

*"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

April 2016

## Slashed Church Budget Heads to GC2016

UMNS—The United Methodist Church's lowest general church budget proposal in 16 years is now heading for a vote at the 2016 General Conference next month.

Two denominational leadership bodies have agreed to propose a bottom-line budget of \$599 million for general church funds in 2017–2020.

General Conference—the denomination's top policymaking body—establishes the total amount of money needed to support churchwide ministries. That amount is then apportioned



mainly to U.S. conferences, which in turn ask for apportionments from local churches.

If General Conference adopts this proposal, U.S. conferences would be asked to pay the lowest general church apportionments since the current apportionment formula began in 2001. General

Conference will meet May 10–20 in Portland, Ore.

The Connectional Table, which coordinates the denomination's agencies, and the board of the General Council on Finance and Administration, the denomination's finance agency, each had approved a proposed budget of \$611 million in February.

However, after hearing concerns about the financial pressures faced by conferences and local churches, the top executives of the denomination's general agencies urged that the figure be decreased

by \$12 million.

Both leadership bodies, which are responsible for developing the general church budget, called additional meetings to consider the recommendation.

The finance agency board on March 28 voted 11-2 for the revised budget. The Connectional Table on April 4 voted 29 in favor with one abstention. Agency top executives have voice but not vote at Connectional Table meetings.

Moses Kumar, the top executive of the General Council of Finance

**Continued on page 9**

## SIERRA LEONE Bishop At Conference; Dedicates School

**By UM News Service  
With local reporting**

The first sessions of the Sierra Leone Annual Conference since the Ebola outbreak began with marching brass bands that brought together about 2,000 United Methodists in Freetown. But the shadow of the deadly disease was still present in the memorial service honoring those who died.

The popular "march past" cultural celebrations, in which marchers process through the streets, were banned during Ebola. But the processions returned this year and included United Methodists from Sierra Leone as well as invited guests from Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Germany, Norway and the United States. New York Conference interim Bishop



PHOTO BY PHILEAS JUSU, UMNS

**United Methodist clergy lead the "march past," marking the beginning of the 136th session of the Sierra Leone Annual Conference on March 10. In the foreground are NYAC Bishop Jane Allen Middleton, and John G. Innis of Liberia.**

Jane Allen Middleton was one of those guests. The bishop spoke at the annual conference session and dedicated a school named in her honor.

The 2015 annual conference

meeting took place with harsh restrictions that aimed to curb the deadly Ebola virus—including a ban on street procession and a drastically reduced number of

**Continued on page 4**

## Bishop's Invitation: Praying for Reform On Immigration

*Dear Sisters and Brothers,*

Grace and peace to you in the name of the risen Christ!

I would like to invite you to participate in the Interfaith Prayer Vigil for Immigration Reform that will take place on April 25 at 11 a.m. at St. Paul and St. Andrew UMC (263 W. 86th St.) in New York City. I am delighted to partner in this important work bringing awareness to the present issues that our immigrant brothers and sisters face every day.

This prayer vigil is sponsored by the NYAC Immigration Task Force and the Conference Board of Church & Society, the social justice advocacy arm of the conference, in an attempt to bring awareness to the raids and deportation taking place in the United States. At the prayer vigil, we will be in prayer for the Supreme Court as we await a

**Continued on page 5**



For a full lineup of events, go to: [www.nyac.com/conferencecalendar](http://www.nyac.com/conferencecalendar).

### 4/14–15 Order of Elders Retreat

Rev. Dr. Douglas Powe Jr., a professor of evangelism and urban ministry at Wesley Theological Seminary, will lead the retreat from 10 a.m. Thursday through 3 p.m. Friday, at the Stony Point Center, 17 Cricketown Road, Stony Point, N.Y. Powe, an elder in the Baltimore/Washington Conference, is committed to helping urban congregations and churches in transitional areas to flourish through community partnering. Register online at [www.nyac.com/eventdetail/3909201](http://www.nyac.com/eventdetail/3909201). Questions to retreat registrar, David Collins, at [David.Collins@nyac-umc.com](mailto:David.Collins@nyac-umc.com).

### 4/25: Immigration Reform Vigil

The NYAC Immigration Task Force is sponsoring an interfaith prayer vigil for immigration reform at 11 a.m., at St. Paul & St. Andrew United Methodist Church, 263 W. 86th St., Manhattan. Join in this time of prayer for the Supreme Court's ruling on "deferred action on parental authority" and to stop deportations. Bishop Jane Allen Middleton will be a featured speaker as well as many other faith leaders. For more information, contact Rev. Karina Feliz, immigration task force chair, at [Karina.Feliz@nyac-umc.com](mailto:Karina.Feliz@nyac-umc.com).

### 4/30 Virtuous Woman Showcase

Limitless, Too, a circle of young women in the Long Island West District United Methodist Women, will host a fundraising event at 4 p.m. for their partnership with Day's for Girls, Inc. the goal of "Clothed in Strength & Dignity, Not Fearing the Future" is to provide 200 sustainable menstruation kits to women and girls in Cameroon. The showcase is at Vanderveer Park UMC, 3114 Glenwood Road. Brooklyn, N.Y. For more information, please contact [liwlimitlesstoo@gmail.com](mailto:liwlimitlesstoo@gmail.com).

### 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. See related stories on Pages 1, 9, 10, and 11.

### 5/21 17th Annual UMM Luncheon

The men of the conference will gather under the theme, "Mind, Body,

and Soul," to discuss colon cancer, domestic violence and spirituality with speaker Dr. Kenrick Waithe. The event at the New Rochelle UMC, 1200 North Avenue, runs from noon to 3:30 p.m. For information, call 917-365-78550 or 516-485-3723.

### 5/16 Older Adults Ministries Workshop

Rev. Dr. William Randolph, director of Aging and Older Adult Ministries at Discipleship Ministries, will lead a workshop, "Our Legacy: A Generational Bridge of Remembering and Hope," for the New York Conference at the Mamaroneck UMC, Mamaroneck, N.Y. The event runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Participants should bring a lunch; desserts and drinks will be provided. The registration form and instructions can be found at [www.nyac.com/eventdetail/3907407](http://www.nyac.com/eventdetail/3907407). Contact Rev. Jim Stinson at 203-378-4702, or [jstinson4242@aol.com](mailto:jstinson4242@aol.com), with any questions.

### 6/8–10 Annual Conference

Clergy and laity will gather for the 217th gathering of the New York Conference at Hofstra University on Long Island. More information and registration details can be found at [www.nyac.com/2016annualconference](http://www.nyac.com/2016annualconference). All reports, petitions and corporate resolutions to be considered by the annual conference should be received by the conference secretary by April 27. Please email your document to Margaret Howe, conference secretary, at [confsecy@nyac.com](mailto:confsecy@nyac.com). Clergy can register for the health screening at annual conference by selecting HealthFlex/WebMD and Quest Blueprint for Wellness online at [www.gbophb.org](http://www.gbophb.org). See related story on Page 6.

### 7/11–15 NEJ 2016 Conference

"Quilted by Connection" is the theme for the quadrennial gathering of the 10 annual conferences in the Northeastern Jurisdiction of the UMC. Bishops for the jurisdiction will be elected and assigned during this meeting at the Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square, Lancaster, Penn. More information and registration details can be found at [www.nejumc.org/2016conference.html](http://www.nejumc.org/2016conference.html).


### 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](http://www.nyac.com/eventdetail/3167094).

### 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

Continued on page 12



The **Vision**

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

Bishop: **Jane Allen Middleton**

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# Shared Eucharist Brings Churches to Table

An “interim shared eucharist” will be celebrated among the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) on April 13 at Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church in New Paltz, N.Y.

Bishop Andrew Dietsche of the Episcopal Diocese of New York will be the celebrant at the 6 p.m. service; Rev. Timothy Riss, superintendent of the Catskill Hudson District for the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church, will preach. The pastors and congregations of all three churches will help lead the worship.

The shared eucharist provides an opportunity for the churches to come together in Eastertide and rejoice in their growing dialogue and concord. For more than 10 years, the United Methodist and Episcopal Churches have been in talks to move toward “full communion,” where both denominations mutually recognize the sharing of essential doctrines. Both of the denominations already share full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The event is sponsored by the New York Conference of the UMC, the

Episcopal Diocese of New York, and the New York Episcopal Diocese Interfaith and Ecumenical Commission. This is the third in a series of interim shared Eucharists celebrated by Episcopalians and United

Methodists in the New York area since 2012; previous celebrations were at St. Paul’s Chapel and the John Street Church, both in Manhattan. Rev. Robert Walker, assistant to the bishop of the New York Conference of the UMC, and Dr. Nicholas Birns, a member of the Interfaith Ecumenical Commission, are the co-chairs of the Episcopal-United Methodist dialogue in the greater New York area.

The liturgy will emphasize elements common to all three denominations. Those partaking of communion may receive either wine or grape juice. The bread will be gluten, dairy, and egg free, so that all may come to the table.

After the Eucharist, pizza, salad and soft drinks will be served. All are invited to come for worship and stay for fellowship. Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church is located at 90 Route 32 South in New Paltz.

For more information, contact Birns at [nicholas.birns@gmail.com](mailto:nicholas.birns@gmail.com).



# Finding New Ways to Offer God’s Hope

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant for Older Adult Ministries

*“I’m not very big,” said the Little Blue Engine. “I have never been over the mountain.”*

*“But we must get over the mountain before the children awake,” said all the dolls and the toys.*

*The little engine looked up and saw the tears in the dolls’ eyes. And she thought of the good little boys and girls on the other side of the mountain who would not have any toys or good food unless she helped.*

*Then she said, “I think I can. I think I can. I think I can.”*

These words from the beloved, “The Little Engine That Could” by Watty Piper, helped me preach the gospel recently at a facility dedicated to caring for those with Alzheimer’s disease and other cognitive affecting diseases.

As I read the story, after quoting one line of scripture, “I can do all things through him who loved us,” I witnessed a miracle (perhaps small to some, but huge to those of us who were there).

Before finishing the story one resident, and then another, and then everyone present (even the woman who never speaks) were saying with



me, “I think I can. I think I can. I think I can.”

As the story drew to a close and the journey over the mountain is successfully completed, the residents and staff finished the story with me—*And The Little*

*Blue Engine smiled and seemed to say as she puffed steadily down the mountain, “I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could.”*

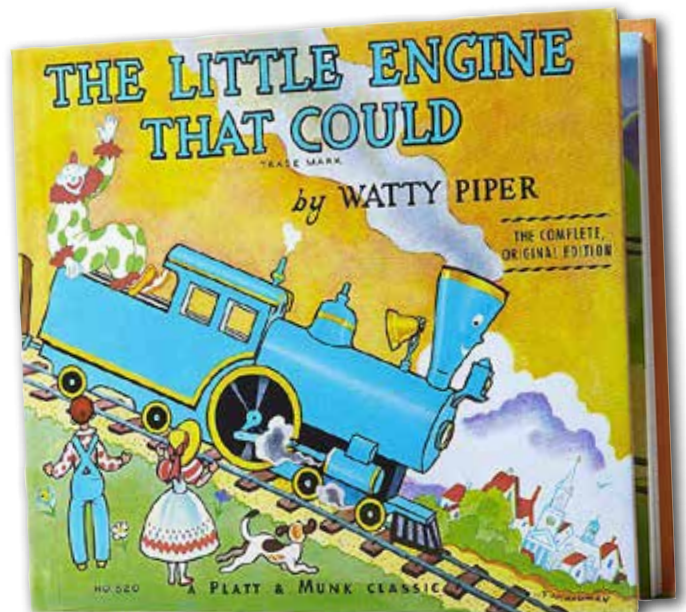
The Gospel had been heard, most especially by me.

We knew, at least for the moment, that life can be embraced, no mountain is too high if we remember God is with us. The takeaway, for all who care for and about older adults, is there are ways to reach all people with God’s word of hope.

Experiment! Take chances! For in truth, we never know how God will be experienced. Don’t be afraid to challenge

such folk with the Gospel and their ability to cope with life, using whatever tool might help achieve the goal. Remind them that “nothing in all creation” will be able to separate them from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Remind them that they can make it over the mountain. And as caregivers so can we.



# Bishop Dedicates School in Sierra Leone

Continued from page 1

delegates. Schools were also shuttered and hand-washing stations proliferated.

The 136<sup>th</sup> session of the Sierra Leone Annual Conference with the theme “Claiming God’s Divine Promise” (Exodus 33:1) opened on March 10. Five brass bands played while marchers sang and processed about two miles from and back to the host, Brown Memorial United Methodist Church.

“We are slowly returning to normal ways,” said a street trader who had abandoned her wares to join the group of onlookers watching the throng of United Methodists march past.

The conference held a memorial service to celebrate those who lost their lives during the Ebola epidemic, including 11 medical doctors and more than 200 health workers. Nearly 4,000 people died in Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak.

In his episcopal address, Bishop John K. Yambasu of the Sierra Leone Area said, “Someone told me that the most important thing we ever have to do is always ahead of us and not behind us. So at this conference, I would like to focus our attention to the most important missional priorities ahead of us.” He listed church unity, evangelism and church growth, innovative and life-changing ministries, intentional leadership development and aggressive fundraising as key goals.

Bishop Middleton said her remarks included a call to empower the people of the United Methodist Church in Sierra Leone to support the mission of transformation. She also addressed the sexuality debate expected at the 2016 General Conference.

“Can we be strong enough in our unity in Jesus Christ to find our common ground in him?” she asked. Middleton said Christians pray and discern God’s will and believe they are being



**The principal of the Bishop Jane Allen Middleton School (left) in Sierra Leone presents the bishop with a plaque and other gifts at the formal dedication of the school.**

faithful; “yet, they have opposite opinions.”

For his part, Yambasu said the denomination’s attempt to deal with the issue of human sexuality is becoming complex.

“Many years on,” he said, “our long and painful journey towards integration suffered a setback when the now much divisive issue of homosexuality showed its ugly head.”

The bishop said that while many United Methodists thought the sexuality issue would “soon pass away,” it has become, in St. Paul’s words, “a thorn in our flesh” of the global church.

Yambasu said many delegates are approaching the 2016 General Conference with great apprehension because some conferences in the U.S. are more accepting of gay candidates for

ordination.

“We continue to pray for our United Methodist Church so that God will save our denomination from collapse,” he said. “Without Scriptural faithfulness, we cannot effectively carry out lifesaving and soul-winning evangelical outreach ministries.”

This was Middleton’s second visit to the country for its annual conference. In 2010, she preached at a service in which three people were ordained, and 17 others were “commissioned” for ministry. She noted that the church there places a “real emphasis on improving clergy credentials” and there is a desire to launch a United Methodist university and seminary in Sierra Leone.

“The people there are very faithful and very courageous,” the bishop said. “I have great hope for the country and the church there.”

The naming of the school, Middleton said, really pays tribute to the work of the Central Pennsylvania Conference—now part of the Susquehanna Conference. Middleton served as the episcopal leader there before retiring in 2012, and eventually coming to the New York Area. She noted that for well over 100 years, the churches of that area have supported mission work in Sierra Leone, and more recently salary support for clergy.

The school, which has been operating for three or four years, caters to middle school students, but there are plans to expand to serve those in K–12.

“Anytime one has an encounter with a country like Sierra Leone that is struggling for survival, you realize how important it is to support our sisters and brothers in those circumstances,” Middleton said. “Our responsibility is to honor the extraordinary witness of those with very little resources . . . you come home enriched.”

## American Citizenship Comes With JFON Help

From April newsletter of **Justice for Our Neighbors**

Sze Ming Ho was only 14 years old when he ran away from his home near Shanghai, China. It was the beginning of Chairman Mao’s disastrous “Great Leap Forward,” which would condemn millions to death by starvation, including the boy’s own grandfather.

Ho headed to British-held Hong Kong, where he got a job as a merchant mariner for a Danish shipping line. He came to America as a crewmember in 1966 and jumped ship. He was caught and deported. He tried again some years later, and successfully stayed in the United States.

He married, had children, and made sure

they had the university education that he was denied. He worked as a cook for 50 years and he paid taxes. He received his green card in 1981.

Ho learned English by reading American newspapers, and he engages in lively discussions on a variety of issues facing the nation and the world. He is proud to have achieved his goals in this “melting country,” he says, and has never wanted to return to China.

“I am very loyal to this country,” he said. “I love this free country.”

On March 25 in New York City, Ho raised his right hand and took the oath of U.S. citizenship at age 73.

Why now? Why after all these years did he

decide to finally become a citizen?

“I want to vote to help the country get well again,” he answered decisively. “That is the reason.”

The New York Justice for Our Neighbors’ Chinatown clinic and site attorney TJ Mills helped Ho with the citizenship process.

“He is a wonderful lawyer,” said Ho. “They are all very good Christians.”

Now a registered voter, Sze Ming Ho also hopes to serve on a jury one day.

To read more about the work of the Justice For Our Neighbors program, go to <http://nyac-jfon.org/>.

# Prison Ministry: Reform Criminal Justice System

As important as direct service to the incarcerated or those recently re-entering society is, there is another form of prison ministry that also presents essential challenges: advocacy for changes in the criminal justice system itself. Currently, the Conference Board of Church and Society is focusing on two particular legislative campaigns to create a more just system.

## The Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act

The Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act (S.2123) in the U.S. Senate is sponsored by senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Mike Lee (R-UT) and a bipartisan group of other Senators. This bill will help reduce extremely long sentences for those awaiting sentencing as well as some of those already incarcerated. It will also lessen the number of those in the federal prison population, which has exploded since 1980.

The increase in the number of incarcerated individuals is largely due to mandatory minimum penalties, which exacerbate racial disparities and perpetuate dangerous prison overcrowding.

The legislation will also limit federal life sentences for youth and adults, and would end solitary confinement for juveniles. These critical

elements recognize the capacity for people to change and that people deserve a second chance.

**What can you do?** You can help get this law passed by calling 800-826-3688 and asking that the majority leader bring the bill to the Senate floor. You can also encourage your senator's support.

## HALT Solitary Confinement Act (A4401/S2659)

The CBCS is also working to change the use of solitary confinement. It is estimated that between 80,000 to 100,000 people—disproportionately people of color—are held in solitary confinement each day.

That means being confined to a cell for 22 to 24 hours per day, with one hour in an exercise cage. Food is pushed through a small slot in the door. Those who have survived solitary describe the experience as being “buried alive.”

In 2011, the United Nations stated that solitary confinement in excess of 15 days should be prohibited based on the scientific evidence of its psychological damage, especially on those with mental illness, pregnant women, and youth. Half of all prison suicides occur in

conditions of solitary confinement. This method violates inherent human dignity and creates toxic environments for incarcerated people, correctional staff, and administrators.

New York State is considering a bill which would significantly alter this practice: the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act (A4401/S2659). To learn more about its provisions, go to <http://nycaic.org/legislation>.

**What can you do?** Come find out what it's like in a solitary confinement cell. In partnership with the National Religious Coalition Against Torture (NRCAT) and other groups in our conference, CBCS will be bringing a full-size replica of a solitary cell to annual conference in June. We will also be sponsoring a campaign to pass the NYS HALT legislation, which is considered a model for the whole country. Find out more, go to [www.nrcat.org/torture-in-us-prisons](http://www.nrcat.org/torture-in-us-prisons).

The Conference Board of Church and Society invites co-sponsors for this hands-on demonstration. If you would like to “sign on,” please contact the CBCS at [churchandsociety@nyac-umc.com](mailto:churchandsociety@nyac-umc.com) and let us know how you can be our partner. We are looking for financial support, publicity, crew volunteers and prayers!!

## Praying for Reform On Immigration

Continued from page 1

ruling on DAPA (Deferred Action for Parental Accountability) that effects more than five million undocumented immigrants.

Friends, our scriptures tell us that we are called to draw the circle wide and embrace all that we meet—put simply, when we see the immigrant, we see Jesus (Matthew 25:35). I pray that you will make every effort to join us and invite your congregation to this event as well. We are so much stronger as a conference when we involve local church participation in our efforts to build the beloved community.

If you have any questions please contact Rev. Karina Feliz, chair of the task force, at [karina.feliz@nyac-umc.com](mailto:karina.feliz@nyac-umc.com), or via her mobile number, 201-982-6652.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the task force's work and for the work you already do with our immigrant brothers and sisters.

In Christ's love,



Bishop Jane Allen Middleton



## Grant Helps Meet Kingston Needs

### From Global Health, February 2016

More than 45 percent of families in Midtown Kingston live below the poverty line and depend on food stamps or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to feed their children. It is one of the most economically challenged and underserved districts in Ulster County, N.Y., and a U.S. Department of Agriculture-designated food desert, which means that there is little access to fresh produce or healthy food options.

In response to these challenges, the Clinton Avenue United Methodist Church—pastored by Rev. Darlene Kelley—began the Caring Hands Soup Kitchen and Pantry. Caring Hands not only provides meals but also operates a community garden that is open to the public, offers GED lessons, and has a legal clinic.

This year, the Global Health unit gave Caring Hands a grant to provide healthy breakfasts to low-income adults and families with young children. This is often the only meal and community contact beneficiaries will enjoy for an entire day. The grant will also cover hands-on

training in healthy food preparation for families receiving food benefits.

Program Manager Teryl Mickens responded to news of the award by saying, “We are so humbled and very grateful for all that this grant will allow us to accomplish. We can't wait to witness our community's recognition of the abundance of God. We do not take lightly the source of these funds or the ability to do good in the world.”

The Global Health unit recognizes that good nutrition can help to lower people's risk for many chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, some cancers, and diabetes, which are all leading causes of death in the U.S. Global Health is committed to ensuring that all people, especially those at greater risk for health disparities, enjoy a healthy life by accelerating access to healthy nutrition and physical activity.

Support this work by giving to the Global Health Advance #3021770 at [www.umcor.org/Search-for-Projects/Projects/3021770](http://www.umcor.org/Search-for-Projects/Projects/3021770).

Global Health is a newsletter of *Global Ministries*.

# Preparing for AC Awards, Elections

*Every day to us is Easter, with its resurrection song.  
When in trouble move the faster to our God who rights the wrong  
Alleluia! Alleluia! See the power of heavenly throngs.*

(“Easter People, Raise Your Voices,” UMH 304, v3,  
Rev. William (Bill) James, 1979)

Has your church taken advantage of the educational materials that the NYAC Archives and History developed to celebrate 25 United Methodists, who by their lives and work, helped make disciples for Jesus Christ? If you have, great! If not, why not go to [www.nyac.com/250years](http://www.nyac.com/250years) and start now?

Our own Shirley Parris and Rev. Bill James are two of the 25 stalwarts of Methodism whose stories are being told. This year at annual conference, we will be giving the Shirley Parris Award for Excellence for the fifth time. Nominations for both clergy and laypersons are due by May 1. More information and the nomination form can be found at [www.nyac.com/laity](http://www.nyac.com/laity).

This year, we will also be electing a new conference lay leader. Do you or someone you know sense a call to this office? Nominations will be taken from the floor of annual conference where both clergy and lay members will vote. Prospective nominees are asked to submit a one-paragraph biography with a photograph for use by the voting body. Pertinent information, in addition to name and contact information, would be areas of service in the local church, and district, conference, jurisdictional

or general church levels. These one-paragraph bios should be sent with a digital photograph to Lynda Gomi at [lgomi@nyac.com](mailto:lgomi@nyac.com). For more information on the role of conference lay leader and other related information, go to [www.nyac.com/laity](http://www.nyac.com/laity), or contact Renata Smith at [renata.smith@nyac-umc.com](mailto:renata.smith@nyac-umc.com).

Lay members of annual conference, please attend your district annual meetings, read the preconference material on the conference website, familiarize yourself with your role by reading the Lay Member's Guide to Annual Conference on the web site at [www.nyac.com/laity](http://www.nyac.com/laity), register for annual conference, and of course, attend and participate!

As in previous years, the Board of Laity invites you to join in five minutes of corporate prayer for the NYAC and the global church via conference call, weekdays at 6:55 a.m. from May 23 to June 3 (Telephone 605-475-4700, access code 191759#). Contact Warren Whitlock at [wgw1009@yahoo.com](mailto:wgw1009@yahoo.com) with any questions.

Abundant Blessings,  
Renata

**LAITY  
ON THE  
MOVE**  
Renata Smith



## —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:

**Edward Dayton** to Long Hill UMC (LFT)(DH); Dayton currently serves the NOW Larger Cooperative Parish.

**Kathleen Reynolds** to the UMC of Litchfield (LFT)(DH); Reynolds currently serves the Open Doors Community Parish.

**John Parille** to Bethel UMC in Conn.; Parille currently serves Gaylordsville UMC.

**Elon Sylvester** to Bellmore UMC (LFT); Sylvester currently serves One Foundation Ministries (mission congregation) in Pelham.

**Amy Tompkins** to Cairo UMC and Sandy Plains UMC; Tompkins currently serves Simpson Memorial UMC in Palenville, Quarryville UMC in Saugerties, and St. John's UMC in Malden, all in New York.

**Lunne Rouse** to First Church Baldwin, UM; Rouse currently serves the UMC of Huntington-Cold Spring Harbor.

**Hector Custodio** to Immanuel-First Spanish UMC (LFT)(DH); Custodio is currently unappointed.

**YoungJu Steven Kim** to Setauket UMC; Kim currently serves First UMC of Thomaston and the UMC of Watertown.

**Vicki Flippin** to the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew UM as associate pastor; Flippin currently serves the UMC of the Village as associate.

**Sandra Wanamaker** to First UMC of Port Jefferson, N.Y.; Wanamaker currently serves Community UMC, North Canton and Washington Hill UMC, both in Connecticut.

**Karen Cook** to Community UMC, North Canton, and Washington Hill UMC; Cook currently serves Bethel UMC, Conn.

**Oliverio Barrera** to Fourth Avenue UMC (LFT)(DH); Barrera currently serves Queens Hispanic UMC.

**Bruce Lamb** to Ardsley UMC and St. Paul's UMC, Hartsdale; Lamb currently serves as associate at Mount Calvary/St. Mark's UMC in Manhattan.

**Elisa Vicioso** to Primera Iglesia Metodista Unida de Corona; Vicioso currently serves Immanuel-First Spanish UMC in Brooklyn.

**Jay Kim** to Bethelship Norwegian UMC; Kim currently serves the UMC of East Berlin.

**David Collins** to the NOW Larger Cooperative Parish; Collins currently serves the Delaware Headwaters Parish. The NOW Parish includes First UMC, Brewster; Drew UMC, Carmel; Holmes UMC; Lake Mahopac UMC; Mount Hope UMC, Mahopac Falls, and the UMC of Purdy's.

**Romana Abelova** to the NOW Larger

Cooperative Parish; Abelova currently serves the Delaware Headwaters Parish.

**Dee Stevens** to the Delaware Headwaters Parish; Stevens currently serves the Ardsley UMC and Saint Paul's UMC in Hartsdale. The Delaware Headwaters Parish includes UM churches in Bloomville, Hobart, Stamford (NY) and Township.

**Adrienne Brewington** to the Poughkeepsie UMC; Brewington is currently appointed to an extension ministry as the district superintendent of the Long Island East District.

**Siobhan Sargent** to Memorial UMC in White Plains; Sargent currently serves as an associate pastor at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew UM.

**James Van Schaick** to Pound Ridge Community Church, Conn.; Van Schaick currently serves First Church Baldwin, UM.

**Yountae Kim** to Prospect UMC in Bristol, Conn.; Kim currently serves as an associate pastor at Mid-Hudson Korean UMC.

**Charles Ferrara** (retired) to Patchogue UMC (LFT); Ferrara currently serves Bellmore UMC (LFT).

**Rafael Garcia** to Christ UMC in Staten Island; Garcia currently serves the UMC of Hempstead.

# Camp Experience Builds Self Confidence

BY JANE WAKEMAN

Camps Governing Board

Sometimes, parents send their children to camp. Sometimes, children send their parents to camp. Such was the case when Anna Bosco returned from Woodsmoke at the Kingswood Campsite. Her enthusiasm persuaded her family members (mom is Pat Schlegel, Camping and Retreat Ministries Board member) to join in a Labor Day take-down weekend at Kingswood. Thus began a long-standing family tradition of camping there.

A Woodsmoke camper and former counselor, Bosco grew up attending St. Paul and St. Andrew Church in Manhattan with her family. She was introduced to Woodsmoke by friends who had attended, but it took a full year for them to persuade her to actually go. Bosco gave in and went to the weeklong camp for middle and high-school aged youth.

In a recent interview, Bosco said that she was immediately pulled in by the way the campers learned to work together. In addition to the skills they were taught, they learned to contribute to the community through their projects, and developed confidence and independence.

They experienced teamwork in problem solving. While the adult leader facilitated the projects, the campers were tasked with finding their own ways to solve problems and organize their approach. Bosco said that this has contributed to her own growth in self-confidence by learning to trust her ability to make decisions, lead others, and find solutions.

Woodsmoke also provided ample opportunities to have fun and work hard. Bosco recalls campers improvising a "Super Mike" cape out of a tablecloth for program director Mike Weinlein to show their appreciation for all they had experienced working on the Pines site, a campsite especially designed to accommodate persons with limited mobility.

On another occasion, the campers used their creativity to "improve" a chapel skit by re-working it and making it their own, a task that took up an entire day. Following her high school graduation, Bosco interned for Weinlein over the summer.

Her summer job last year was with Project SPY, a program run by



**Teens work on a construction project at Woodsmoke, a youth camp held at Kingswood Campsite in Hancock, N.Y.**

Fieldstone UMC in Christiansburg, Va., that gives middle and high school students the opportunity to do service projects for low-income homeowners. She expects to return this summer as well.

A sophomore at Virginia Tech, Bosco is majoring in civil engineering. Among her passions are hiking, fires, and building things. She is intensely curious about the structures of buildings and how they come together. She wants to give back to the community as a volunteer and as a civil engineer. Bosco believes her experiences at Kingswood have contributed significantly to the person she is today.

This year, May 27–30 is the Memorial Day set-up weekend for anyone willing to pitch in and have a good time. For more information on the NYAC camps, go to [www.nyaccamps.org/](http://www.nyaccamps.org/); or check out the Facebook pages for Kingswood Campsite and Quinipet Camp and Retreat Center.

*Wakeman is a deaconess in the New York Conference.*

## JOB OPENING

### Director of Student Ministries

Simsbury United Methodist Church in Connecticut is looking for a director of student ministries to coordinate and oversee a diverse collection of activities designed for students in grades 7–12. An enthusiastic, energetic leader with a history of working with students is needed. Other key attributes for the candidate include motivating parent volunteers, event planning, and consistent communication using a variety of media.

SUMC has a long history of dynamic youth programming and recently completed the first phase of a student ministries' strategic plan. The candidate chosen will partner with the church's Youth Council and church leadership to create and implement a vibrant youth ministry.

Interested candidates should contact Jim Swearingen, staff parish relations chair at [jimswearingen007@gmail.com](mailto:jimswearingen007@gmail.com), or 860-205-1889. Please visit our web site at [www.simsburyumc.org](http://www.simsburyumc.org) for more information.

## Bethel UMC Kids 'Beelieve' in Ending Hunger

Children from pre-K to high school at Bethel (Conn.) United Methodist Church are abuzz about purchasing 50 beehives during Lent to benefit families in need. For nearly four decades Sunday School classes at Bethel have had a Lenten project focusing on ending hunger through Heifer International.

"We really like the mission of Heifer International to end world hunger and poverty and to care for the earth," said Ann McLellan, Sunday School coordinator. "We always start with Heifer moments during church and try to do as much as we can to engage our members." A special treat this season was taking children of the congregation to visit the Heifer Farm in Rutland, Mass.

The children in Sunday School classes made a wide variety of items to sell to raise money for the beehives. These included beeswax candles, bee pins, and care packages that included honey and lemon green tea. "Each Sunday School class takes part in friendly competition to raise the most money," said McLellan. A celebration complete with a petting zoo was held April 3.

# OBITUARIES

## Rev. David Lecour Parker

The Reverend David Lecour Parker of Wesley Village, Shelton, Conn., died on April 6. He was 92.

Parker, who was born a twin on December 20, 1923, attended Middlebury College for his freshman year before transferring to Hamilton to join his brother at their father's alma mater.

While serving in the Army, Parker's battalion was destined for the Battle of the Bulge, but the night before troops were to ship out to Europe, nine men—out of thousands—had their names called. Parker was one of the nine sent to Guam instead of France to serve with the Army Signal Corps.

After college, Parker went to Union Theological Seminary in New York City on the G.I. Bill, where he studied with some of the great theological minds of the twentieth century, including James Muilenburg, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich. Parker attended the historic first meeting of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam as secretary to Union's president, Henry Van Dusen.

After graduating from seminary, he was ordained in the Methodist Church and during his pastoral career served eleven congregations in northern New Jersey, Staten Island and Long Island. In the New York Conference, he served Summerfield on Staten Island, and Albertson, Woodmere-Lawrence, East Meadow, and the East Hampton churches on Long Island. He blessed every church with his musical abilities on the piano and organ. He retired in 1994, but continued to serve in East Hampton until 2004.

In 1959, Parker met Merolyn Faith Graham, and they were married a year later. Parker was a caring father to their three daughters who he taught army calisthenics, and wrote songs for their birthdays. He was proud that all three daughters, and later a grandson, Eli, would also attend Hamilton College.

Parker was an early supporter of civil rights, women's rights and gay rights, and a proponent of interfaith relations. He often joined in protests and reached out to those suffering from acts of injustice.

After the couple moved to Lord's Valley, Penn., Parker continued his church involvement there as organist for the Church at Hemlock Farms. He went to live with his daughter Julie and her family in Larchmont, N.Y., after the death of his wife in 2007, before finally settling at Wesley Village.

He will be remembered for his vibrant energy, vigorous piano playing, and deep faith. Parker leaves behind thousands of personalized poetic, acrostic and musical tributes that he wrote for colleagues, friends and family.

He is survived by three daughters and two sons-in-law: Julie Faith Parker and Bill Crawford, Kate and Don Parker-Burgard, and Valerie Parker; six grandchildren, Graham, Mari, Jacob, Eli, Maxwell, and Josephine.

The funeral service was held April 9 at the Larchmont Avenue Church, Larchmont, N.Y. In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions be directed to the David Parker memorial funds at either Trustees of Hamilton College, Hamilton College, 198 College Hill Rd., Clinton, N.Y., 13323, or Wesley Village, 580 Long Hill Ave., Shelton, CT 06484.

## Rev. Robert Woodcock III

Rev. Robert Dudley Woodcock III of Rocky Hill, Conn., died on March 5. He was 69.

Woodcock, who was born in 1946, worked briefly as a physicist for the U.S. Navy after graduating from Brown University with a master of science degree in 1968. He became a probationary member of the New York Conference in 1971, received his master of divinity degree from Hartford Seminary in 1972, and was appointed to East Berlin UMC. He was ordained an elder in the New York Conference in 1974, and in 1977 he was appointed to South Park UMC in Hartford.

Concerned with the medical problems that some of his parishioners faced, he began to study nursing and received his master of nursing degree from Yale in 1979; he was appointed to Hartford Health Care Ministries that same year. In 1983-84 he served in extension ministry at Veterans Administration Medical Center in Newington, Conn., and in 1985 as a member of the nursing faculty at Western Connecticut State University, where he remained until his retirement from the conference in 2006.

In retirement, he continued to teach part time until 2011, and as late as this January, he was assisting in continuing education events at The Institute of Living/Hartford Hospital. He was recognized as an excellent teacher whose students left with a clear understanding of the material. Woodcock also served on the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

He was active in many organizations, including the Connecticut Council of Parish Nurse Coordinators, the Hartford Foundation, and Leadership Greater Hartford. He enjoyed monthly breakfasts with fellow retired Methodist ministers, and also with Hartford Good Shepherd Church's men's group. He was an adult education coordinator at Temple Beth Torah in Wethersfield, Conn.

He served on the board of the American Assembly for Men in Nursing; in various roles for the International Honor Society of Nursing, Kappa Alpha chapter; and on the Spiritual Care and Clinical Pastoral Education Advisory Committee at Danbury Hospital.

Rev. Woodcock is survived by his wife, Jeanne; three children: Julien Tremblay, Katherine LeDuc, and Teresa Yankauskas; three grandchildren; and a sister, Virginia Eisenstein.

The family will hold a private memorial service. Memorial contributions may be made to the American Lung Association.



# Lesbian Pastor Moves Closer to Church Trial

(UMNS)—The Rev. Cynthia Meyer moved a step closer to a church trial after she and Bishop Scott Jones failed to agree on a just resolution to the complaint that she is a “self-avowed, practicing” homosexual.

One option the Great Plains Conference bishop offered Meyer was that Edgerton United Methodist Church, where she is now pastor, could withdraw from the denomination and retain Meyer as pastor in a new denomination.

Meyer rejected that choice.

“I thought that was a surprising and disappointing request. That he would want those who disagree with the formal position of the church to simply leave the denomination was troubling,” Meyers told United Methodist News Service.

“Certainly, on that point I knew this was not anything I would willingly accept or sign. It does not seem to me to be just.”

She also rejected a proposal to delay the proceedings until after the 2016 General

Conference votes on human sexuality petitions during the May 10–20 international conference in Portland, Ore.

Delegates will consider more than 70 proposals on whether to confirm or rewrite the denomination’s biblical understanding of human sexuality.

*The Book of Discipline*, the denomination’s book of policy and teachings, since 1972 has proclaimed that all individuals are of sacred worth but the practice of homosexuality “is incompatible with Christian teaching.”

Church law lists being a “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy member and officiating at same-sex unions among the denomination’s chargeable offenses.

Only General Conference can change these church policies.

“While many persons within The United Methodist Church disagree with the rule that says persons who are self-avowed, practicing homosexuals may not be ordained and may not

be appointed as pastors, the rule is currently in effect,” Bishop Jones said. “Rev. Meyer’s sermon prompted the supervisory response, the attempt to find an agreed-upon just resolution and this referral to church counsel, as outlined in the *Book of Discipline*.”

Jones has referred the complaint to the Rev. David Bell as counsel for the church. The counsel is responsible for compiling relevant materials in the case and acting as a sort of church prosecutor.

Meyer told her congregation at Edgerton UMC in a January 3 sermon that she is a woman “who loves and shares my life with another woman.” Meyer has served since July as pastor of this semi-rural church, about 40 miles from Kansas City, Kansas.

In her considerations for a just resolution she said she wanted to “continue to serve faithfully as an appointed, ordained elder in The United Methodist Church.”

**Continued on page 12**

# Slashed Church Budget Heads to GC2016

**Continued from page 1**

and Administration, told both bodies that the budget revision reflects attentiveness to United Methodists’ concerns.

“The key question is: Are we listening?” he said. “Together, we are listening.”

Both the finance agency board and Connectional Table, which have members from around the globe, met via teleconference and webinar technology to save on travel expenses.

“What we’re striving for ... is a budget that is reflective of the needs and the capacity throughout the connection,” said Dakotas-Minnesota Area Bishop Bruce Ough, the Connectional Table chair.

## What’s the impact?

The proposed budget allocates the following:

- \$305.7 million for the World Service Fund that supports 10 of the denomination’s 13 general agencies (including United Methodist Communications, which encompasses United Methodist News Service)
- \$104.9 million for the Ministerial Education Fund that supports UM seminaries and provides financial aid for UM seminary students
- \$92 million for the Episcopal Fund, which supports active bishops, their support staff, retired bishops, surviving spouses and minor children of deceased bishops

- \$41.9 million for the Black College Fund that supports 11 United Methodist-related historically black colleges and universities
- \$36.9 million for the General Administration Fund, which supports General Conference, Judicial Council, the United Methodist Commission on Archives and History, and the General Council on Finance and Administration
- Nearly \$9.4 million for Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe
- \$8.2 million for the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund, which supports the church’s ecumenical work

Funds help with such denomination-wide endeavors as planting new churches, providing resources for evangelism, supporting theological education, advocating for church social teachings, engaging in international development and cultivating new mission fields.

The budget offers a target for the coming four years. Actual spending largely depends on giving received.

It’s too soon to know whether agencies will make up for shortfalls by dipping into reserves, relying on alternative revenue such as grants, or reducing staff, Kumar told his agency’s board.

The proposed budget also does not yet include initiatives going before the 2016 General Conference that could have financial impact. Members of the General Council of Finance

and Administration and Connectional Table will meet periodically throughout General Conference to adjust the budget to take into account what the legislative body approves.

General Conference delegates will vote on a final budget proposal on the last day of the meeting.

In the United States, the denomination’s finance agency requests apportionments from each conference based on a formula that includes its local church expenditures, local church costs, the economic strength of the conference and a base percentage approved by General Conference.

The General Council on Finance and Administration is asking the 2016 General Conference for the first time to approve a formula for apportionment giving from the central conferences—the seven church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. Even if the formula gains approval, U.S. United Methodists will still pay the bulk of general church expenses.

The reduced general church budget comes at a time the church has seen its U.S. worship attendance decline, even as multinational membership has grown.

Donald R. House Sr., an economist and chair of the denomination’s Economic Advisory Committee, warned church leaders last year that unless the denomination reverses its U.S. declines in the next 15 years, its connectional structures will be unsustainable.

# Getting Ready to Gather in Portland

## End to End

A time of worship and Holy Communion will officially begin the 2016 General Conference at 2 p.m. (PST), Tuesday, May 10. The scheduled closing is at 6:30 p.m., May 20.

## To Follow the Action

- Get the Android or iOS version app for your mobile devices at the Google Play or iTunes stores, respectively.
- Check out photos, videos, news stories, and daily wrap-ups available on the General Conference web site [www.gc2016.umc.org](http://www.gc2016.umc.org). The plenary and worship sessions will also be live streamed on the web site.
- Via the GC Facebook page: [facebook.com/umcgeneralconference](https://facebook.com/umcgeneralconference)
- On Twitter, follow @umcgc. To post your own tweets, use #umcgc, and add #nyacumc to make a connection to other NYAC members.
- Updates and reports from the NYAC delegation will also be added to the conference web site ([www.nyac.com](http://www.nyac.com)) and Facebook page.

## Covered in Prayer

All are welcome to join the prayer community created for General Conference by registering at [www.60daysofprayer.org](http://www.60daysofprayer.org). The Council of Bishops also set in play 131 days of 24-hour prayer vigils in each of the 131 regional conferences in The United Methodist Church.

Every delegate will receive a Protestant prayer-bead strand including a prayer medallion created specifically for this General Conference.

## Legislative Work

During the first week of General Conference, the legislative committees meet to prepare their recommendations to the plenary regarding the petitions they have reviewed. In the second week, the recommendations are reviewed and voting takes place on the petitions.

Each of the 864 delegates was assigned to one of 12 legislative committees. The eight NYAC delegates and their assignments are:

- Rev. Denise Smartt Sears, Church and Society 1
- Dorothee E. Benz, Church and Society 2
- Carolyn Hardin Engelhardt, Conferences
- Rev. William Shillady, Financial Administration
- Frederick K. Brewington, General Administration
- Rev. Timothy J. Riss, Global Ministries
- Dorlimar Lebrón Malavé, Independent Commissions
- Rev. Noel Chin, Ministry and Higher



**Each of the delegates at General Conference will receive a set of handmade prayer beads to use during their devotional times.**

Education/ Superintendency  
All proposed legislation—from individuals, organizations, church-wide agencies and annual conferences—is printed in the *Advance Daily Christian Advocate*, which is available online at [www.umc.org/who-we-are/gc2016-advance-edition-daily-christian-advocate](http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/gc2016-advance-edition-daily-christian-advocate).

## John Street Celebration

The 250th anniversary of Methodist ministry at the John Street UMC in lower Manhattan will be celebrated at 10:20 a.m., Monday, May 16, with a video presentation by Rev. Jason Radmacher, pastor, and members of the church's board of trustees.

## Worship Design Team

Rev. Todd Pick, a member of the New York Conference, is offering his talents again as a member of the General Conference worship design team led by Rev. Laura Jaquith Bartlett. Pick designed the altar spaces for the NYAC gathering at Hofstra University for several years before becoming the director of evangelism and growth for the Texas Annual Conference.

## Judicial Council

The United Methodist Judicial Council will meet in Portland to decide if questions related to constitutionality emerge during the conference. Lawyer Beth Capen, a member of the New York Conference, serves on the judicial council.

## Other Participants

More than 2,500 visitors are expected for the duration of General Conference. These will include all members of the General Council on Finance and Administration and the Connectional Table. Chief executive officers of the 12 United Methodist general agencies will also attend. Members of the church and secular press will

provide coverage. Numerous United Methodist members and other interested individuals will receive credentials to sit in the visitors' gallery.

## An Alternative Discernment Process

Delegates will consider whether to use an alternative process of discernment for dealing with legislative petitions that was adopted last year by the Commission on the General Conference.

The Commission plans to request that this process be used for dealing with petitions regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, but it could also apply to other legislation at the option of the legislative body.

The plan would give delegates the opportunity to discuss selected legislation in small groups. The small groups will give reports of their discussions to a facilitation team of delegates, who would be elected near the start of General Conference. The facilitation team would compile the information, look for trends and directions, develop a report to the plenary and craft a petition or petitions which will then come to the plenary for consideration according to the current rules of the General Conference.

## Tutorial on Sand Creek

UMNS—A full 30 minutes of the May 18 plenary session will go to a tutorial on the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre, in which U.S. troops led by a Methodist preacher-turned-cavalry officer attacked unsuspecting Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians. Gary L. Roberts, a historian, will explain the massacre and place it in the context of a westward expansion that dislocated, in some cases decimated, tribes.

Delegates also will get a 173-page report by Roberts, titled "Remembering The Sand Creek Massacre: A Historical Review of Methodist Involvement, Influence, and Response," offering far more detail and analysis. (It's available online as part of the *Advance Daily Christian Advocate*, pages 1235–1408.)

The Sand Creek Massacre occurred on Nov. 29, 1864, along the Big Sandy River of the Colorado Territory. Col. John Milton Chivington, who put on hold his career as a Methodist Episcopal Church pastor to join the Union Army, led a surprise, early morning attack by some 675 soldiers on a Cheyenne and Arapaho encampment. Roughly 200 were killed, many of them women, children and the elderly.

Delegates to the 2012 General Conference in Tampa, Florida—which included an "Act of Repentance Toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous People" service—adopted a petition calling for "full disclosure" of the Methodist role in Sand Creek.

# Examining Gender and General Conference

**BY GLORY DHARMARAJ, PH.D**  
Executive Director, Interfaith Mission Institute

History was without women for a long time. The history of our General Conference has not been exempt from this blind spot and irony. While we have made gains in the recent election of delegates to the General Conference, there is still a lack of gender parity.

## Openings and Closings

Despite approving the category of deaconess, the 1888 General Conference refused to seat elected female lay delegates. Another contradiction was the approval of the full-time lay vocation for women as deaconesses, while warding off women's ordination with rights to administer sacraments. In the midst of these contradictions, women had to live out their vocations within the church.

The 1880 Methodist Episcopal General Conference not only voted against the ordination of women but also decided to revoke all the local preachers' licenses granted to women since 1869.<sup>1</sup> Women had to wait until 1956 to gain the full rights of ordination.

With reference to offices such as class leaders, stewards, and Sunday School superintendents in the local church, the challenge of inclusive language was addressed by the 1880 General Conference. Its decision removed the use of male pronouns, such as "he, his, and him" for such offices.<sup>2</sup> While the question of laywomen and gender was addressed in the 1880 General Conference, it took a century to officially include inclusive language for God! In 1980, the task force on language guidelines (inclusive language) was established.

## General Conference 2016

The recently released results of the monitoring done by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women reveals a continuing lack of gender equity as evidenced in the article, "Women by the Numbers: Statistics and Research about Women in the United Methodist Church" at [www.gcsr.org](http://www.gcsr.org). From among the 864 delegates elected to the May General Conference, the GCSRW research found:

- Of 431 lay delegates, 44.5 percent are female and 55 percent are male.
- Of 434 clergy delegates, 27.4 percent are female and 72 percent are male.
- Of 360 Central Conference delegates,



UMNS PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

## Delegates consider legislation at the 2012 United Methodist General Conference in Tampa, Fla.

74 percent are male and 25 percent are female, with three delegates not listing gender.

- Of 180 lay delegates from the Central Conferences, 64 percent are male and 35 percent are female.
- Of 180 Central Conference clergy, 84 percent are male and 15 percent are female.

Since the details of race and ethnicity are not available yet, my reflection does not deal with the "intersectionality" of women.

## The Face of Women in Structure and Movement

The membership percentage of women in the United States UMC is 58.

As for the southern hemisphere, the phenomenal growth of Christianity—especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—is unprecedented. The emerging, burgeoning, and living forms of Christianity are mostly indigenous, and their agency primarily non-Western. They embody what is known as world Christianity today.

Today, two-thirds of all Christians are women, as Professor Dana Robert of Boston University points out. Robert asks, "What would the study of Christianity in Africa, Asia and Latin America look like if scholars put

women into the center of their research?"<sup>3</sup> In the growing grassroots movement of Christianity, the role of women is a key factor.

In the feminization of Christianity, do women occupy key positions, along with men, in their respective church structures in world Christianity? Until church systems and structures are open enough for women to gain positions at the structural level, women's voices may not be converted into perspectives and mainstreamed.

Movement and structure need not necessarily be oppositional. Any movement that merely ends up as a structure loses its grassroots vitality. Any structure that is not rooted in the praxis of a life-giving movement is a skeleton without the embodiment of flesh and blood. A movement that does not structurally ensure power for its women is likely to be co-opted, and its power relegated to those who are at the top rungs of the structures. Movement and structure ought to form a life-giving hybridity.

Women stand to lose if they are not vigilant enough. As opinion-makers and decision-makers, men have a great role to play in emerging Christianity, assuring that women get shared power in the growing movement.

(This article was first published at [www.umglobal.org/2016/03/glory-dharmaraj-gender-and-general.html](http://www.umglobal.org/2016/03/glory-dharmaraj-gender-and-general.html).)

1 General Conference *Journal*, (25 May 1880), 316. *The Christian Advocate* 55/24 (June 10, 1880): 377.

2 *The Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1880*. Appendix 22. Pages 409-10.

3 Dana Robert, "World Christianity as a Women's Movement," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 30, no. 4 (October 2006), 180.



Continued from page 2

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. Use this shortened link, <http://bit.ly/1YYvhkh>, to go to the registration page. If you have any questions please contact [clergylifelonglearning@gbhem.org](mailto:clergylifelonglearning@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.

### 11/7–9 Revitup! For Young Clergy

The "revitup for a Lifetime of Ministry" gathering will help young clergy strengthen personal, financial and leadership skills to improve their lives and sustain their ministries. The event, sponsored by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, is planned for the B Resort & Spa in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Continuing education credits are available. Check for more details and registration info at [www.gbophb.org/events/revitup/](http://www.gbophb.org/events/revitup/).

### 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: 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](mailto:vision@nyac.com).

## Lesbian Pastor Moves Closer to Church Trial

Continued from page 1

She acknowledged she is in a committed relationship with a woman but said she believes the *Book of Discipline's* ¶2702.1b violates the "foundational Wesleyan spirit of the General Rules, ¶104, 'to do no harm, do good, and obey the ordinances of God.'"

### What happens now

After the counsel for the church compiles the relevant materials and drafts a judicial complaint, the next step would be a review by a seven-member committee on investigation—sort of the United Methodist version of a grand jury. The committee would include four clergy and three lay members.

*The Book of Discipline* has no specific timeline for the work of a counsel or that of the committee.

The committee can dismiss if members decide there is not enough evidence to bring charges. If five or more members of the committee on investigation recommend it, the bishop may suspend a clergy person from all clergy duties pending the outcome of the judicial process. At least five committee members must vote that Meyer be charged for a trial to proceed.

If the committee files charges, Jones would then appoint a presiding officer, a retired bishop who would serve as a judge.

*The Book of Discipline* says trials should be regarded as "an expedient of last resort." Under church law, a resolution without trial remains an option throughout the process.

Meanwhile, Meyer will continue to serve Edgerton UMC.

### Looking to May

Meyer said the next developments for her will probably not happen until after the 2016 General Conference.

"I'm glad I will be there (at General Conference) for part of it. I try to live in hope. I don't know really what to expect but I am always hopeful the church will move forward in greater inclusivity, welcome, care for all and involvement of all in every aspect of church life."

Meiers said she appreciates all the support she has received and hopes people will speak out on this issue.

"I hope more people will speak out in ways that are appropriate to them. I think that really is vital if we are to move forward in a spirit of love and justice."

Bishop Jones asks that people "keep Rev. Meyer, Edgerton United Methodist Church and the Great Plains Conference in your prayers."

## Brewington Honored For Justice Work

Frederick Brewington, a lay member of the New York Conference and co-head of the 2016 General Conference delegation, was recently named for the fifth time to the *Long Island Press'* 2015 Powerlist.

Brewington was cited for his work as a civil rights attorney based on Long Island. The announcement printed in the *Press* read:

"Whether he's representing town employees accusing fellow co-workers of racially insensitive remarks, or those claiming false arrest and imprisonment by local police,

Frederick Brewington continues the fight for justice, which throughout the years has drawn animosity from some, and adulation from others. Brewington has also succeeded in several high-profile discriminatory housing suits in recent years, an issue that continues to be of concern to community activists. Brewington's advocacy doesn't just come alive in the courtroom. He's also on the board of the Syosset-based ERASE Racism, which promotes racial equality and continues to address institutional racism and conduct research on myriad issues, including school segregation on Long Island."



PHOTO COURTESY  
LONG ISLAND  
PRESS

Frederick  
Brewington