

# A Service of Celebration

Come welcome Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton and celebrate his installation as our episcopal leader

3 p.m., September 25 | Salem UMC, Harlem, N.Y.



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



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

September 2016

## NYAC Ready To Answer Call For ERTs, Flood Buckets

Following the devastating storm and floodwaters of Superstorm Sandy, volunteers from around the annual conference—and around the country—came to assist survivors in their recovery. In typical United Methodist fashion, we had volunteer teams from as far away as Georgia, Texas, and California come to our aid. While the Sandy recovery still goes on for many, we are now receiving requests from West Virginia and Louisiana for early response (ERT) and recovery teams. (For more information on the recovery efforts in [West Virginia](#) and [Louisiana](#), please see their respective web sites).

Below are updates and opportunities for serving as part of the New York Annual Conference Disaster Recovery ministry.

**West Virginia:** We have received a request from the West Virginia Annual Conference for recovery teams. These are the teams that do the repair and rebuild work. We are looking to send the first team to West Virginia in mid-October. If you are interested and available to be part of an October team, or if you would like to lead a team at another date, please contact Tom Vencuss at [tvencuss@nyac.com](mailto:tvencuss@nyac.com) for more information.

**Louisiana:** The Louisiana Annual Conference has put out a request for ERT teams.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF REV. K KARPEN

**Peace Feasts at the United Methodist Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew bring together people of the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian faiths for a meal and dialogue.**

## Responding to Hate

# 9/11 & the Power of Love

**BY JOE IOVINO**  
A UMC.org feature

One of Jesus' most difficult commands is to love our enemies. "Just as your heavenly Father is complete in showing love to everyone, so also you must be complete," he says (Matthew 5:48 CEB).

Ever since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, United Methodists in New York City have been finding ways to respond to an act of

hate with love.

Each year, the United Methodist Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew in New York City holds an interfaith dinner. "We bring together 50 Christians, 50 Jews, and 50 Muslims," the Rev. K Karpen, pastor of the congregation explains. "We gather for a meal we call a Peace Feast because we share readings from our different traditions about peace."

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

### 9/8–10 Local Pastors' Licensing School

The spirituality committee of the Long Island West District is sponsoring a free in-house retreat, The Elijah Challenge, led by William Lau. The three-day event will be held at Grace UMC in St. Albans, N.Y. For more [information](#), contact Grace pastor, Rev. Alpher Sylvester, at 718-465-5621. The event promises to deliver ideas to grow and transform church ministries and congregations.

### 9/20–22 New Church Leadership Institute

The Susquehanna Conference of the UMC is sponsoring a workshop for those considering creating new churches in the next couple of years. Come and learn what it takes to lead a new church from experienced trainers Jim and Kim Griffith. The program begins at 1 p.m. September 20 and concludes at 12:30 p.m. September 22. The host church is CrossPoint UMC, 430 Colonial Rd, Harrisburg, Penn. The [registration](#) fee of \$299 includes an electronic manual and snacks. Spouses may attend for free.

### 9/25 Welcome for Bishop Bickerton

All are invited to join in the 3 p.m. [celebration](#) to welcome our new bishop, Thomas J. Bickerton, at the Salem UMC, 2190 Adam Clayton Powell Blvd., New York. See related story on Page 3.

### 9/30–10/2 IGNITE: Let There Be Light

From September 30 to October 2, more than 1,000 students in grades 6–12 from around the region are expected to gather at the Wildwoods Convention Center in Wildwood, N.J., to learn about God's calling on their lives and go deeper in their journey of faith in what's sure to be the most inspiring and thrilling event of the year. Find out more about the speakers, performers, lodging, schedule and much more at [www.ignitenj.org](http://www.ignitenj.org). The event is sponsored by the Greater New Jersey Conference.

### 9/27–28 & 9/28–29 Tri-District Bishop's Retreat

The Catskill Hudson, New York/CT, Connecticut districts will meet on Tuesday and Wednesday; the Metropolitan and Long Island East and West districts will gather on Wednesday and Thursday, all at the Stony Point Center, Stony Point, N.Y. Come and hear from our new bishop, Thomas J. Bickerton. [Register](#) now on the conference web site; there is no walk-in registration for this event.

### 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 5 p.m. at Grace UMC, 125 104th St, N.Y., N.Y. There will be a full day of panels, workshops, worship, and a wide range of presentations on all aspects of ministry with incarcerated and their families and advocacy for criminal justice reform. [Registration](#) details and a schedule are available on the conference web site. Questions can be sent to: [churchandsociety@nyac-umc.com](mailto:churchandsociety@nyac-umc.com)

### 10/13–14 or 18–19: Anti-Racism Training

The NYAC Commission on Religion and Race has planned two sessions of "Effective Christian Leadership in a Multicultural World" training. This training is mandatory for all clergy, and members of district committees on ministry and BOOM. The sessions, which run from 8:30 a.m. on the first day until 4 p.m. on the second day, will be held at:

- October 13–14: Stony Point Retreat Center, Stony Point, N.Y.
- October 18–19: Bishop Molloy Retreat Center, Jamaica, N.Y.

[Register](#) for either session on the conference web site. Contact Rev. Sheila Beckford at [Sheila.Beckford@nyac-umc.com](mailto:Sheila.Beckford@nyac-umc.com) with any questions.

### 10/15 Act of Repentance Service

In fulfilling a promise made at the 2015 New York Annual Conference, members of the Committee on Native American Ministries (CoNAM) will be holding an act of repentance service at 11 a.m., September 24 in Connecticut. The group will make a pilgrimage to an area in Greenwich believed to be the site of a Native American massacre in 1644. Rev. Steve Peiffer and Cynthia Kent of the Northeastern Jurisdiction CONAM will lead the service. For directions to the exact location and more information, contact: Elaine Winward at [ewinward@optonline.net](mailto:ewinward@optonline.net), or 914-669-5264.

### 10/16 Installation of DS Julia Yim

Details are still being finalized for this afternoon event planned for Bible Korean UMC in Dix Hills, 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. More details are available on the [registration](#) site.

### 11/19 Laity Convocation

Laity from around the conference will gather to explore the theme, "We Are Called . . .!" with Rev. David Gilmore, NYAC director of congregational development and revitalization. The day will run from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Stamford Hilton in Connecticut. Cost is \$25 per person; or \$75 for every four people from the same congregation. A continental breakfast and lunch are included. [Register](#) by November 9.

<small>The News of the New York Conference of The United Methodist Church</small>	
<b>Bishop: Thomas J. Bickerton</b> <b>Editor: Joanne Utley</b> New York Conference of The United Methodist Church 20 Soundview Avenue, White Plains, NY 10606 Phone (888) 696-6922 Website: <a href="http://www.nyac.com">www.nyac.com</a> Vision e-mail: <a href="mailto:vision@nyac.com">vision@nyac.com</a>	

# Prison Symposium Explores Diverse Ministries

**BY SHEILA PEIFFER**

**NYAC Board of Church & Society**

In Matthew 25, Jesus gives the same priority to prison ministry as to feeding and clothing those in need—yet while many of our churches have food pantries and clothing drives, how many of us reach out to those who are incarcerated and their families? And how many of us feel that we don't even know where to start when it comes to prisons and the criminal justice system?

The "I Was in Prison and You ..." NYAC prison ministry symposium, on Saturday, October 1 will help to fill that void. At the symposium, a wide array of presentations, panels and workshops will provide ideas for churches to engage in meaningful ministry with

the incarcerated and their families, and also in advocating for criminal justice reform. Grace UMC, 125 W. 104th St., New York, N.Y., is hosting the symposium from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The day will begin with worship to set the stage for prayerful discernment, heartfelt listening to personal stories, and uplifting inspiration from the Word, song and Spirit. The morning's panel will focus on ministry with those who are incarcerated and their families, with additional workshops where skills for assisting with re-entry, counseling, educating and support will be explored.

During lunch there will be ample time to browse information from different organizations in the area and talk to representatives about these opportunities. In the afternoon, a second

panel will explore areas where advocacy for criminal justice reform could be effective, again followed by workshops where these skills and issues will be delved into in greater depth. The day will close with a communion service, as we pray together for the continuing commitment to work for both mercy and justice, as we strive to really comprehend that, "What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me."

Worship, two panels, eleven workshops and lunch—all free! Make sure that a group from your church will be there to take advantage of this incredible opportunity to launch new ministry or renew your commitment to projects already under way. Registration and full schedule are available [here](#).

## Celebrating Our New Bishop

On September 25, the conference will gather to officially install its new episcopal leader, Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton. Salem United Methodist Church, 2190 Adam Clayton Powell Blvd. in Harlem, will host the celebration that will begin with a pre-worship concert at 3:30 p.m. The service begins at 4 p.m. Light refreshments will follow the service.

Clergy are asked to wear white or light-colored robes with red stoles. The clergy will robe in Cullen Hall in the lower level of the church. The clergy processional will begin at 3:45 p.m.

Parking is being made available in other church parking lots and for on street parking in the area, and carpooling is suggested. Members of Salem's United Methodist Men will be outside the church—at 129th Street and 7th Avenue—to direct drivers to any remaining free parking. There are several pay parking lots within a few blocks of the church. Salem UMC is accessible via several subway lines and Metro-North Railroad. Additional details are [here](#) on the NYAC web site.

Bickerton was assigned to serve the New York Area as bishop, effective September 1. For the previous 12 years, the native of West Virginia had led the Western Pennsylvania Conference. As a part of his episcopal responsibilities, he also serves on the General Board of Global Ministries, the Standing Committee on Central Conference affairs, and the Commission on the General Conference.

He and his wife, Sally, are the parents of Elizabeth, T.J., Ian, and Nick.



## Renovations In White Plains

**Renovations on the conference center in White Plains are well underway with new windows going in throughout the structure. Insulation has been greatly improved and a new heating/air conditioning system installed. If the work continues as anticipated, the conference staff will be able to move back in around Thanksgiving.**

# September is National Preparedness Month

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security have designated September as National Preparedness Month. The national campaign aims to encourage and assist individuals, families, and communities to better prepare for disasters and other emergencies. The theme for this year is, “Don’t Wait. Communicate. Make your Emergency Plan Today.”

Effective preparation is both a key to an effective response as well as critical to minimizing the effects of a disaster—large or small.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) provides a resource for individuals, churches, and community-response titled, “Connecting Neighbors.”

Connecting Neighbors: Organizing the Local Church for Disaster Ministries

All disasters are local: the local church is a major thread in the overall fabric of a community’s disaster defenses; the visible presence of the local church is essential in any type of disaster. Disaster response is an effective

ministry through which we become instruments of God’s healing and hope. By becoming the hands and feet of Christ, we share in a commitment to the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of people in a time of crisis.

- **Module 1: Ready Congregants:** How ready and prepared are you, is your family, in the event of a disaster? Do you have a personal or family plan in place?
- **Module 2: Ready Church:** Does your church have a disaster preparedness plan? Is your insurance adequate? Are your vital records safe?
- **Module 3: Ready Response:** Is your church part of a community preparedness plan? What are the resources or services your church could offer in the event of a community disaster event?

Each module is a 2.5-hour stand-alone event. To discuss the Connecting Neighbors program, or to schedule a training event, please see the information on the [NYAC web site](#).

## W.Va., Louisiana Request ERT Help

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To serve on an early response team a person must have a current ERT badge. If you are interested in leading, or serving on a team to Louisiana please contact Vencuss at the address listed above. During the first few weeks or months after a disaster, only specially trained early response teams (ERT) can enter the affected areas, due to health concerns and infrastructure limitations.

**Cleaning buckets:** UMCOR is requesting [cleaning buckets](#) that will be sent to Louisiana as part of the relief effort. Thousands have already been delivered to the affected areas.

During September and October, the NYAC will be collecting cleaning buckets that will be sent to Mission Central in Pennsylvania for distribution. A number of churches throughout the annual conference have been designated as collection sites. At this point we have identified the following churches in the six districts:

- Metropolitan: Calvary, Bronx; New Rochelle
- Long Island East: Centerport, Seaford, Hicksville, Bayport
- Catskill Hudson: New Paltz
- New York/Connecticut: Hyde Park, Pawling
- Connecticut: Seymour; Clinton; Jesse Lee, Ridgefield
- Long Island West: Brooklyn Sandy recovery office at Bethany House

If your church would like to serve as a collection site, please contact Tom Vencuss at [tvencuss@nyac.com](mailto:tvencuss@nyac.com).

Specific instructions about drop-off times and dates is forthcoming. Instructions for assembling cleaning buckets can be found on the [UMCOR](#) web site.

### NYAC Disaster Response Training Events

**Basic ERT Training:** Two training sessions are scheduled for September 24 in New Paltz, and October 15 in Mount Kisco (Ross Porter, instructor). These sessions run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Contact Tom Vencuss for additional information. [Register here](#).

**ERT Recertification:** Two classes have already been held in New Rochelle and Hyde Park with a combined total of more than 30 persons in attendance. [Register here](#) for upcoming recertification classes:

- September 10: 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Bellmore (NY) UMC. For more information contact: Tom Vencuss
- September 18: 2–5 p.m., Clinton (CT) UMC. For more information



**Flood bucket delivery to a UM church after flooding in Louisiana.**

contact: Craig Fitzsimmons at [mcraigfitzsimmons@gmail.com](mailto:mcraigfitzsimmons@gmail.com).

- September 22: 6–9 p.m., New Paltz (NY). For more information contact: Tom Vencuss

To take part in an ERT recertification class you must have already completed the basic training course.

### Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care (DESC) training

**DESC basic training:** 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., September 24 at Simsbury (CT) UMC. Contact: Wendy Vencuss at [wvencuss@gmail.com](mailto:wvencuss@gmail.com). [Click for more information](#).

**DESC leader training:** 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., September 10 at Bellmore (NY) UMC. Contact: Wendy Vencuss. Persons attending the DESC leader training must have first attended the basic training course.

It is our intention to provide training events in all areas of the Annual Conference. We will be working with District Disaster Response Committees to determine locations and dates for trainings.

Please check out the [Missions/Disaster Response](#) area on the NYAC web site for additional information and updates.

# Responding to Hate: 9/11 & the Power of Love

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“My favorite part is always in the beginning when we’re trying to mix up all the tables,” Karpen continues. “We always have people who are calling out, ‘Hey, we need another Muslim over here.’ Or, ‘we need some Jews over here.’ ‘Anybody got a Christian?’ ‘Do we have any Methodists wandering around? They can come and be with us.’”

One year, a rabbi noticed beauty in the chaos.

“This is paradise,” Karpen remembers the rabbi saying. “This is how it’s going to be. It’s not going to be like, ‘You’re not like me. Stay away.’ . . . It’s going to be, ‘Hey, Jews, Muslims, Christians, come here together.’”

“I think he’s right,” the pastor concludes.

The United Methodist Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew is six miles from the site of the World Trade Center. Karpen has been their pastor since 1984.

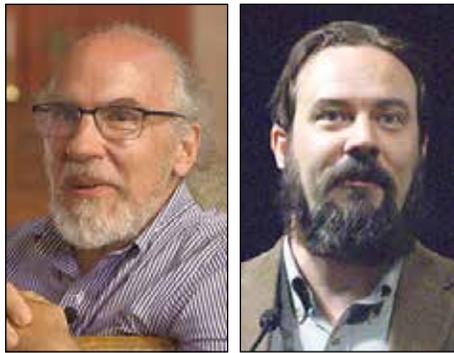
“It always seems like it’s very distant in the past,” he reflects. “It’s years and years ago until you get to that day. Then it seems like it just happened yesterday.”

## Love triumphs over tragedy

Rev. June Stitzinger-Clark was serving as pastor of the Atlantic Highlands and Navesink United Methodist churches in New Jersey on September 11, 2001. When the morning news reported a fire at the World Trade Center, she and her husband went to the harbor to pray for the situation.

Later that morning, Stitzinger-Clark returned to do what she could to be helpful as people evacuating New York arrived at the harbor by ferry and private boat. She and Rev. Robert Tynski, a local Catholic priest, shuttled notes between loved ones, prayed with all who requested it, and “emptied out” the Catholic church’s thrift shop to provide clothes to those coming out of the decontamination showers.

Stitzinger-Clark vividly remembers a pregnant woman who was worried that her



Revs. Karpen (l) and Radmacher (r)

husband didn’t know where she was. Later in the day, Stitzinger-Clark saw the woman walking down Main Street with her husband. When she saw the pastor, the woman smiled and lifted her husband’s hand.

“She was lifting up a sense of glory that God had intervened,” Stitzinger-Clark reports. “Love triumphed in the midst of all that tragedy.”

Paul Pillitteri and his then-fiancée Martha Chapman were finishing plans for their wedding scheduled for September 15, 2001, at Washington Square UMC, less than two miles from the site of the World Trade Center. In the days immediately following the attack, Chapman was determined to go ahead with the wedding.

“This was about hate,” she remembers thinking, “and our marriage is about love. We’re going to do this.”

Soon, however, the couple realized it would be impossible. They were married November 24, 2001.

## Coming together

Chapman describes connections she felt to others. “I remember having naked soul eye-contact with complete strangers,” she says.

Rev. Stephen Bauman, pastor of Christ Church United Methodist in New York City, also recalls a pervasive sense of unity.

“The city very quickly adopted a ‘we’re all

in this together’ kind of attitude. It was quite stunning really. The differences people had just melted away.”

“I felt like God’s name had been co-opted by people who wanted to use it for evil,” Jennifer Rodia, chief communications officer with United Methodist Communications, remembers. She was a member of Christ Church in 2001. “And in times like that it is so important for people of faith to do whatever they can to show that love is a much more powerful force than hate.”

Rodia was soon “mashing hundreds of pounds of potatoes” and helping feed volunteers working at the site of the World Trade Center.

## Moving forward

“It’s hard to look back on that day,” Karpen confesses. “I would like us to all be looking to the future, hopefully a good future and a peaceful future.” A future that will connect people who are loving and serving both God and their neighbor.

Rev. Jason Radmacher, pastor of John Street United Methodist Church whose building is located three blocks from the site of the World Trade Center, encourages his congregation to continue to share the power of love today.

“I think the people of John Street Church are more empathetic having experienced the chaos of that day,” he says. “We remember what it was like to be running scared, not knowing where our loved ones were, and what was going to happen next. Living through that moment, you realize how many people around the world face terrible adversity every day. I think the Holy Spirit can use that awareness to increase our ability to love one another.”

“I often return to the Prayer of Saint Francis at this time of year,” Radmacher continues. “It reminds me that we all have a choice to make. Do we want to walk in the light or live in the dark?”

Whenever we choose to show love to everyone, as Jesus commands, we are choosing to walk in the light.

# NYAC Gave \$1M to Fight Malaria

In late August, the conference officially completed its fundraising for the Imagine No Malaria (INM) campaign, topping out at just more than \$1 million.

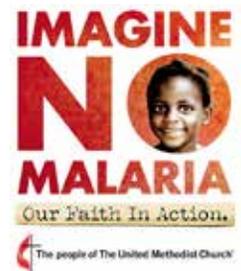
Bishop Jane Allen Middleton, who returned to retirement on August 31, applauded the news and said it “represents sacrificial giving from many.”

The final \$110,000 from the New York Conference came from the Quadrennial Mission Focus Fund. According to Ross Williams, chief financial officer for the NYAC, this fund was established by the conference many years ago to support the United Methodist Church’s four areas of focus—developing principled Christian leaders, congregational development, ministry with the poor and improving health globally. It can be used for investment into

any of these four areas and is funded by a line in the annual conference budget.

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton, who served as chairperson of the UMC’s Global Health Initiative, offered an update on the INM campaign in an email.

“The effort has recently surpassed \$70 million and a pathway has been set forth to raise the remaining \$5 million. As we complete this wonderful connectional project, may our prayers continue to focus on the children and families whose lives have been saved, and whose hope for a long and healthy life has been restored.”



# VIM Builds Bridges—Literally and Spiritually

*A Volunteers in Mission team spent August 5–14 in Nicaragua to strengthen the conference's partnership with Accion Medica Cristiana (AMC) and contribute to the construction of a suspension foot bridge on a model farm known as the New Jerusalem Land Bank. Here are some excerpts and photos from their [blog](#) on the NYAC web site.*

## Monday, Aug. 8

We have been partnered to begin building a pedestrian bridge that will allow children to get to school and residents to get to the market to sell and buy necessities. The current bridge is unsafe and during about 80 percent of the year is impassable due to the high volume of water in the rainy season.

Just a few days ago, a young man—a teacher at the school that the children of New Jerusalem attend—was on his way home. Because the water was high, and the bridge was unsafe, he tried to go through the river. Some friends on the other side of the river saw him, and decided to go fetch a rope to help him across. While they were gone, the young teacher was overtaken by the current. His friends returned with the rope, but could not find him. They first thought that perhaps he had made it safely across. A day later they found his motorcycle where he had left it—odd. The next day they found his clothes in the river. That is when they decided to start a search. The next day they unfortunately found his body.

Why is this important? Our task is to build a bridge—very close to where this young man drowned—because there is no other, safer option . . . to cross a 75-foot wide river. I wish, I pray, that this project could have started earlier, and been at least completed just enough to be passable for this man.

## Thursday, Aug. 11

This morning we divided into groups; one group helped move dirt away from the hole for the foundation of one side of the bridge . . . Another group painted the first coat on the metal posts that will be the railings on the new bridge.

Finally, four others from our group went to visit the farm school at the land bank to learn about the development of the land banks and to see an agricultural test plot where the farmers can experiment with different techniques and crops.

What a wonderful moment it was when the first cement was poured into the foundation! As the afternoon unfolded, many of the stones that we hauled and hauled (and hauled) from the river were placed in the hole, and we began to see real progress.



**Large rocks are placed in a hole before the cement that will form the footing on one side of the footbridge.**



**Members of the team put a coat of green paint on the bridge handrails.**

It's been an important lesson . . . for us that this project began before us and will continue after us. We are part of that process—a big part in several ways, since we are helping with the foundational parts of the bridge, and have raised enough money to pay for the next part, the metal work of the bridge.

The part after that needs more funding, so we will be sharing the story once we get home, and working to help them complete this important project . . . It's very exciting for us to think about the impact this bridge will have on the community . . . We are so blessed

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# VIM Builds Bridges—Literally and Spiritually

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to be a blessing!

Later, . . . associates of this land bank gathered with us to share their stories . . . The farmers and their families work hard for their new lives—studying and learning and implementing new techniques as they grow food for their families like rice, beans, and corn, and things to sell at market, especially coffee and cocoa. They love being able to have their children in school. Their goal is to pay off their 10–12 year mortgages and live sustainable lives.

Imagine this: the men walk about 3.5 kilometers to the main road with 100-pound sacks of coffee or cocoa on their backs. Then they get a bus to towns where their products can be sold, an hour or 1.5 hours away. While this may not sound appealing to us, it surely has improved their lives immensely.

Sometimes it's overwhelming to think about how challenging and hard life in Nicaragua can be for people—and for dogs—from our American perspective anyway. Here, most people don't have cars, and have to walk long ways to take crowded buses. Many work from dawn to dusk, and for those without electricity, like those at the land bank, they cram as much as they can between those hours; even though they sometimes have kerosene lanterns they usually go to bed shortly after sundown. All that and more, just to sustain their simple lives.

. . . The people we have met, even if they are poor by our standards, are proud of what they have achieved, are very generous in the ways that they are able to be, are hard working, and are extremely spiritual. They trust that God will help them through their challenges and will guide them each day. They are inspiring! They remind us that we have much for which to be thankful, and as we prepare to return to the United States in a few days, we pray that we will remember to be grateful, continue to work to help the AMC and their mission, will work for justice in the world, and will learn to live more simply, so that others around the world may simply live.

## Friday, last day in New Jerusalem

Bittersweet moments with fun, work and farewells.

We began by stopping at the school and spending time with the two classes of children.

We did several activities: Daryl brought crosses for the children to decorate with colorful stones and glitter.

It was a great time! The children were so careful and did a great job. We



The group is all smiles in their bright yellow team shirts.

sang “This is the Day” in both English and Spanish.

Each class had their photo taken with a Polaroid camera so we were able to leave the photo in each classroom. Then the fun really began as the children and some adults played with beach balls! It was a time of fun and giggles for everyone.

At the worksite, where there was more concrete to mix, rebar to tie, poles to paint, and then the goodbyes. We presented team t-shirts to many of the partners at the New Jerusalem Land bank and took lots of pictures.

# Fall VIM Trips Take a New Track

Two Volunteers in Mission trips this fall are emphasizing intercultural learning experiences rather than construction work.

## Japan and Philippines | October 5–17

This leadership enrichment opportunity for members of the Council on Missions will focus on intercultural and interfaith experiences.

**Japan host:** Rev. Hikari Chang, regional GBGM missionary serving as administrative and program director of the Wesley Foundation in Tokyo

**Agenda:** Visits to the Hiroshima and the Peace Park and Museum, Nagaragawa church and various temples.

**Philippines hosts:** Jay and Grace Choi; she is a community health worker at Harris Memorial College and he works with the Center for Geocentric Ministries at Union Theological Seminary.

**Agenda:** Harris Memorial College to meet Cristina Manabat, the president, and other faculty members (Harris Memorial offers the only deaconess training in Asia.); Union Theological Seminary; meeting with Bishop Rodolfo Juan of the Manila Episcopal Area.

## Ghana | November 1–15

The Spirit Builders Praise Dance Ministry of the NYAC, led by Rev. Sheila Beckford, Rev. Tisha Jermin, and Rev. Dr. Leslie Duroseau, are anticipating a unique teaching and learning experience in Ghana. According to Beckford, “the team will have an opportunity to expand their repertoire by incorporating African techniques and culture into their dance ministry.”

**Agenda:** Visits to the W.E.B. Du Bois Center and Nkrumah Mausoleum in Accra, Elmina and Cape Coast slave castles.

## Clergy Health Clinic Openings

There are still spaces available for active clergy and/or their spouses in the October 24–30 health clinic and seminar at New York Methodist Hospital in Brooklyn.

Overnight accommodations and virtually all expenses beyond a \$50 registration fee are covered by the hospital. Where else can you receive \$1000s in medical exams and testing for \$50? Give yourself this gift to check out your health? Check out the [details](#) on the NYAC website, or contact coordinator, Rev. Elizabeth Braddon at [elizabeth.braddon@gmail.com](mailto:elizabeth.braddon@gmail.com), or 203-481-2789.

## Intercultural Training For Churches

The Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CCORR) offers a free three-hour workshop, “Intercultural Competency for Church Leaders” available to any local church with 10 or more people interested in attending. This workshop will help your leaders:

- Increase skills in working with people of diverse backgrounds
- Create new places for new people in your ministry
- Effectively address tensions and conflict in your church and community
- Build relationships with your groups through deep sharing and learning.

This is a workshop that CCORR offers for free to the local church, church councils, small groups, and districts.

If you would like to invite CCORR to bring this workshop to your church/ministry, email Dorlimar Lebrón Malavé at [dorlimar.lebron@gmail.com](mailto:dorlimar.lebron@gmail.com) with a tentative date. A member of CCORR will follow up with further details.

## JOB OPENING

### Children, Youth Ministries

Grace United Methodist Church in Valley Stream, N.Y., is seeking a dynamic, dedicated, and passionate Christian individual to lead our Children and Youth Ministries. The church describes itself as a family of faith striving to share God’s love with all people. The ideal candidate should be an active member in church ministry, a college graduate with experience working with children, possess good computer and communication skills, knowledge of contemporary communication tools, have good management and organizational skills, and be comfortable leading worship, prayer, and Bible study. This part time position requires 10–15 hours per week.

Please send your cover letter and resume to [GraceVSNY@aol.com](mailto:GraceVSNY@aol.com).

## “Living in the Now” Can Be a Gift

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant, Older Adult Ministries

*Alive Now*, published by The Upper Room—a ministry of the United Methodist Church—is one magazine my wife, Barbara, and I enjoy. When reading it the other night I found my mind wandering from the writings themselves to the title, *Alive Now*. Who thought of the name? What is its origin? Did the title decide the purpose of the magazine or did the name come first, helping to decide its direction? I have been playing with the words and discovered how many times they have come from my lips.

I can’t help but think of my time as director of spiritual life of United Methodist Homes and the number of times residents would fret about the past and the future. This fretting often led to an inability to live comfortably in the present moment. While the fretting was understandable, it served no useful purpose.

A frequently asked question was, “Why am I still here?” My answer was a variation of “I don’t know.” But the fact is you are still here. You are still alive now! What are you going to do about that? The present is too good a gift to be wasted. Whatever the ultimate reason, the fact is still a fact.

The good news is that our faith offers more than a clue or two on how to move forward. These clues are found in the call to discipleship: Follow me. I’ve yet to meet anyone, regardless of age or health, who could not be loving, which is surely part of that call. Not to challenge older adults to find meaning in their declining years by relating them to their discipleship is to miss an opportunity for life giving ministry. Although it may be difficult to offer the challenge to a person in physical or cognitive decline, it is even so, when heard, truly life giving.

Even as I feel changes that come with my own aging, when I live into the basic call, somehow the changes feel less important. The challenge as we change is to find new ways to remain faithful, to always discover we are alive now and to help others to make the same discovery.



GOD’S GIFT OF LONG LIFE

## Churches Save Utility Costs with BlocPower

More than a year ago, the energy conservation company BlocPower partnered with the United Methodist City Society to help churches with their utility costs. Their funding came through the Department of Energy and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to provide opportunities to help the United Methodist community become more energy efficient.

BlocPower aims to serve the community by providing the financial and engineering services that facilitate energy upgrades for buildings. We specifically focused on small businesses and not-for-profit organizations, including houses of worship. To date, more than 300 houses of worship are participating, 40 of which are United Methodists churches in Brooklyn and the Bronx, and Nassau, Suffolk, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties.

BlocPower’s process is very straightforward. First, the church provides their energy consumption information for the last year, including recent meter statements. Next, BlocPower uses engineers to assess the client’s energy usage and compile a 30-page comprehensive report of conservation suggestions. Finally, they work with a church to secure financing, and/or grants to implement the suggested improvements.

So far, BlocPower has helped Tremont, Fordham, Hempstead, Hempstead, Trinity Richmond Hill and Vandever Park churches retrofit their facilities. Tremont and Fordham specifically received \$50,000 loans from NYSERDA to refit their heating and air conditioning systems; the loans are paid back through reduced energy usage. On average, the upgrades have provided savings of between 20 and 30 percent on the churches’ annual bills.

If you are interested in entering the program, contact Rev. Bill Shillady at [bshillady@umcitysociety.org](mailto:bshillady@umcitysociety.org).

# NEJ Bishops Respond to Call to Action on Racism

August 12, 2016

Dear NEJ Black United Methodist Pastors, (BUMP), and NEJ Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR), NEJ Black Leadership Forum, (BLF), Joseph Daniels, Varlyna Wright, William Meekins, Lillian Smith, Denise Smartt Sears, Tracy Bass, and Derrick Porter,

Thank you for your inquiry as to how the NEJ College of Bishops is beginning to address the [Call to Action legislation](#) passed at the 2016 NEJ Conference. At our first college meeting following the conference on August 11 and 12, the college spent significant time discussing next steps.

The college agreed that we would begin to address our own racism by engaging an outside resource to lead the college through training in intercultural competency in 2017. This would be a foundational step toward more specific training and discussion within the college about racism, white privilege, white supremacy, oppression, and internalized oppression. We agreed that we would spend time in discussion and/or training in these areas in every college meeting within this quadrennium.

We committed to carrying out the call to action in our conference areas realizing that the work will need to be contextualized for each conference culture and situation. There will necessarily be a variety of ways, plans, and strategies used to respond to the call to action within the NEJ episcopal areas. To this end we began to identify resource groups and persons who we will turn to for help in this effort. General Commission on Religion and Race, General Commission on Status and Role of Women, *Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships*, *Visions*, *Committee on Native American Ministries*, the Multi-ethnic Center for Ministry, conversation projects, our United Methodist schools, and a variety of individuals appear on the beginning of our resource list. We will continue to add to this list of resources for our use and for use in the

conference areas we serve. We will have reports on progress and plans submitted to our annual conference sessions and will share them with the jurisdiction. We will initiate conversation with the jurisdictional secretary on how stories of response, ideas, and progress can be made available and be shared periodically with the entire NEJ area. We will work with the vision table to plan for and implement intercultural competency training among its members as a foundational training for future discussions and collaborative plans on addressing the call to action across the jurisdiction. The college has organized a team to continue the work between college meetings and to work with other entities within the jurisdiction.

We will also encourage the Council of Bishops to also pursue an action plan in which the Council will confront its racism and initiate ongoing internal and external conversations on white privilege, white supremacy, oppression and internalized oppression. To that end we are writing a letter to the Council inviting them to join our College on this journey.

We expect that the Multi-Ethnic Center, annual conferences, as well as additional jurisdictional and general church teams, boards, agencies and leaders will contribute ideas and suggestions for resourcing and strategy as we move forward in collaborating in this work and ministry within the jurisdiction. Additionally, we will explore our understanding of tribalism as understood by many of God's people whose family origin lies outside of the United States and explore our understanding of nations as understood by many of God's native persons whose family origin lies within the United States.

We seek your prayers and support as we begin to take steps to respond to what has now become a jurisdictional call to action. We are thankful for those who initiated the call to this work.

Peace,  
Sandra Steiner Ball  
President of the NEJ College of Bishops

## Bishops Delay Naming Commission

The Council of Bishops' (COB) Executive Committee says that an overwhelming number of nominations for the Commission on a Way Forward has delayed the appointment of commission members. More time is needed for all nominees to be given adequate consideration.

Following their July meeting, the COB's Executive Committee asked all current residential and retired bishops to nominate up to five persons by August 15. At that time, they expected to name the commission members by August 31, with a target of October for an initial meeting.

This resulted in well over 300 nominees for membership, including names that were previously submitted to either the president or executive secretary of the council.

"We are well along in prayerfully vetting each of the nominees to

create a commission that reflects the global and theological diversity of the church, as well as commission membership that is truly open to finding a way forward," said Bishop Bruce R. Ough, president of the Council of Bishops. "However, the enormity of the task, the desire to do it well and the urgency of beginning this work all need to be balanced."

The executive committee was to meet by conference call on September 9 to consider a proposed list of 20–25 Commission members. Once the Executive Committee agrees on a final membership list, the full Council will be given an opportunity to approve the commission membership.

"I am still very hopeful we can assemble the Commission and begin its work this fall," Bishop Ough said. "In the meantime, I urge the entire church to join the bishops in praying our way forward."

## Getty Concert, Workshop Set for October 30

The Kensington United Methodist Church in Connecticut in joining with other area churches to present hymn writers Keith and Kristyn Getty in concert. The Gettys, known for hymns like "In Christ Alone" and "The Power of the Cross," will perform with their band at 6 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 30 at Bethany Covenant Church, 785 Mill Street, Berlin, Conn.

Their songs have been performed by a range of artists, including Alison Krauss, Ricky Skaggs, Newsboys, Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Chris Tomlin.

Earlier in the day, at 2 p.m., Keith Getty will present a leadership event, "Hymns, Worship and the Christian Life," for pastors, church leaders and musicians in The Gathering Place at Bethany Covenant Church. This free event is open to all, but registration is required at <http://www.gettymusic.com/leadership-events>. Snacks and refreshments will be provided.

To purchase the \$30 concert tickets, go to: [www.gettys.eventbrite.com](http://www.gettys.eventbrite.com). For more information or questions, email [BerlinWorshipLeaders@gmail.com](mailto:BerlinWorshipLeaders@gmail.com).

# NC Pastor Avoids Church Trial in Same-Sex Wedding

UMNS | A pastor in Charlotte, North Carolina, will avoid a church trial and keep her job after she co-officiated with retired Bishop Melvin Talbert at the April same-gender wedding of two church members.

The Western North Carolina Conference announced that the complaint against the Rev. Val Rosenquist had reached a just resolution on Aug. 30. The resolution came shortly before the conference's Bishop Larry M. Goodpaster began his long-planned retirement Sept. 1.

Rosenquist, senior pastor of First United Methodist Church in Charlotte, and Talbert co-officiated the April 23 wedding of Jim Wilborne and John Romano—both members of the congregation. The wedding took place despite church law that bans United Methodist clergy from performing and churches from hosting ceremonies that celebrate same-gender unions.

Talbert told United Methodist News Service that as far as he knows, he does not face any complaint for the wedding. However, the Council of Bishops suggested in May that Talbert might have breached [an earlier just resolution reached](#) after he officiated at a same-gender union in 2013.

A church-trial conviction can result in clergy losing their credentials or lesser penalties. However, the Book of Discipline, the denomination's law book, also calls church trials "an expedient of last resort" and keeps the

door open for "a just resolution" through much of the complaint process.

The parties involved in Rosenquist's case have decided to keep the details of the resolution confidential pending any action prompted by the new Commission on a Way Forward. Bishops [are establishing the commission](#) with the task of trying to bridge the denomination's deep divisions over homosexuality and preserve church unity.

Rosenquist and the conference confirmed that she still remains under appointment at First United Methodist Church, and unlike in some other same-sex wedding cases, she is not under suspension.

Talbert said the question of whether he violated the terms of his just resolution is now before a team in the Western Jurisdiction. Talbert retired from that jurisdiction. In the 2015 just resolution, Talbert agreed he was willing "to live according to the Book of Discipline."

Talbert—who has long advocated eliminating church restrictions related to lesbian and gay individuals—has said the Discipline also talks of living in Christian conscience and that is what he is trying to do.

So far, he said, the team has taken no action.

Bishop Elaine Stanovsky is the convener of the team. On Sept. 1, she just began a new assignment as bishop of the Alaska, Oregon-Idaho and Pacific Northwest conferences, and did not immediately return requests for comment.

## OBITUARIES

### Susan Woodworth

Susan Woodworth, 60, died September 3, 2016. She was the wife of Rev. Robert Kersten, who retired from the New York Conference in 2015.

Woodworth was born in Montreal, Canada. She graduated in 1978 with a bachelor's degree in English from Middlebury College.

Throughout her life, she was engaged in ministry with the Henderson Settlement in Frakes, Ky.; The United Ministry of Delhi's play school; as campus minister at Hartwick College and SUNY Oneonta; and then as a licensed local pastor in the New York Conference, serving the Andes, Hurleyville and Woodridge churches.

Woodworth also served as director of Delaware Opportunities' big buddy program; activities director at Countryside Care Center, Delhi; and children's program facilitator at the Daniel Pierce Library in Grahamsville, N.Y. She retired in December 2015 from Silver Bay YMCA, where she served as host of the Brookside/Trinity pastoral respite ministry.

When Woodworth was diagnosed with cancer three months after retiring, she vowed to continue living fully and intentionally. She asked that she be honored and remembered her best by living your life fully and intentionally with kindness and compassion.

In addition to her husband, Woodworth is survived by her children and their families, Gideon, Liz and Wyatt Frisbee, and Chelsea Frisbee and Silas Branson; her stepson and his family, Kris, Kate and Sadie Kersten. She is also survived by her parents Don and Earla Woodworth; a brother and his family, Greg, Carolyn, Sara and Hilary Woodworth; and brother Gordon Woodworth; her former husband, Ron Frisbee; and many aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Calling hours are 5 to 7 p.m., Friday, Sept. 16 at Colonial Memorial Funeral Home, 396 State Route 52, Woodbourne, N.Y. A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 17 at the United Ministry of Delhi, Courthouse Square, Delhi, N.Y. Rev. Dr. Mark Chatterton and Rev. Duane Buddle will co-officiate. The family will greet guests prior to the service from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. in the Harder Room. A reception following the service will be held in McIntosh Hall.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Woodworth's name may be made to Henderson Settlement, P.O. Box 205, 16773 Highway 190, Frakes KY 40940, or at [www.hendersonsettlement.com](http://www.hendersonsettlement.com); The Intervale Center, 180 Intervale Road, Burlington VT 05401, or at [www.intervale.org](http://www.intervale.org); or The United Ministry of Delhi, PO Box 111, Delhi, NY 13753.

Notes of condolence may be sent to Bob Kersten and the family at P.O. Box 233, Pittsford, VT 05763.

### Rev. Sydney L. Parker

The Reverend Sydney L. Parker, 93, died August 10, 2016, at Benchmark Senior Living in Hamden, Conn.

Rev. Parker was born June 16, 1923, in Brooklyn, to the late Joseph and Zedonia (Zeda) Lasky. He was a graduate of the City College of New York and the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He was a veteran of World War II, having served in the U.S. Army as a medic. He was a long-time member of the Wallingford Senior Center, where he led a Bible study.

Parker served in the New York Conference for 32 years from 1956 until his retirement in 1988. He was a pastor in New York for Middle Hope and Marlboro, Dover Plains and Wingdale, Philmont, St. Paul's in Oyster Bay, Warwick, Trinity in LaGrangeville, in addition to and Wallingford in Connecticut.

Survivors include two daughters, Madeline R. Parker of Wallingford, Conn., and Bernice E. Parker of Watertown, Mass.; one brother, Gerard D. (Selma) Parker, of New York; one granddaughter, Sarah P. Yesko, of California, and two nieces, Jodi Seidner of Connecticut and Nadine Jacobson of New York. His wife, Liselotte (Lottie) Furth Parker, and his oldest daughter, Susan E. Parker, predeceased him.

A memorial service was held August 20 at the Cheshire UMC in Cheshire, Conn. Interment was at Ferncliff Mausoleum in Hartsdale, N.Y.

Condolences may be sent to the family in care of Bernice Parker, 4 Bates Road, Apt. 4, Watertown, MA 01472. A message of remembrance may also be left at [www.BaileyCares.com](http://www.BaileyCares.com).

# God's Sign for a New Future

My Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Last week I jogged about a mile away from the condo where I've been living for the past 20 months to the Conference Center. As I stood in front of this building under renovation I looked up at the sky to see a full rainbow—a sign of God's blessing over this building that is only partially restored.

Could this be a metaphor for The United Methodist Church today? We too are undergoing a renovation. Yet we have a strong foundation. And surely we have the promise of God's blessing. We have come this far by faith and most assuredly God will continue to lead us into a faithful new future.

The Council of Bishops is establishing a Commission on "A Way Forward" as a denomination. We find ourselves divided by many issues, including how we live together regarding LGBTQI persons. But we are united by far more than we are divided. Can we not claim our oneness in Jesus Christ in such a way that we can be the church God has called us to be?

I was startled recently in reading *The Wright Brothers* by David McCullough. Their father Martin Wright was a bishop of the Brethren Church, one of The United Methodism's predecessor denominations. What I learned is that in the late 1800s that church split. Why? What issue would compel these faithful, committed Christian sisters and brothers in Christ to divide a denomination? They divided over whether or not to allow church members to be Masons.

We are perhaps not of one mind even today over the issue of membership in the Masons. But are our opinions so strong that we would consider dividing our denomination over this?

I can only imagine that Jesus wept when that division occurred and Jesus is weeping as we struggle with unity today. Yet out of just such struggles can come a promise of a stronger, more faithful, and more fruitful church.

Bishop Ivan Abrahamson, head of the World Methodist Council, said recently, "One of the things that I have been a bit disappointed about in the United States is the sense of pessimism, which is definitely not shared with the rest of the world communion. We stand in a great tradition. I passionately believe that the golden years of Methodism don't lie behind us, but in the future."

This is what we have to offer to the world: a passion to live as Christ lived—a life in love with God and God's people, focusing on our spiritual connection and a commitment to acts of justice and mercy to the last, the lost, and the lonely.

Simone Weil and others have said that the very nature of spiritual truth is that it is paradoxical. The Great Paradox of our Christian faith is that when we give our lives in love, we receive life. The cross expresses this metaphor so powerfully. Jesus gives his life in love so that we might be transformed by love.

Can United Methodism live into this paradox? Can we love each other even while we disagree? Can we give of ourselves sacrificially, knowing that this is the way to new life? Can we accept and embrace our LGBTQI sisters and brothers as created by God and fully part of our church? Can we love those who want to uphold our clergy covenant as expressed in our *Book of Discipline*?

In other words, can we love all persons, whether or not they share our views? I believe that we can, and that we must. For love is the only "Way Forward" for The United Methodist Church and for us individually. Without love we are lost, but with love we will find our way. The rainbow



**Bishop Jane Allen Middleton processes into the Hofstra Arena for worship during the 2016 New York Annual Conference.**

hovering over our United Methodist Church under renovation is a sign of a future of hope. As Paul said, "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love."

I have covenanted with my colleague bishops to pray daily for God's yearning to be fulfilled for The United Methodist Church. It is so clear that in these days we must fervently be in prayer. These are my last words to you as your Interim Bishop. God is providing well for you as you enter into a season under the leadership of Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton. It has been a privilege beyond words to serve you. I will continue to hold you, the beloved people of the New York Annual Conference, in my daily prayer. May the rainbow be a promise of God's abiding love.

In Christ's love,

† *Jane Allen Middleton*

Bishop Jane Allen Middleton