating your interest.

7/22-24 "Mission u" On the Move

"Mission u" will be meeting all under one roof at the Stamford Hilton in Stamford, Conn. The studies will include the Bible and human sexuality, Latin America, and climate justice. Additional details will be available at www.nyac.com/eventdetail/3167094.

5/10-20 2016 General Conference

General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church that meets once every four years. The conference can revise church law, as well as adopt resolutions on current moral, social, public policy and economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for church-wide programs. The UMC's top legislative body will meet at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland.

8/29-31 Global UM Clergywomen Gathering 2016

Under the theme: "ONE: Birthing a Worldwide Church," United Methodist clergywomen will gather at the World Methodist Conference at the Hilton-Americas Hotel and Conference Center in Houston. This gathering will serve as the culmination of regional gatherings of United Methodist clergywomen that have taken place throughout the connection. Meeting in conjunction with the World Methodist Conference will strengthen the Methodist identity and understanding of the United Methodist clergywomen, as well as provide them with additional leadership-building education and networking. Use this shortened link, <http://bit.ly/1YYvhkh>, to go to the registration page. If you have any questions please contact clergy lifelonglearning@gbhem.org.

10/1 Prison Ministry Symposium

The Conference Board of Church & Society will present a conference-wide symposium entitled, "I Was In Prison And You . . ." from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Grace UMC, 125 104th St, N.Y., N.Y.

Vision Deadlines for 2016

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 2016 are as follows: March 4, April 1, May 6, June 3, July 1, Aug. 5, Sept. 2, Oct. 7, Nov. 4, and Dec. 2. Please send any stories, photos, ideas, or questions directly to vision@nyac.com.

<small>The News of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church</small>	
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Gilmore Named as Congregational Developer

Dear Sisters and Brothers of the New York Conference,
Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ!

I am pleased to announce that I will appoint Rev. David A. Gilmore as the New York Conference's director of congregational development and revitalization on July 1, 2016. Rev. Gilmore currently serves the Centennial United Methodist Church in Kansas City, Mo.—a congregation that has added more than 300 new members under his pastoral leadership. He is a graduate of Ottawa University and St. Paul's School of Theology, both in Kansas City, and a doctor of ministry candidate at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, N.Y.

I am confident that Rev. Gilmore will bring many gifts to the New York Conference as we continue to form new congregations and revitalize existing congregations. He has demonstrated the ability to dramatically grow congregations and has served as a consultant for other churches.

David brings a variety of experience to this position that was created in our conference in 2014. After a successful career in the U.S. Navy, he was called to the ministry in 1997. He has expanded two congregations in the Missouri Conference and serves as a consultant for the Healthy Church Initiative (HCI) in that conference. David has also served as a consultant in the Missional Church Consultation Initiative (MCCI) for the West Ohio Conference. In 2009, he received the Harry Denman Evangelism Award for the Missouri Conference.

He comes to us highly recommended by Missouri Bishop Robert Schnase, as well as others throughout the denomination who are engaged

in church growth and development.

Moving back to New York will be a homecoming for David and his spouse, Kimiko Capri Gilmore. David is a child of the New York Conference having grown up in White Plains, N.Y., where his father Rev. Don Gilmore served Trinity United Methodist Church. The senior Gilmore also pastored the Pine Bush (N.Y.) United Methodist Church.

The director of congregational development and revitalization provides visionary and passionate leadership for developing new congregations

and church revitalization across the conference. The Rev. Dr. Derrick-Lewis Noble, the first person to hold this position in the conference, has regrettably had to leave the position due to health reasons.

We are very fortunate to have Rev. Gilmore as part of our team as together we seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



Rev. David A. Gilmore

In Christ's love,

Bishop Jane Allen Middleton

Celebrating 250 Years Of Methodism in New York

BY BETH PATKUS
NYAC Archivist

In the autumn of 1766 in New York City, Philip Embury, an emigrant local preacher who had been converted to Methodism in Ireland, preached to a small group of five (including two servants) in his home, at the behest of his cousin, Barbara Heck.

When some of her fellow emigrants began to give up Methodist ways, Barbara famously broke up a card game, threw the cards into the fire, and reminded Embury of his responsibilities. From this first small group would come Wesley Chapel (later John Street Church) in 1768.

Throughout 2016, the New York Conference Commission on Archives and History (CAH), in cooperation with John Street UMC, will celebrate the 250 years of New York area Methodism that followed this first class meeting.

To begin the year, the archives has developed 25 educational posters that tell the stories of luminaries in the New York Conference over the past 250 years. These posters detail each person's life and

accomplishments and provide discussion questions that will be useful for Bible study, discussion groups, sermon preparation, and confirmation classes. Each biography is also available in a bulletin insert format.

Those profiled are: Barbara Heck, Philip Embury, and Captain Thomas Webb; Francis Asbury; James Varick; Freeborn and Catherine Garretson; Jesse Lee; Nathan Bangs; Mary Morgan Mason; Phoebe Palmer; Sojourner Truth; Maggie Newton Van Cott; Fanny Crosby; Frank Mason North; James Monroe Buckley; Frederick Asbury Cullen; Harry F. Ward; Elsie F. Stowe; Lorenzo King; Ralph Sockman; Chester A. Smith; William M. James; Alfredo Cotto-Thorner; Roy C. Nichols; Amos Seung Won Rhee; Paul Abels; and Shirley Parris.

Visit www.nyac.com/250years to find a link to the page of biographies, and explore the New York Conference's rich and diverse heritage. And stay tuned for more activities and resources throughout the year, including a calendar of conference historic places and celebratory activities at annual conference in June.

Recent New Appointments

Bishop Jane Allen Middleton intends to make the following appointments at the 2016 session of the New York Annual Conference, to be effective July 1:

Lori Miller to Newtown UMC; Miller currently serves Pound Ridge Community Church.

Janet Hodge to Crawford Memorial; Hodge currently serves Tremont UMC.

Robert Knebel to West Hartford UMC; Knebel currently serves the UMC of Waterbury, Conn.

Jennifer Morrow to Warwick UMC; Morrow currently serves Rowayton UMC.

Roger Jackson to St. Paul's UMC in Brooklyn; Jackson currently serves Saint James UMC in Lynbrook, N.Y.

Godfrey Uche to St. Mark's UMC in Brooklyn; Uche currently serves Christ UMC in Brooklyn.

Richard Hanse to the First UMC, Meriden, Conn.; Hanse currently serves West Hartford UMC.

Learn to Be Immigrant Welcoming Church

BY BRUCE LAMB

As people of faith we are called to step out in the valley of the brave and call dry bones to life. The vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37:1–14 came to the prophet after God had directed him to prophesy the rebirth of Israel. Ezekiel was to tell the bones that God would breathe new life into them.

Last November, I joined 50 other people of faith from 13 states for the “Dry Bones” immigration retreat led by the Conference Board of Church and Society at the Wesley Woods Camp and Retreat Center in Des Moines, Iowa. We worshipped, prayed and strategized on how we could continue to build the movement to defend and support the rights of immigrants.

The New York Conference team made up of Church and Society Chair, Rev. Paul Fleck, Immigration Task Force Chair Rev. Karina Feliz, Pastor Romana Abelova, and myself looked at how we can work with our churches to become more welcoming to the immigrant community. That journey is a lifelong process as we work to live out our mission of making disciples of all nations. As United Methodists, we believe that at the center of Christian faithfulness to scripture is the call we have been given to love and welcome the sojourner.



Welcoming immigrants is not only an act of mission; it is an opportunity to receive God’s grace.

We are beginning this journey in 2016 with church training on ways to welcome immigrants in our communities. The first session is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., February 20 at the conference center in White Plains. Becoming an immigrant welcoming community is a journey open to entire congregations or smaller groups within congregations.

The goal of the training is to equip churches to travel from mercy to justice, from service only to incarnational friendship, and from ministering to being transformed alongside. Each group will put together a plan of action for their community. The process is a four-fold one, each month with a different focus:

- Month 1 looks at our faith and what scripture says about hospitality, welcoming immigrants and moving from mercy to justice.
- Month 2 explores the roots of building incarnational relationships and how getting to know people affected by the issue is central to moving forward.
- Month 3 targets education to create incarnational relationships that then lead to

transformation in our churches and society.

- Month 4 pursues ways to publically and prayerfully witness the commitment to our immigrant brothers and sisters. This last step includes a time of celebration as groups begin the lifelong journey.

We want to invite people to deepen their understanding and build relationships based on mutuality and love. The journey is about a concrete process to become more welcoming. Our faith tradition is saturated with texts about welcoming the immigrant.

Leviticus 19:33–34 says, “When an immigrant resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the immigrant. The immigrant who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the immigrant as yourself, for you were an immigrant in the land of Egypt.”

The church has an important role to play in reaching out and loving our neighbor. I pray that your church or small group will join us on February 20. Please go to www.nyac.com/eventdetail/2122536 for additional information and to register.

Lamb is the assistant coordinator for social justice, engagement and advocacy for the conference’s Board of Church & Society. For more information contact him at bruce.lamb@nyac-umc.com.

Protect Immigrants As “Sanctuary” Church

Churches all throughout the United States are agreeing to serve as “sanctuary churches” protecting immigrants from deportation. A recent National Public Radio report noted that out of a group of 13 immigrants who sought sanctuary with churches, 11 were able to get stays from deportation. Rev. John Fife, a former pastor at Southside Presbyterian in Tucson asks the question, “What would happen if a mother from Guatemala showed up at your church door with a little kid in her arms and said, ‘Can you help me?’” repeating a question he’s recently posed to faith leaders across the nation.

Will your church look at signing up to serve as a sanctuary church? Congregations are standing up to say that we are called to live out Leviticus 19:34, “The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native born. Love him and her as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt.”

The New York Annual Conference Immigration Task Force is working along with the New Sanctuary Coalition to put together a list of churches that will serve as sanctuary for those in need of short-term emergency refuge. To view an information sheet on the process, go to: www.nyac.com/servingasanctuarychurch.

The Legacy Of Dr. King

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As we were carted off to four jails in the area we sang freedom songs with a special resolve. I’m told that this was the largest simultaneous incarceration of clergy in our nation’s history.

In 1963, I was in Washington and heard Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. In 1968, I was among the thousands who walked silently behind his funeral cortege in Atlanta. Bigotry had taken a great American from us.

Dr. King was a visionary who struggled fearlessly for an equitable society, where people of every color and creed would dwell in harmony and mutual respect. He gave his life for a better nation and world, and had he lived, he was about to confront more pointedly the issue of poverty.

His focus was on justice, non-violence and love, reflecting the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. How fortunate we were to have King’s prophetic leadership a half-century ago. He would urge us to continue the ongoing struggle for peace and reconciliation.

I suspect, too, that he is a bit embarrassed to have a holiday all his own, and would remind us of Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and countless others—most of them African-Americans whose names we do not know—men and women who endured oppression, and should also be remembered at this time.

Ralph Lord Roy of Southington, Conn., is a retired United Methodist minister who served churches in New York City and Connecticut. Email: ralphlroy@aol.com.

Stepping Up to Give More in Connection

BY JERRY EYSTER

Apportionments enable United Methodists to do all the good we can. These funds from our churches are intended to provide the New York Annual Conference (NYAC) and the greater United Methodist Church with the resources that make a difference for souls throughout the world. We don't focus on where our giving went; we focus on what our portion meant to:

- Former drug addicts being renewed at Anchor House and the Far Rockaway Mission;
- Immigrants receiving legal support from Justice For Our Neighbors;
- Hurricane Sandy victims assisted by UMCOR and the conference's recovery efforts;
- Economically struggling families who are helped by after-school programs, soup kitchens, and food pantries supported, in part, by mission grants from the conference; and
- Those who are beginning their faith journeys at newly formed mission churches.

United Methodists are not just connected; we are a "connexion." I use the 18th century spelling here to emphasize the essence of John Wesley's Methodism. The movement Wesley started was more than a network, more than a list of names; it was a new being, the Body of Christ in the world reaching out to those in need, providing helping hands, offering nurturing care, and feeding spiritual growth.

When John Wesley founded the New Room in Bristol, England—the first chapel build for Methodist worship—he needed a means to pay for it. In February 1742, one of the early leaders in Wesley's movement, Captain Foy, came up with a plan, suggesting that each class or small group member contribute one penny per week to pay for New Room. The class leader would be responsible for collecting the money in the small groups who meet regularly to deepen their faith and hold one another accountable. Those who could not pay would be passed over, and the class leader would be responsible for contributing the missing funds. Wesley adopted the approach, which became the basis for funding early Methodism.

Recently the conference's Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A) was asked by interim Bishop Jane Middleton to solve a problem much like what Wesley faced: How can the conference budget be fully funded through the apportionments paid by our churches?

With an annual NYAC budget of just over \$8 million, the contributions of conference churches typically fall \$1 million short of that amount, leaving conference programs short of the resources needed to accomplish their missions. The reasons for this shortage are many, and CF&A members have been charged to listen and learn about each situation.

To deal with this situation, the conference has carried a budget contingency to make up the difference. The contingency is only applied to certain line items in the budget that must be paid at 100 percent, such as salaries and benefits. Those line items are deemed to need "full-funding" and are therefore increased via a contingency to reflect an assumption about our collection rate. The more churches that remit their entire apportionment the less need for this contingency and conversely, a low level of payment increases the need.



As in the days of Wesley when some individuals could not financially support the ministry, there are some churches today that don't have the resources to contribute all of their designated apportionments. And it's here where we ask that the old Methodist approach be revived. CF&A has created a program that would allow for individuals, groups or churches from across the conference to give for those who cannot. The program has been dubbed the "class leader apportionment shortfall sharing" fund, or CLASS Fund.

For those who may think that bridging the \$1 million shortfall through donations is an unrealistic goal, please consider that the conference has more than 100,000 members. That's a total shortfall of less than \$10 per member per year, or less than 20 cents per week. If we adjust for inflation, the one-penny contribution in Wesley's day was a much greater burden than 20 cents per week would be today. Wesley's class leaders were typically responsible for 10 to 12 souls. If our burden were spread similarly, we would need just 10,000 class leaders in our conference to give less than \$2 per week to close the gap.

So just as the 18th century class leaders stepped up to help those unable to pay, we are asking our conference members and churches to do the same. Are you ready to join in helping our "connexion" to grow, to thrive as the Body of Christ in the New York area by becoming a CLASS Fund leader?

Steps you can take to help our conference do all the good it can:

- Encourage your church to be faithful in paying 100 percent of its yearly apportionments;
- Encourage your church to step-up to a new level of apportionment giving, even if your church is not able to pay 100 percent of its portion;
- Encourage your church to give more than its full portion to help struggling churches by remitting additional monies to the conference in the regular payment process;
- Become a CLASS Fund leader yourself by donating via a link on the conference web site, <https://ny-reg.brtapp.com/MakeaDonation>. Donations can be made via online donation or by check; please remember to indicate on the electronic form or on the check memo line that the donation is for the "CLASS Fund."

Jerry Eyster, a member of the conference Council on Finance and Administration, is also a Wesley scholar.

Rising Hope, Inc.: A Road to Restoration

BY DEBORAH MOORE

Retired Rising Hope Supervisor

I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

—Luke 15:7

When thinking about criminal justice, many people take a position of “lock them up and throw away the key.” But this attitude overlooks the basic humanity of people who are sent to prison. Yes, they’ve made terrible mistakes and done hurtful things. But they are still people; sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. And the Bible clearly tells us that we must extend our ministry of peace and reconciliation to all of God’s lost sheep, even those in prison.

For the past 19 years, the volunteers of Rising Hope, Inc. have heeded that imperative. Rising Hope is an all-volunteer organization that provides one year of college-level education to men in three New York State prisons. The program is open to men of all faiths because the goal is not to proselytize, but to teach academic skills. Even though the curriculum is very similar to that of a first-year seminary program, followers of all faiths are welcome and respected.

The program has three goals:

- **To further the students’ educational development.** Because many of our students dropped out of school and earned their GED in prison, they have poor study, writing and critical thinking skills. Rising Hope provides an opportunity to hone those skills. As one graduate said, “I learned commitment, determination, and perseverance. I used to be a quitter . . . Thanks to this program, I learned to stay focused and finish what I started . . . I also learned how to study, manage my time, and set my priorities.”
- **To help them progress on their spiritual journey.** Even though the curriculum is based on the Judeo-Christian tradition, the profound questions that are studied can be applied to any faith. Big questions like, “Who is God?” “What does God want from us?” “What does it mean to be righteous?” are fundamental to all great religious traditions.
- **To create a community of learners.** Negative peer pressure had a great deal to do with why our students dropped out of school. But as our students get to know one another, they begin to care about each other in a very meaningful ways. When a



A class of Rising Hope graduates with their diplomas.

student is overwhelmed by the demands of the course work, some want to quit. But their fellow students will not hear of it. They rally round, offering support and encouragement. One student put it this way: “We became different people in room 221, where the facades of the yard weren’t present. This course created a community out of 16 people who would have normally never bonded with each other. Not all of us were of a Christian background, so I doubt it was the Christian message that solidified us as a family. I believe it was the exploration of a spiritual relationship motivated by the curriculum that bound us together. The experience opened my eyes to the positive presence in all of us. There is good in us.”

To participate in the program, the students must apply and be accepted. Then, they take five courses with five different instructors each semester. It’s the equivalent of a full-time semester of college. They do all the things college requires. They read books, take quizzes and tests, write papers, deliver presentations, discuss their findings, etc. Some local colleges are willing to accept between 24 and 30 credit hours of Rising Hope courses toward an associate’s or bachelor’s degree.

Is the effort worth it? Can uneducated men in prison reform their lives and become productive citizens? The answer is yes. Our God forgives and redeems broken lives. Over the past 19 years, more than 1,200 men have graduated from the program. Many have gone

on to earn bachelor and master’s degrees.

One graduated as valedictorian of his class at CUNY. Four, that we know of, have earned their doctorates. Two more are working toward their doctorates now.

Most of our graduates pursue a career in the helping professions where their incarceration is an asset rather than a liability. They become social workers, drug counselors, youth counselors, pastors, chaplains, case workers, and the like. Many are inspired to help people avoid the mistakes that landed them in jail.

Rising Hope welcomes new volunteers, but not everyone is suited to teaching at the college level. However, we do need people to donate funds to buy new textbooks. And congregations can help by sending Christmas and Easter cards to the students. For men who have no family, a card from a congregation usually brings tears to their eyes. To find out more about Rising Hope and how you can be involved, please go to <https://risinghopeinc.wordpress.com/>

Over the years, when people learned that I teach in a prison, they look at me like I have two heads. Obviously, they’re thinking, “Who in their right mind volunteers in a prison?” One prison guard actually asked me that question. But if they could see how much our students grow and change during their year in our program, they’d know why I do it. It is a huge blessing for all of us at Rising Hope to do the work that God has led us to do. And it’s a blessing to see the men blossom and grow into the men God is calling them to be.

Dreaming a Dream for Kids in Need

BY REV. WILLIAM TOWNSEND

Director of Spiritual Life

As I write this article, lottery fever has infected the nation. The Powerball is set to pay out a record \$1.6 Billion. People everywhere are pondering what they would do if they were to win the jackpot. Their visions range from giving the bulk of the money to charity to buying a new house for every member of their family, and from retiring to starting a new business.

I posed the question to some of the young men in chapel and was surprised at their answers. One young man said the first thing he would do was to just go home. Another would opt for a new pair of shoes. But the most touching response came from a young man who said, "If I won I would buy a headstone for my brother."

I was moved by the fact that their first thought was not the fulfillment of some extravagant wish list, but rather common things



that many of us take for granted.

Perhaps it's difficult to dream big when your basic needs for security, identity, and belonging have never been met. How does a person envision moving into a mansion when she has not experienced a stable family setting? How does a person think about buying a shiny new sports car when his heart is aching because his brother is lying in an unmarked grave?

This experience made me realize how selfish some of my own thoughts and dreams are. It also reminded me that beneath their often rough exteriors, shaped by years of negative experiences, our children have loving, caring hearts capable of touching acts of

kindness and compassion.

My hope for the young people at the Children's Home is that they would be set free to dream and to envision a hopeful future. In all likelihood that future will not include a billion dollar nest egg. But I pray each child would be blessed with an abundant supply of love, forgiveness, grace, independence, and success.

Thank you for the many ways you support the ministry of the Children's home, enabling us to meet the basic needs of children and families so they can be liberated to dream big dreams and equipped to soar into the future.

For more information on the Children's Home, call 607-772-6904 (or toll free 800-772-6904) ext. 131, or visit the web site at www.chowc.org. To schedule a presentation about the Children's Home, contact Margaret Tatich, ext 131. Feel free to send donations directly, or use the New York Conference advance number 60-0588.

Lift Your Voice At Hofstra in June

The annual conference music team has put out a call for those interested in sharing their gifts as part of this year's mass choir for the ordination and commissioning service. The theme for the 2016 annual gathering is "Go . . . in Jesus' Name: the Spirit Sends Us Forth."

Rehearsal will be at 8:45 a.m., Saturday, June 11; the ordination service begins at 10 a.m. A link to this year's selection will be posted on the conference web site as the time draws nearer. For additional information, contact Raymond Trapp, director of music, or Ian Wharton, coordinator, at music.worshipnyc@gmail.com.

McClanahan Wins For Sandy Coverage

Congratulations to Rev. Arthur McClanahan on his first place win for "Hurricane Sandy Recovery-Efforts in the New York Annual Conference" in the video news story category at the United Methodist Association of Communicators competition in January. His work was the core of "The Voices of Sandy Recovery—Three Years Later," which can be viewed on the NYAC web site at www.nyac.com/author/detail/283594.

McClanahan served churches in New York and Connecticut for 30 years before becoming the director of communications for the Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church.



Sugar Loaf Youth Fight Hunger

On February 7—SouperBowl of Caring Sunday—the youth of Sugar Loaf United Methodist Church took over the worship service to share with the congregation what they had been learning about tackling hunger. After worship, they served soup that they had made and collected more than \$600 and 268 canned goods, which will be split between the Chester and the Warwick food pantries. On January 15, the youth went door-to-door collecting canned goods. They learned how hard it is to feed a family on a budget, and that hunger and poverty are not just limited to big cities, but is right in the community.

Camp: “One of the Best Things I’ve Done”

BY JANE WAKEMAN

Our NYAC camp counselors come from all over the world, but one of the most enthusiastic comes from Long Island.

Zoey Lee has attended Camp Quinipet for the past 11 years, the two most recent years, as a camp counselor. She likes to share her love of the camp and what keeps her coming back. Now a college student at James Madison University, she said that her passion is to become a teacher. Most of her volunteer time is spent working with children.

Growing up at the Bayville United Methodist Church, Lee first started going to Camp Quinipet at her mother’s insistence. She did not want to go. She had heard about it through her church that sometimes went on retreat there, but in fourth grade, it did not sound like much fun.

Looking back, she said that experience now helps her to understand how campers feel when they are at camp for the first time. She is sensitive to the boys and girls who stand aside and test the rules. By giving them special attention and learning about their individual feelings, Lee helps bring them back into the fold and they often end the week wishing they could stay longer.



Camp Quinipet veteran, Zoey Lee

Lee described her early experience as a camper as a time when it “doesn’t matter where you are from” or what your circumstances are.

“It’s very freeing and you can be one with everyone,” she said.

It is a time away from the social stresses of home and school life and where boundaries can be stretched and lasting relationships with

counselors and friends formed. Camp is a place where you can sign up for the activities you are passionate about and grow as a Christian. Morning chapel and evening vespers, discussions, skits and being with friends help you to know that God is there and everywhere and will always be there.

“Camp is easily one of the best things I have ever done in my life,” she said. “You don’t realize how much camp changes you until you get to experience Camp Quinipet. Being at Quinipet you are so engaged in camp life that you forget anything exists outside of it, a little phenomenon known as Quinibubble . . . It helps you find who you truly are. My life there is beautiful.”

When asked what she would tell someone who is considering camping, Lee said, “Camp is hard to explain. It is not about rules and regulations. You can’t see how meaningful it is until you get there . . . It is a place where you can be and explore and soak in the moment—and not have a care in the world.”

May God richly bless our campers, counselors and staff and the special gifts they share as they prepare for another summer experience serving and learning in the name of Christ.

Grant Named To Honor Muhleman

The United Methodist Frontier Foundation has announced a 2016 ministry grant named in honor of the organization’s former president and executive director. The Rev. Keith Muhleman Ministry Grant is intended to encourage and support creative and vital ministry in the local church.

One or more grants—totaling \$5,000 per conference—will be awarded to local NYAC churches in the NYAC whose initiative, creativity and commitment to the Gospel is evident in a ministry or program designed to meet an existing or emerging need within the congregation or greater community. The grant may be used either to establish a new ministry or to support an existing one, but may not be used simply as a revenue source for the church’s operating budget.

The grant application is available on the foundation’s web site at www.umff.org, or may be requested from the foundation office. The completed application must be received by March 25 with the winner being announced at the June session of the New York Conference.

Labyrinth Quilt Squares Made for GC2016

Labyrinths are a means to meditation, reflection and prayer.

One of United Methodist Women’s planned prayer ministry activities for General Conference 2016 is to offer quilted finger prayer labyrinth squares for delegates and guests. The goal is to collect 2,000 finger prayer labyrinths by February 29.

The variety of labyrinths made by women from all over the country will extend support, outreach and blessings to thousands of recipients. Each labyrinth will be tagged with a card identifying that it was “handmade with love and prayer by United Methodist Women.”

Instructions and a pattern can be found at: www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/gcfingerlabyrinth.



Interested volunteers should e-mail gcprayer@unitedmethodistwomen.org with an estimate of how many they might be able to make. Labyrinth squares are to be shipped to: Brooks Howell Home, Attn: General Conference Prayer Ministry, 266 Merrimon Ave., Asheville, NC 28801.

Community Can Help Ease Personal Transitions

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant on Older Adult Ministries

They were childhood friends. They have been married for more than 60 years, and have never been separated in all those years. That was until a few weeks ago when her dementia advanced to the stage where she was no longer safe in their home, and required more care than her husband or family could provide.

She is now in a dementia care setting, often angry and bewildered that her husband and children “just dumped me here.” She does not comprehend why they made the decision, which was made in great agony. They were heartbroken when that seemed to be the only choice left to them. Needless to say, her husband is torn between knowing “I made the right decision,” and “maybe there is another way that I am not seeing.”

Sound familiar? It is an increasingly common situation. The small congregation I currently serve is discovering a new twist on an old adage—“It takes a village to raise a child.” As a village of caring people, who see themselves as an extended family, they are discovering it takes a congregation to care for everyone devastated by such a turn of events. How do they care for husband and wife? How do they be the church to people who have been such a part of their lives, without overstepping boundaries? How much privacy do they need? Do they visit her, and if they do, how do they respond to her anger and illogical thoughts?

Tough questions! Ones that beg for answers. Ones that no one seems able to answer in definitive ways. Having ministered in a setting for the last 13 years where these questions constantly arose, I still do not have definitive answers. What I do have is some suggestions that often work, some do’s and do not’s.

Ministering to Caregivers

- Err on the side of caution; don’t assume what the caregiver(s) need. Ask! “Is there something specific that we can be doing for you?”



GOD'S GIFT OF LONG LIFE

“Would it be helpful for us to bring meals for a while?” “Would someone who would shop for you be helpful?” Offer specific ways the congregation is prepared to be there for them, asking if that is what they want or need. The bottom line is, we ask permission or we risk seeming intrusive at a difficult time.

- Be willing to listen, not necessarily offering suggestions, to the caregiver’s pain. Being heard and allowed to vent opens the door to healing acceptance. We don’t have to have answers to be helpful. We just have to be with the one hurting.
- Be careful not to add guilt to someone already feeling guilty for not being able to care for a loved on. Avoid suggesting they need to move on. That might imply they are not responding appropriately.

Ministering to those with dementia and/or Alzheimer’s

- Accept their confusion. Correcting them, however gently, often adds to their anger. Be empathetic, rather than sympathetic. Listen to them and then try to shift the focus to something pleasant and non-threatening, something that will likely give them pleasure. “Tell me again, where were you born?” “What do you remember doing when you were younger?”
- Compliment them. “You are still so pretty/handsome, you must have been a knockout.” Too simple? Borderline inane? Perhaps, but if it allows them to temporarily escape the confusion. That is a gift you can bring.
- Do not, even unconsciously, say or do anything that might seem like criticism. “Mom, when is the last time they washed your hair?” “You must remember I was only here yesterday.” Such comments, while seemingly innocuous, often upset the one to whom they are said.
- Positive statements are more likely to elicit good responses and add to the quality of the visit.
- Enjoy the moment. Try not to give into the temptation to feel sorry for the one you are visiting.

Married Lesbian Recommended as Provisional Deacon

BY ERIK ALSGAARD

Baltimore-Washington Conference

The Board of Ordained Ministry of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, meeting in January, recommended Tara “T.C.” Morrow for commissioning as a provisional deacon. Morrow is a woman married to another woman.

The board is making public what is normally a confidential personnel matter in an effort to be as transparent and open as possible, according to its chair, Rev. Charles Parker.

Both Parker and the board are fully aware that the 2012 Book of Discipline states that “self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve” in the church.

The church further states in ¶2702.1(b) that being a “self-avowed practicing homosexual” is a chargeable offense that could result in a clergy person being placed on trial and losing their credentials.

“Two people of the same gender being married or living together is a basis for investigation,” Parker said, “not a basis for a decision,” citing ruling 1263 of the Judicial Council—the church’s version of the United States Supreme Court.

“Self-avowed” is defined by the *Book of Discipline* where a person has “openly acknowledged to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee on ordained ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual.”

“Practicing,” Parker said, according to Judicial Council rulings 1027 and 980, is understood to mean “genital sex” with a person of the same gender.

In the case of Morrow, he said, “we all know that she is married. We can make assumptions, but we don’t tend to question candidates on their specific sexual practices whether they are hetero

or homosexual.” Parker said that he believes the Board is on “solid disciplinary grounds.”

A statement from the board notes that they, the annual conference, and The United Methodist Church “are not of one mind on the issue of ordination of LGBTQ individuals, and that our Judicial Council has issued multiple rulings regarding ordination and the definition of ‘self-avowed, practicing homosexuals’ that create further ambiguity. We therefore affirm the right and responsibility of all board members to engage in holy conferencing during deliberations and to vote their conscience following a fair examination of all candidates.”

The board’s recommendation will go forward to the clergy executive session meeting on June 1, during the Baltimore-Washington annual conference session. Both Parker and Craswell said that they have never witnessed a clergy executive session turning down a candidate that the board recommends.

Reflections of a Retired Pastor

BY JACOB DHARMARAJ

Throughout our lives we strive to complete tasks and responsibilities as fast and efficiently as possible, in order to save time. How we spend saved time is up to us. Will Rogers aptly said, “Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save.” According to a recent survey, the average person has roughly 20 years of life remaining after retirement—time enough to write a biblical commentary or earn a medical degree or even a Ph.D!

When I was at the pre-2016 General Conference meeting in Portland, Ore., a couple of weeks ago, one of my friends was surprised that I took early retirement, and asked me what retirement was like. I told him what it was like with a story:

“Two monks who were living in a cloistered medieval monastery had agreed that the one who died first would send a message from the beyond. When, in the course of time, one of the monks died, the other monk directed a message to the deceased asking whether the beyond was like the here. To his question came the reply: *Nec taliter, nec aliter, and totaliter aliter* (neither the same, nor different, but totally different.)” My friend was mystified by my response.

Naming the realities

Looking back, I was indeed blessed to have served fine congregations in three different conferences for more than three decades. I have served both small and large congregations. I was solicited to serve on well-known academic campuses, the largest church in a jurisdiction, and also with boards and agencies. But I chose to stay in the local church for a personal reason. I would not have made it thus far without the help of visionary Bishops, mission-minded cabinet members, and the unique connectional system of the United Methodist Church.

Like many immigrants, my experience, both inside and outside the four walls of the church, are both memorable and malevolent. For instance, when I was working on my doctorate in a reputable academic institution in the Midwest, the chair of the department repeatedly rejected my dissertation proposal. After more than a year of rejections, a sympathetic professor spilled the beans. The chair of the committee assumed that I had plagiarized some research materials because my written English was scholarly, and the theoretical content too deep for an international student. (My dissertation was published as a book

immediately after my graduation.)

When I came to the New York Conference, the trustees of one of the two churches I was appointed to serve, didn’t want to hang my name on the church’s outdoor sign because my last name was so foreign to them. Yet, the church took off and I took in 33 new members in the first year and 22 during my second year. Then I was moved to another church where I served for 14 years before retiring. (Soon after I left, my successor’s name appeared on the new sign.)

Counting the blessings

Yet my overall experience in the local church far exceeds some of the pain and scars it had inflicted. I would not have stayed in the local church if it had not been for the care and concern of committed parishioners. They were open, warm and welcoming.

I would never forget the first Sunday of my appointment in Clarksburg UMC in the former Central Illinois Conference. During the announcement time, one of the senior members of the congregation, looking at my wife who was sitting in a pew and then at me who was standing behind the pulpit said out loud, “You are two beautiful people, from a beautiful culture. Welcome!” I can cite many more such welcoming and positive affirmations.

The world and the church today is a lot more global than it was when I commenced my ministry. Everything is *glo-cal* now. To think of global church as a homogenous mass does a disservice to its breadth. The NYAC indeed reflects the face of the global church.

Exit interview

The Sunday before I retired, one of my enlightened parishioners—who works in the

high-tech industry—perceptively asked if the conference had called for the retiring clergy members to conduct an exit interview. He was puzzled when I said, “No.”

I often thought about his comment, particularly, during the retirement ceremony. My class of retirees had an accumulated experience of more than 400 years in pastoral service, and a vast majority of them were retiring early. I wondered why our conference had failed to conduct an exit interview with the outgoing pastors and their spouses who could have shared some “golden nuggets” out of their rich and varied experience in ministry. Many successful corporations’ routinely make it as a standard practice.

Church ministry is not made by the great actors striding across the stage. It is made by ordinary clergy—both active and retired—by their spouses and their children who have sacrificed so much to be part of this pilgrim journey. For the most part, they go unnoticed, yet the church would not go round without them.

The bishop of our conference needs to listen to the voice of the retiring clergy one last time without the mediated voices such as the Board of Ordained Ministry, cabinet members or others.

After all, one cannot simply represent the other, or speak for the other all the time. One can speak only as one’s self. Representation is a multifaceted process, especially when dealing with difference. It engages feelings, attitudes, and emotions, and mobilizes fears and anxieties in the life of the pastors at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple, commonsense way. Failure to do so would be like a painter abandoning representation in order to focus on canvas, color and light.

Hamilton Named to Presidential Post

President Obama has appointed best-selling author and pastor Adam Hamilton as a member of the President’s Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. His selection as an appointee was announced in an official White House statement on January 29.

The other appointees joining Hamilton on the council include Rev. Traci D. Blackmon, acting executive minister of justice and witness ministries for The United Church of Christ and pastor at Christ the King UCC in Florissant,

Miss., and Christian blogger and the author Rachel Held Evans.

The official announcement from the Office of the Press Secretary noted that President Obama said, “I am pleased to announce that these experienced and committed individuals have decided to serve our country. I look forward to working with them.”

Hamilton is the senior pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, one of the fastest growing, most highly visible churches in the country.

Time for Rest & Learning At Bishop's Convocation

Continued from page 1

accelerate positive outcomes, and create a culture of responsibility.

- Recognize, reinforce and reward behavior that both inspires and sustains the work of others.

The training sessions were put on hold for an afternoon of free time to relax or play on Wednesday. Later that evening, clergy talents were showcased in song and comedy in an event put together by Rev. Enrique Lebron.

In the Thursday morning session with Bishop Middleton, she noted that a team was in place for the episcopal transition that will take place September 1. The former episcopal residence in New Rochelle has been sold and the purchase of a home closer to the conference center is planned. She also noted that while renovation plans for the conference center were moving forward, there is a \$1 million shortfall to fund the project.

In other comments, the bishop:

- Celebrated the diversity and inclusive nature of the New York Conference. Expressed the hope that plans to restructure the UMC would not “consume the energies” at General Conference. She also asked, “How do we continue to include all people and give a message that is open and affirming when we have rules that are counter to that?”
- Reiterated the need to insure that our congregations are reaching out to transform the world for Jesus Christ and not just working to maintain the church.
- Stressed the need to intentionally invite people into a relationship with Christ and to



Rev. Sungchan Kim offers a prayer for the clergy members of the 2016 General Conference delegation; below, Deb Clifford offered strategies on coaching laity; at right, Dr. Mackie Norris worked with clergy spouses on ways to improve their health.



begin that process with prayer.

- Noted the success of a new church “boot camp” that was run by Derrick-Lewis Noble. She said that there would be announcement soon about the replacement for Noble who has

had to resign due to an illness. (See story on Page 3.)

- Announced that 88 percent of churches paid their full share of apportionments in 2015. The retreat drew to close with a service of communion led by Bishop Middleton and a prayer



for the 2016 General Conference delegation offered by Rev. Sungchan Kim, superintendent of the Long Island West District.

Clifford can be contacted through her Inspired Church web site at <http://inspiredpeople.com/>.

Briefing Previews GC2016 Debates

UMNS—In a gathering that repeatedly stressed church unity despite passionately held differences, United Methodists received a preview of some issues the 2016 General Conference will debate when the denomination's top lawmaking body meets this spring.

Rev. Steven Lewis, Gresham United Methodist Church in Portland, Ore., urged delegates to remember who they are as they debate issues and resolutions at General Conference 2016.

"Few will read what we write, but millions will watch what we do," Lewis said during his sermon at opening worship during the pre-General Conference briefing.

More than 400 delegates, communicators and other United Methodists who will be part of the 2016 General Conference attended the Jan. 20–22 event at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland. Most will return for the denomination's legislative assembly May 10–20.

United Methodist Communications sponsored the event, with involvement and support from other agencies and ministries of the church.

Many United Methodists expect the most passionate and difficult debate at the 2016 General Conference to deal with how the denomination ministers with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. At the briefing, participants got a preview of the emotional stakes in the debate as well as a chance to try out an alternative process for discussing legislation on tough issues.

This is a brief look at some of the issues explored:

Big changes proposed for bishops, clergy

Bishops would no longer be elected for life, ordination of United Methodist elders and deacons would be faster and the first step would be taken to allow doing away with guaranteed appointment under legislation being proposed to the 2016 General Conference.

However, since term limits and guaranteed appointment would require changes to the denomination's constitution, those reforms would come slowly, even if approved.

Bishop Grant Hagiya, Greater Northwest Episcopal Area, a member of the 2013–2016 Ministry Study Commission, said the commission wanted to give conferences "maximum flexibility."

"The most important factor that we have to consider is leadership, leadership, leadership. Leadership is one of the key ingredients in vitality," Hagiya said.

Hagiya said the commission proposed ordination when a candidate is approved for provisional membership, although conference membership would come only after the provisional period was completed. Other proposed changes would allow a bachelor's degree to fulfill requirements for Course of Study for local pastors and eliminate commissioning.

Lonnie Brooks, chair of the legislative committee of the Association of Annual Conference Lay leaders, gave the highlights of the association's package of 15 pieces of legislation.

"We think there is nothing in the church outside the responsibility of lay people, since we pay for what the church does," Brooks said.

The lay leaders proposed seven points of reform for bishops, including term limits, which Brooks said would increase accountability. Under the term-limit proposal, a bishop would be elected for eight years and could run again for another eight-year term. The terms would be the same worldwide.

The legislation on guaranteed appointment, or security of appointment, would remove the constitutional barrier identified by the Judicial Council after the 2012 General Conference approved legislation



PHOTO BY WILLIAM SHILLADY

Fred Brewington, an NYAC lay member, listens in to a presentation during the January preview of the 2016 General Conference.

that would have allowed bishops to give elders less than full-time appointment and added steps for discontinuing elders and associate members from receiving an appointment.

A proposal to reform the episcopal complaint process provides that if the jurisdictional College of Bishops cannot process the complaint to completion within 180 days, the complaint moves to the full Council of Bishops.

Church budget

As the U.S. economy has recovered from the 2008 crash, the denomination as a whole has seen its financial health improve.

Moses Kumar, the top executive of the General Council on Finance and Administration, reported that a record 26 conferences paid 100 percent to the general church apportionments in 2015—the highest number in at least 16 years. At the general church level, the money supports bishops, United Methodist ministerial education, most general agencies and denomination-wide efforts such as the Black College Fund, ecumenical work and Africa University in Zimbabwe.

The General Council on Finance and Administration's board and the Connectional Table are proposing a budget of \$611.4 million for general church funds in 2017–2020. That's about a 1.4 percent increase above the \$603.1 million budget approved at the 2012 General Conference. With projected inflation, that budget actually represents a 7.2 percent spending decrease in real dollars, Kumar said.

The finance agency's board also is proposing that for the first time United Methodist churches in Africa, Asia and Europe would have a set formula to support the denomination's global ministries. Under the proposal, central conference apportionments would contribute to two of the seven general church funds—the Episcopal and General Administration funds.

A U.S. central conference?

One of the frequent complaints about General Conference is that

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Briefing Previews GC2016 Debates

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delegates spend much of the 10-day global meeting on issues that strictly focus on the United States.

Participants at this month's preview heard about two plans to address this concern by creating a central conference or similar body to encompass the entire United States. Currently, the denomination has seven central conferences in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. Each has the authority under the denomination's constitution to make "such changes and adaptations" to the *Book of Discipline* as missional needs and differing legal contexts require.

Members of the Central Texas and North Texas conferences are bringing legislation to create a U.S. Central Conference that would meet in conjunction with General Conference.

A task force appointed by the Northeastern Jurisdiction is bringing "A Global Connection Plan," that is more complicated but also, according to its proponents, more comprehensive.

The plan would rename General Conference as the Global Connectional Conference, restrict its work to church matters that are global in nature and add continent-wide bodies called connections, including a North American connection. The plan also would replace U.S. jurisdictions and central conferences with bodies called regions.

Restructuring proposals

Frederick Brewington, a member of the Connectional Table and NYAC lay delegate, pointed out that a number of formal and informal proposals regarding the denomination's structure and connection will come before the General Conference. "The Connectional Table neither adopts nor endorses any of the proposals that currently exist," he said, but he outlined some basic principles to follow in these discussions.

One of those proposals is "Plan UMC Revised." The Rev. Clayton Oliphint explained that this plan removes provisions ruled unconstitutional by the Judicial Council after the 2012 General Conference adopted "Plan UMC," a compromise proposal.

Under Plan UMC Revised, the current Commission on Religion and Race and Commission on the Status and Role of Women would be merged into a committee on inclusiveness. The plan also folds the United Methodist Commission on Archives and

History into the denomination's finance agency.

Social issues

The 2016 General Conference will consider amendments to more than 70 social justice petitions ranging from climate change to human trafficking.

Representatives from the Division on Ministries with Young People, Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Board of Church and Society, Commission on General Conference and Standing Commission on Central Conference Matters and the Board of Pension and Health Benefits highlighted some of those resolutions.

The United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits recognizes its responsibility to protect and promote human rights and the environment, said Kirsty Jenkinson, calling climate change "the most severe economic threat to the world." She is managing director, Sustainable Investment Strategies, Wespath Investment Management Division of the pension board.

In 2015, the board and Wespath implemented a human rights investment guideline that identified 11 high-risk countries and 39 companies with significant investments in those places, Jenkinson said.

Alternative process

"Christian conferencing is what General Conference is all about," said Judi Kenaston, chair of the Commission on General Conference, as she outlined an alternative group discernment process that General Conference could approve for use on "challenging" conversations.

The proposal, nicknamed Rule 44 because it follows General Conference's Rule 43, could be used with legislation on human sexuality if the

rule is adopted.

"We are a connectional church with many varied cultures and opinions," Kenaston said. "A unified church can accomplish so much more in the world by pooling resources. Because of our size, we are able to do so much more."

Dr. Dorothee Benz, a lay member of the NYAC delegation, participated in a panel, "A Conversation on Human Sexuality." A video of the discussion can be found at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lb2iKa29Eo.

Praying for General Conference

Rev. Tom Albin, dean of The Upper Room Chapel, will again help lead a prayer community to support delegates and the entire denomination during General Conference.

"Prayer is like oxygen for your soul," Albin told attendees.

The General Conference Prayer Ministry designed a "60 Days of Prayer" daily prayer book that runs March 31–May 29 so church members can connect through the same Scripture, meditation and prayer for each day.

Looking ahead to 2020

A draft of a new general, or global, *Book of Discipline* will be presented to General Conference for affirmation, said Bishop Patrick Streiff, chairperson of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, "so that we know we can work on to finalize it for the 2020 General Conference." The goal is to have feedback on the draft from every annual conference by the end of 2017.

Benedita Penicela Nhambiu, a member of the denomination's Connectional Table, said there will be an effort to re-align that body to make it more representative, both in terms of geography and age groups.

Brewington Featured in GC2016 Video

The Connectional Table continues a two-part conversation on the worldwide nature of The United Methodist Church as a part of the #CTTalks online forum, a series of videos and social media conversations around key topics related to General Conference 2016.

Beginning February 2, a video will be posted each week that examines our ecclesiology, our theology, and our missiology in a worldwide context. Connectional Table board members Benedita Penicela (Mozambique), Fred Brewington (Northeast Jurisdiction), and Ole

Birch (Denmark) will share with delegates to General Conference the legislation leading to a process for attending to our worldwide connection and the way we structure and align ourselves. They will also share the principles and values that have guided their work thus far.

An accompanying one-page conversation starter is available for delegates to use to continue the dialogue. The videos and the handout will be available on the Connectional Table website at UMC.org/who-we-are/cttalks-5-worldwide-nature-structure.

OBITUARIES

Rev. Lloyd Eugene Dees

The Reverend Lloyd Eugene Dees of Rincon, Ga., died February 4, at the age 85. Lloyd was born December 12, 1930 in Camden, AL to Martin W. Dees and Maggie McCants Dees.

After serving the African Methodist Episcopal church from 1961 to 1972, Rev. Dees was admitted to the Western North Carolina Conference of the UMC. He transferred to the West Virginia Conference in 1973, where he became a full member. In 1974 he moved on to the New York Conference where he served Woodycrest UMC, Bronx; Taft UMC, Manhattan; Trinity UMC, White Plains; St. Mark's UMC, Brooklyn; St. Paul's UMC, Inwood; and Freeport UMC. After retiring in 1999, Dees served Aldersgate UMC in Dobbs Ferry from 2003 to 2004.

In 1957, Dees married Dolores Mills. The couple relocated to Georgia, where Rev. Dees was an associate minister at historic Trinity UMC in Savannah, Ga., under Rev. Enoch Hendry. Dees was known for his beautiful voice, often singing the gospel song "If I Can Help Somebody" during Communion at this church.

He is survived by a son, Jason Lloyd (Crystal) Dees of Port Wentworth, Ga.; and a daughter, Janet Dees of Chicago; and seven brothers and one sister.

A memorial service will be held at Trinity United Methodist Church, Savannah, at a future date. Arrangements are being handled by the Baker-McCullough Funeral Home—Hubert C. Baker Chapel.

Eleanor C. Snow

Eleanor C. Snow, the widow of Rev. M. Lawrence Snow, died on February 2, in Brewster, Mass. She was born on April 3, 1934, in Bronxville, N.Y.

Snow was a graduate of Darien High School, Central Connecticut State University with a bachelor's degree in elementary education, and SUNY New Paltz with a master's degree in elementary education. For more than 25 years, she taught at schools in Greenwich and Simsbury, Conn. Most recently she taught at the Stony Brook Elementary School and after-school program in Brewster.

Snow loved spending time in her garden, with her book club and volunteering in the community. She was an active member of Orleans United Methodist Church in Orleans, Mass. She will be remembered for her energy, loving spirit and commitment to children.

Rev. Snow served 48 years in the New York Conference at the churches in Darien, Greenwich, Stamford, and Simsbury, all in Connecticut, and at Community UMC in Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

In addition to her husband who died in 2009, Snow was predeceased by a daughter, Katrina Snow. Survivors include three sons, Chris (Cathy) Snow of Fort Myers, Fla.; Stephen (Kathleen) Snow of Hingham, Mass., and Peter Snow of Sterling, Alaska; a daughter Karen (David) Householder of Manhattan Beach, Calif.; 14 grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and five nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held at 11a.m., Saturday, March 5 at the Orleans UMC, 73 Main Street, Orleans, Mass., with a reception immediately following in the church hall. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Snow's memory to the Nauset Youth Alliance, 384 Underpass Road, Brewster, MA 02631.

Rev. Richard Y. Yerrington

The Reverend Richard York Yerrington of Beacon Falls, Conn., who served churches in the New York for 40 years, died at Bridgeport Hospital

on January 15.

Yerrington was born in Hartford, Conn., on October 30, 1930, the only child of Charles B. and Lillian Y. Yerrington. He was raised in Rocky Hill and graduated from Wethersfield High School.

After serving in the U.S. Army Reserves, Yerrington attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, where he received a certificate in advertising design. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Connecticut and a bachelor's of divinity from Yale Divinity School.

Yerrington was ordained by the Methodist Church in 1960. In his 40 years of service in the New York Conference, he served South Middletown UMC, Unionville UMC, Memorial UMC of Avon, and finally Golden Hill UMC as senior pastor until 1995. Following his retirement, he went on to serve as chaplain of the United Methodist Homes of Shelton, interim pastor of the Trumbull Congregational Church and most recently associate pastor of the Newtown UMC. Rev. Yerrington was a past president of the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport and was active in many committees of the New York Conference. He was also a member of the Saltwater Artists Gallery of Pemaquid Point, Maine.

In addition to Penelope, his wife of 50 years, he is survived by his children, Matthew B. (Kimberly) Yerrington of Beacon Falls, Adam H. (Amy D'Amaro) Yerrington of Shelton, and Sarah L. (Lee) Porter of Maryland; grandchildren, Kaylee, Zackary and Madison Yerrington of Beacon Falls, Lily Yerrington of Shelton, and Xavier and Mara Porter of Maryland.

A memorial service in celebration of his life was held January 30 at Golden Hill UMC, 210 Elm St., Bridgeport, Conn. Interment was private.

Memorial contributions may be made to the memorial funds of the Avon, Golden Hill or Newtown United Methodist churches. Online condolences may be offered at www.wakeleememorial.com. Cards and notes may be sent to the family at 472 Rimmon Hill Rd., Beacon Falls, CT 06403.

Rev. Benjamin B. K. Chiu

The Reverend Benjamin Bing Kong Chiu died January 2 while on vacation in Singapore. In the New York Conference, Rev. Chiu served the New York Chinese Methodist Church from 1988 until retirement in 1993. His most recent residence was in Oakwood, Ga.

Rev. Chiu was born in 1928 in Jiangmen, China. In 1957, he graduated from Singapore Trinity Theological College. His active ministry spanned 35 years; he continued to serve churches in retirement. Chiu's service included Singapore Cantonese Methodist Church, Kampar Methodist Church in Perak, Kuala Lumpur Cantonese Methodist Church, Kuantan Methodist Church, Singapore Hakka Methodist Church, and Sacramento Chinese Methodist Church.

Rev. Chiu loved pastoral care and was an untiring teacher, farmer, animal lover and fisherman.

Survivors include his wife, Joyce Tin Yuk Pik, whom he married in 1959; daughters, Samantha (Neil) Shoemaker, June (Bruce) Byerly, Dawn (Arthur) Clode, and Laurie (Ken) Mar; sons, Ivan Chiu, Joseph (Elaine) Chiu, James (Anna) Chiu, and Steven (YiLi) Chiu; and 17 grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a granddaughter, Kayla Mar.

A web site, www.RevChiuBKLegacy.com, has been created to allow friends and family to share their memories and condolences.

OBITUARIES

Rev. James Charles Watson

The Reverend James Charles Watson of Chatham, Mass., died December 28, 2015, at age 96.

Watson grew up on Long Island, N.Y., where he met and married Marion Doré in 1943.

He trained as a machinist/tool-maker and supervised building artillery gun sights during World War II. When the war ended, the couple attended Houghton College. He earned a master of divinity degree from New York Theological Seminary, and a master of arts degree from Union Theological Seminary.

Rev. Watson was a local pastor in the N.Y. East Conference where he served Belmont UMC for two years. He was ordained a deacon in 1952, then as an elder in 1955. He served as pastor for 35 years in three Long Island churches: Glen Cove, Plainview, and Merrick. During his ministry he was active in ecumenical activities, serving as president of the Long Island Council of Churches for three years, and was awarded several honors for fostering brotherhood and social justice.

A trip to the Holy Land in 1972 convinced Watson of the spiritual value of travel to religious sites, and prompted him to host tours, first to the Holy Land and Oberammergau, Germany. After his 1982 retirement, the couple organized group travel under the name, Memorable Tours, visiting more than 50 countries. Their home base became Chatham, Mass., where they expanded the vacation home they had built in 1968. They became active members of the First United Methodist Church of Chatham.

Watson enjoyed flying lessons at the nearby airport and sailing on Pleasant Bay, which he continued to do into his 90s. Following his wife's death in 2007 after a long illness, adopted Zoey, a camel-colored Lab-Pit Bull mix, who became his loyal companion. Watson was able to stay in his home until the end, with the care and support of Seniors Helping Seniors, Companion Caregivers, and Hope Hospice.

He is survived by three children: Dennis F. Watson of Fredericksburg, Va.; Ellen Doré Watson of Conway, Mass., and Doc Watson of Manorville, N.Y.; a sister, Ann Caton of Babylon, N.Y.; as well as seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

A service celebrating his life was held at First United Methodist Church of Chatham on Saturday, January 2, 2016 at 11:00 am. Donations in his memory may be sent to First United Methodist Church of Chatham, 569 Main Street, Chatham, MA 02633 or to Hope Hospice, 765 Attucks Lane, Hyannis, MA 02601.

Jane Dubuque

Jane Elizabeth Brennen Finucane Dubuque, died November 30, 2015, at age 85. She was the wife of the Reverend Raymond Dubuque who retired from the New York Conference in 1986. He had served churches in our conference at Waterbury, East Pearl in New Haven, Port Ewen and Esopus, Rhinebeck and Hillside, and Highland Falls and Fort Montgomery.

She was born in West Haven, Conn., on April 10, 1930, to Harold and Lillian O'Brien Brennan. She was a devoted promoter of the adoption for children with special needs. Jane testified before the Connecticut Assembly in support of legislation to further rights for adopted children and appeared on the CBS program *Up to the Minute* to promote adoption of hard-to-place children nationwide.

In addition to her husband, Jane is survived by sons, Kevin (Gail) Finucane of Madison, Conn.; and Brian (Judy) Finucane of Cortland, N.Y.; Steven Dubuque of East Haven, Conn.; daughters Kathleen Dubuque of Nashville; Janine Dubuque of Meriden, Conn., and Cindy Dubuque of

Hartford; Patricia (Dan) Frantz of Nashville, and Christine (William) Marinos of Hamden, Conn.; brother Robert (Patricia) Brennan of Easton, Conn.; and sister Ellen (Edward) Williams of East Marion, N.Y. She is also survived by 13 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Dubuque was predeceased by two daughters, Jane Colleen "Kate" Linker and Bethany Foss, and two brothers, Dalton H. Brennan and Harold "Butch" Brennan.

A memorial service was held at East Haven Memorial Funeral Home on December 4, 2015. Donations may be made in Dubuque's memory to the Children's Defense Fund, 25 E. Street NW, Washington, DC 20001.

Notes and cards may be sent to Rev. Dubuque at 26 Myrtle Avenue, East Haven, CT 06512.

Jean Bainbridge

Jean Bainbridge, the widow of the Rev. Ralph Bainbridge, died on November 17, 2015, at age 90 in Atlanta. Rev. Bainbridge served in the New York Conference from 1962 until 1986; he died in 2006.

She was born Jean Martyn on March 27, 1925; and married her husband in 1947. They had one daughter, Wendy Jean. Rev. Bainbridge was ordained as an elder in the United Methodist Church in 1964.

The couple lived on Long Island during his time as dean at Camp Quinipet on Shelter Island, N.Y.

While Rev. Bainbridge attended school, they served the Springdale Church in Stamford, Conn., Dover UMC in New Jersey, and the former Myrtle Beach Community in Milford, Conn. In 1966, they served the congregation in Elmhurst, N.Y., and then went on to First UMC in Greenwich, Rowayton UMC in Norwalk, and Ansonia UMC, all in Connecticut.

After his retirement from active ministry in 1986, the couple moved to South Carolina and then to Atlanta.

At this time we have no further information, but for those of you who knew this clergy couple, we thought it important to let you know of her death.

2nd Ebola Video Hopes To Avert Next Outbreak

United Methodist Communications collaborated with Chocolate Moose Media and UNICEF Togo to create "Ebola: In Praise of Prevention," an animated video designed to prevent the next widespread Ebola outbreak from occurring in West Africa.

English and French translations of the video are being distributed throughout Togo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and other African countries, with additional languages and dialects planned. The video can be viewed and downloaded free of charge at www.umcom.org/global-communications/ebola-in-praise-of-prevention.

The video release coincides with the confirmation of two new Ebola cases in Sierra Leone, reinforcing the need for ongoing education and awareness to control the virus.

"In Praise of Prevention" follows the 2014 release of "Ebola: A Poem for the Living," which aims to dispel myths about how Ebola is spread and promotes prevention of the disease. The 2014/2015 outbreak, the worst in reported history, had more than 28,000 cases and more than 11,000 deaths worldwide, as reported by officials, with the majority of them in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.