

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

THE VISION

September 2017



Disaster Relief Response From Bishop

Dear Friends & Colleagues,

It seems that writing pastoral letters to you has become a constant in these days of turmoil and uncertainty. Global instability, political upheaval, and domestic acts of hatred have dominated our lives in recent weeks. Now,

yet another threat has consumed our thoughts and prayers.

I, like you, am heartbroken at the images coming out of Texas and Louisiana in response to Hurricane Harvey. And, even as I write this letter, Hurricane Irma is raging



through the Caribbean on a direct path to the southern United States.

Millions of people are being directly affected by these devastating storms. Though we may try, it is impossible to adequately comprehend the magnitude of these events, the level of human suffering, and the long-term effects of a disaster of this sort. As people of faith, we can thank God for the efforts of first responders and "neighbors helping neighbors" which are so critical in the early stages of storm recovery. This is truly "us" at our best.

In many areas of Texas the full impact of Hurricane Harvey is only now being discovered. The after-effects of Hurricane Irma are only now being anticipated. What we do know though is that families will be displaced for long periods of time, and that once these storms pass the difficult process of assessing homes and neighborhoods begins. As we watch these storms take their course it is natural for us as

Continued on page 3



PHOTO BY JOANNE S. UTLEY

Bishop Bickerton, right, and members of the cabinet lay hands upon Rev. Dr. Alpher Sylvester as they pray during the installation service for the new Connecticut District superintendent.

Sylvester Installed as Connecticut DS

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY
Editor, *The Vision*

In a spirit-filled service marked by uplifting music and exuberant preaching, Rev. Dr. Alpher Sylvester was officially installed as superintendent of the Connecticut District on September 10. The Nichols UMC in Trumbull, Conn., was filled to capacity to celebrate

Sylvester, who took on his new role July 1. As the processional, "Come Thou Almighty," was sung, Sylvester walked up the aisle hand-in-hand with Bishop Thomas Bickerton, and they both paused to bow at the altar before going to their seats.

Members of Sylvester's former church, Grace
Continued on page 11

Faith Helped Clinton Grieve, Move Forward

BY JOANNE S. UTLEY
Editor, *The Vision*

Resist. Insist. Persist. Enlist.

That was the message that former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton shared in a conversation about her faith and politics before a group of some 1,300 people at Riverside Church in New York City.

"Enlisting is the most important part, Clinton said. "We need to start breaking down barriers. If we don't listen to one another we're not laying the groundwork for change."

The September 7 event was a night to celebrate and to raise funds for the ministries of Camp Olmsted, which has been serving children in New York City neighborhoods since
Continued on page 6



PHOTO BY JOANNE S. UTLEY

Clinton said she turned to prayer after her loss in the 2016 presidential race.



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

Ongoing Immigration Prayers

Join the NYAC Immigration Task Force for a time of prayer for our country and immigrant brothers and sisters on Monday nights from 7:30–8 p.m. until further notice. Call-in number: 641-715-3580; group code: 780843#. Contact Pastor [Ximena Varas](#) for more information.

Sept.–Nov. “Connecting Neighbors” Training

“Connecting Neighbors – Ready Church” is an UMCOR/NYAC program designed to assist churches in their preparation for, and response to, the “when.” All churches are encouraged to attend one of the Saturday training events being offered through our Disaster Response Ministry. All the sessions are from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., unless otherwise indicated. For more information, and to register, please visit the [missions/disaster response page](#) on the NYAC web site.

September 23: New Paltz UMC, 1 Grove St., New Paltz, N.Y.

September 30: Mount Kisco UMC, 300 Main St., Mt Kisco, N.Y.

September 30: Noon to 4 p.m., Milton/Marlboro UMC, 112 Church St., Milton, N.Y.

October 7: St. Johns (Elmont/Valley Stream), 2105 Stuart Ave., Valley Stream, N.Y.

October 21: Seymour UMC, 90 Pearl St., Seymour, Conn.

October 28: Grace, UMC, 121 Pleasant St, Southington, Conn.

November 4: Simsbury UMC, 799 Hopmeadow St, Simsbury, Conn.

November 11: First UMC, Routes 23 and 22, Hillsdale, N.Y.

9/28 Anchor House Banquet

Anchor House will host its annual graduation banquet for their clients who have successfully completed treatment at 6 p.m. at the Grand Prospect Hall in Brooklyn. The residential drug treatment program for men and women is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Tickets are \$75; to purchase call Carolyn Bracy at 718-771-0760, ext. 124.

9/30 Conference Center Open House

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton invites you to drop by 20 Soundview Avenue in White Plains, N.Y., anytime between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. to get a tour of the recently renovated building. There will be lots of staff on hand to answer questions, and light refreshments, too. Please respond if you'll attend [here](#).

9/30 Health Quotient Deadline

Clergy are requested to take the Health Quotient questionnaire to avoid paying a higher amount on next year's Healthflex deductible. Go to www.wespath.org, and then log into your HealthFlex/WebMD account to get started. Individuals will pay \$250 extra; families will pay \$500. **Both the clergy person and their spouse must complete the HQ if both are enrolled in HealthFlex.**

9/30 Workshop with Marcia McFee

Dr. Marcia McFee returns to New York to lead this one-day worship workshop from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Offered in conjunction with Practical Resources for Churches at Bethany Presbyterian Church in Huntington Station, N.Y. [Click](#) for details of workshop sessions and registration information. \$10 for United Methodists in advance, or \$20 at the door.

10/2–4 Tri-District Clergy Retreats

Rev. Junius Dotson, the new director of Discipleship Ministries, will be the guest speaker at these annual overnight retreats for clergy at the Stony Point Center in Stony Point, N.Y. Check [here](#) for registration details.

- **October 2–3:** Northern districts (Catskill Hudson, Connecticut/New York and Connecticut) Check-in begins at 10 a.m., October 2. Event begins with lunch on Monday; ends with lunch on Tuesday.
- **October 3–4:** Southern districts (Metropolitan, LI East and LI West) Check-in begins at 10 a.m., October 3. Event begins with lunch on Tuesday; ends with lunch on Wednesday.

10/5-6 NEJ BMCR Meeting

The New York Conference plays host to this annual gathering at First UMC, 227 E. Lincoln Ave., Mount Vernon, N.Y. The theme is “Stony The Road We Trod!”


10/14 Safe Sanctuaries Training

Vail's Gate UMC at 854 Bloomingrove Tpk., New Windsor, N.Y., will host a Safe Sanctuaries workshop designed for congregations who do not have a written policy or need a refresher on editing their policy. The workshop prepares a core team of 4–5 to work with the congregation to write a policy, as well as providing information on how to train trustees, teachers, parents and pastors on the implementation of that policy. The workshop runs from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information or to register, contact Cassandra Negri at childrensministry@nyac-umc.com.

10/14 St. Paul Celebrates 70 Years

St. Paul UMC in Jamaica, N.Y., is celebrating 70 years of ministry to the surrounding community at luncheon banquet at Antun's of Queens

Continued on page 10



The **Vision**

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

Bishop: Thomas J. Bickerton
Editor: Joanne Utley
 New York Conference of The United Methodist Church
 20 Soundview Avenue, White Plains, NY 10606
 Phone (888) 696-6922
 Fax (914) 615-2244; Website: www.nyac.com
 Vision e-mail: vision@nyac.com

Bishop Issues Cleaning/Health Kit Challenge

Continued from page 1

United Methodists to ask, “How can we help?”

Pray.

May our prayers be for God’s grace to fall upon all who are directly impacted by these storms, interceding on their behalf for strength, courage, patience, and hope for this time and for the days, weeks, months, and even years, to come. Let us pray for discernment as a Church that we may respond in ways that bring hope and healing to survivors. And let us be reminded of the presence and goodness of God in all situations and all circumstances.

Maintain a posture of “active waiting.”

I have been in touch with Tom Vencuss, our conference disaster response coordinator. As he describes it, right now we are in a place of “active waiting.” He has been a part of conference calls with UMCOR Disaster Response personnel and Disaster Response Coordinators from Texas and Louisiana and will be a part of future calls in response to the damage caused by Hurricane Irma. They are working with national and local response agencies to determine an appropriate time and response on the part of volunteer and faith-based organizations.

I know it is in our DNA to want to respond as soon as possible, but at this point “out of area” volunteers are being asked to not self-deploy. The situation is not appropriate or safe and there is no infrastructure in place to receive volunteer teams. It will most likely be weeks before a general call goes out for early response teams. In the meantime, Tom is providing daily updates on the NYAC web site.

Mobilize your local church to make an immediate impact.

There is a direct request from our United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to begin

assembling clean-up buckets and health kits. A list of collection sites will be published shortly. Please check the NYAC website for places and times for these collections. UMCOR and Conference leadership ask that only those items requested be collected.

In addition, there are three ways for you to respond financially. UMCOR has designated two Advance numbers for financial donations: [US Disaster Response Advance #901670](#) and the [Material Resources Advance #901440](#). We are also setting up a fund to assist our own early response teams with their travel and supplies. You can send your contributions to the NY Conference, 20 Soundview Ave., White Plains, NY 10606 with “New York Disaster Response Fund” on the memo line or donate directly [online](#) and choose “Disaster Response Fund” in the direct your gift drop-down list.

I am asking each of our churches to mobilize volunteers to construct clean-up buckets and health kits and to take up a special offering for these needs no later than the end of October.

Early response team training events will be scheduled and offered throughout the Conference within the coming weeks. ERT leaders are also being identified and teams will begin to be assembled. Our first team is scheduled for the first week of October.

In addition, there has been concern expressed for the massive flooding that has taken place in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal. The General Board of Global Ministries has been involved in active conversations with our international partners about the most appropriate and effective ways for us to respond. We will communicate with you regarding those plans once they are determined. For now, the best way to respond is through contributions to [International Advance #982450](#).

Friends, at times like this I



Getting It Done

Nikki Rose, from left, Wendy Vencuss and Gail Douglas-Boykin strike a pose during a “Done In A Day” project at a home in Coney Island, Brooklyn. New York Conference staff took part in two daylong rebuilding efforts at the home on August 15 and 22.

am so grateful for the connection we have as United Methodists and especially thankful for the faithful response of the people within our Annual Conference. We have benefitted in the past from the gracious response of United Methodist people when tragedy and hardship has come to our area. It is time for us to respond in kind.

It is so good to know that in the midst of tragedy there are people at work on our behalf, that we have a supportive community of prayer and service, and that we have places in which to gather to share our concerns and joys, our sorrow and blessings. And, I am grateful

to you, the people of the New York Conference for your commitment to mission and ministry, serving those who need us most.

The face of Christ is needed today among those who cannot see beyond their own loss and hardship. May we be that face today in the way in which we respond in love.

The Journey Continues, . . .

Thomas J. Bickerton

Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop



Graduation Smiles

Pastors Gregory Higgins, left, and John LeCain congratulate one another after graduating from the Course of Study at Wesley Theological Seminary. The service was held August 2 at Metropolitan Memorial UMC, in Washington, D.C.

Children's Sermon Course by NYAC Member

A new online course about children's sermons will be taught by Elaine Short, a member of First UMC of Port Jefferson, N.Y. Short, a lifelong Methodist, will lead "Preaching a Children's Sermon," through BeADisciple.com, an online learning platform for Christian education courses.



Elaine Short

Short has been a lay speaker in the UMC for many years, and plans to pursue training to become a certified lay minister.

The two-week course starts September 25 and costs \$25 per participant. The course description and registration details are [online](#).

Churches Must Offer NY Family Leave Benefit

Starting January 1, 2018, New York will put in place one of the most comprehensive paid family leave laws in the nation. The final regulations are still pending and guidelines are just becoming available. However, it's still important to pass along information about the current N.Y. disability law and its upcoming change.

New York is one of a handful of states that require employers to provide disability insurance coverage to employees for an off-the-job injury or illness. This short-term disability insurance has been mandated by the state for many years and can be obtained through your local insurance broker or a state-approved carrier. Churches and not-for-profits are not exempt from providing short-term disability insurance for their employees, although clergy themselves are exempt. Starting on January 1, all N.Y. employers must offer paid family leave as a rider to their disability policy.

The N.Y. disability and the paid family leave insurance are not part of our Worker's Compensation policy. Every local church, with at least one employee (full or part-time) must purchase this policy on their own.

What is the New York Disability Benefit?

- Temporary cash benefits—for a maximum of 26 weeks—paid to a wage earner when disabled by an off the job injury or illness
- The benefit provides cash only, not medical care or medical insurance

What is the New York Paid Family Leave Benefit?

- Allows employee to bond with a newborn, adopted or fostered child
- Allows employee to care for a family member with a serious health condition
- Assists when a family member is deployed on active military duty
- Provides wage replacement for 8 weeks in 2018, increasing up to 12 weeks in 2021
- Provides job protection while on leave
- Provides continuation of health insurance while on leave



Some helpful links:

- NY Disability [Benefit](#)
- NY Paid Family Leave [Benefit](#)

Employers may choose to cover the cost or deduct the premium cost for the paid family leave insurance policy from employees through a payroll deduction. The law actually allows you to start deducting up to \$1 per week now, since employees who have been employed for six months on January 1 will be eligible for up to 8 weeks of paid leave at 50 percent of their weekly pay (capped at 50 percent of the state-wide average pay). The benefit will increase yearly, and in 2021 employees will be eligible for 12 weeks of leave at up to 67 percent of their weekly pay (capped at 67 percent of the state-wide average pay).

The legislative expectation is that employees who need family leave time will now be able to take time off, knowing that their job is safe and that they will still receive a percentage of their pay. Both of these obstacles might have previously prevented lower wage employees from even considering being away from work.

I will continue to update you as more information becomes available from the State of New York, although I strongly advise you not to delay in contacting your insurance broker, getting quotes and putting this policy in place by January 1.

Warm regards,
Sally Truglia

Human Resource & Benefits Manager
New York Annual Conference of the UMC
struglia@nyac.com

Retreating at Quinipet a Church Tradition

BY JANE WAKEMAN

Deaconess

For many churches across the New York Conference, an annual weekend retreat is a beloved tradition, and Farmingdale UMC is no exception. Some 16 members of the congregation carried out the tradition at Camp Quinipet on August 25–27. The diverse group of nine women and seven men enjoyed the perfect weather and the amenities of the Jesse Lee guesthouse.

Church member Betty Gastelua led the group in Bible study on Saturday around the theme of “tabernacle.” She traced the biblical origins and made connections between ancient and the modern times in symbolism, worship and Christian practice. This theme culminated in the Sunday service in Wesley Hall where Gastelua had constructed a “tabernacle” as a worship centerpiece. Tiny lights outlined a cross and symbols were placed to represent the various elements of the tabernacle. Symbols placed within the cross replicated those in the ancient tabernacle; bronze altar and laver, a gold lampstand, the table of showbread, altar of incense and the ark of the covenant. Each was connected to a present-day element of the worship service.

When asked for their “top 10” reasons to chose retreat time at Quinipet, the group had easy answers: the beautiful location, dawn and sunset views, the mile of waterfront, and the charming gazebo. Others called the camp “healing holy ground.”

Dwight Andrews recalled the joy and inspiration he experienced during childhood retreats at the camp on Shelter Island. This year, he led the group on an interpretive walk at the nearby Mashomack Preserve. The memories of childhood experiences along with the current reality causes a “melding” of past and present, he said. One can see how faith has grown and deepened in the intervening years. The property is “irreplaceable”



and the high level of maintenance is part of the positive experience.

Debbie Gunther, who now lives in Syracuse, noted that she’s been part of another group that uses the camp occasionally, the Nassau Hiking and Outdoor Club. The space is welcoming to everyone in the club, regardless of background or religious affiliation, she said. The grounds are peaceful and it is a great place to put away the cares and stresses of daily life in order to reclaim a renewed strength and peace.

Mary Bing, a first-time camper at Quinipet, said that she enjoys the intimate worship that can take place in a small group away from home. She also said she appreciated the time apart to deepen relationships with fellow church members. Veterans of the weekend came from as far away as Florida to take part in this retreat.

Retreats at Camp Quinipet can take place anytime throughout the year. Booking is done through the [retreat link](#) on the camps web site.



Members of the Farmingdale UMC gather for Sunday worship during their weekend retreat at Camp Quinipet.

Caring Touch Can Speak Volumes in Ministry

BY JIM STINSON

Older Adults Ministry Consultant

He slouches in his wheelchair as bingo cards are being distributed. I am not sure what he is thinking. My guess is he’s not a big fan of the game. Every signal from his body seems to say he would rather be anywhere but where he is at the moment. He is in the sunroom of a very nice community for those who can no longer manage life on their own.

Suddenly music from the 1940s and 1950s is heard and “Martie” comes alive. It’s beautiful to see his immediate change of mood. His face lights up. His whole demeanor changes. I am not alone in noticing the change. An aide sees it, too. She puts her arms around the back of his chair, begins swaying the chair as she hums the music.

Martie wiggles himself into the corner of the chair and nestles into the arms that are moving it. “Ah,” he coos, “I’m in heaven.”

Bingo is no longer on his mind. The soft touch of an aide and the music are the key that opens Martie’s heart. He is clearly loving this human connection with this caring aide, who seems to understand the importance of touch to a human soul—no matter how battered and frail age has made him. It brings a smile, a visible change in attitude.

This smile, this visible change in attitude, affects me as well. Suddenly I feel better about visiting a parishioner, who also resides at this facility, and the ministry of which I am privileged to be a part.

She is delightful even in the repetition of the same stories over and over again, even in her forgetfulness, even in her “hating this place” and “having her home taken away.”

What is delightful about her? Maybe, it is that she smiles a lot, even when she is angry. Maybe, it’s because she has just asked me to play bingo with her. Maybe, it’s because the smiles are genuine and often accompany her comment, “Oh well, I’ve had a good life, I’ll do what I can and make the best of it.”

Reluctantly (I have a busy day scheduled) come the words I haven’t planned on, “I would love to play bingo with you and your friends.” I take her hand and help her move the markers to the numbers as they are called. When she has had enough of bingo, she grabs my hand tightly and says with a big grin on her face, “That was nice. I like playing bingo with you.”

She reinforces what I was reminded of by Martie. A caring, appropriate touch is often a part of ministry, especially ministry with people who often feel no longer needed or valued. Older adult ministry is often a matter of “keeping in touch.” A pat on the shoulder, holding a hand in prayer, a hug (when the relationship allows), guiding a shaky hand to a bingo board, all speak volumes. So, a thought for the day: keep in touch.





DAVE CROSS PHOTOGRAPHY

Hillary Rodham Clinton, above left, answers a question from Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, pastor of Foundry UMC, during a September benefit event for Camp Olmsted. Bishop Bickerton, below, greets Clinton at the start of the event.

Clinton Urges Faith-Based Resistance, Engagement

Continued from page 1

1901. This summer brought some 350 kids to the camp, which is operated by the United Methodist City Society.

In his opening remarks, Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton addressed the news that Abingdon Publishing was recalling all copies of a book of daily devotionals that were sent to Clinton during the campaign. Questions had arisen about unattributed content in the book, “Strong for a Moment Like This,” whose primary author was Rev. Bill Shillady, executive director of the UM City Society.

“I’ve talked with Bill several times, and told him that there is plenty of grace for him as far as I was concerned . . . grace for his life and his ministry.

“And I hope I’m speaking on your behalf, too,” Bickerton said to those gathered. “He is a man of great faith . . . a cherished friend and trusted colleague.”

The evening was much of a “love fest” for former presidential candidate Clinton, peppered by wild applause, shouts of “We Love you, Hillary,” and picture taking. Ticket holders began lining up as early as 1 p.m. outside the church for the 7:30 p.m. event.

Bishop Bickerton introduced Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, pastor of Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C., who served as interviewer for the conversation with Clinton after Shillady bowed out. The Clinton family attended Foundry while living in the capital. Bickerton



joked with Gaines-Cirelli, “If you’d like to be seen in New York more, I can do something about that.”

“No thank you,” she responded, with a smile.

In introducing Clinton, the bishop spoke of how she had inspired so many by the way she has integrated her faith into her life and social policy.

“Sister Hillary, we love you,” Bickerton said to loud cheers.

Clinton, who is a lifelong United Methodist, talked freely about the difficult days immediately following the November 8th election.

“I was devastated . . . I never thought I would lose,” she said. “It threw me back . . . I had to rely on my own internal resources.” She recalled having to get up the next day and deliver a concession speech without any hint of bitterness or anger.

Clinton said that she relied on several tools to get her through the early days of the grieving process.

“Number one was prayer,” she said. She said she was also lifted by those who sent her prayers, time she spent with her grandchildren and friends, long walks, yoga, and “a fair share of chardonnay.” She also read some of the writings of Henri Nouwen, the Dalai Lama, and Bishop Desmond Tutu.

“We all know what deep discouragement looks like,” she said, noting that she decided to write a book to figure out what had happened and then explain it.” Her book, “What Happened” is due out next week.

Writing the book was a difficult, yet cathartic, process; one that gave her the courage to get up and keep going. She said she was most worried that the young women who had championed her cause would give up because of her loss to Donald Trump.

“This is a time when we are called to find

Continued on page 7

St. John's Elmont, Sears Honored By UMCS

Continued from page 6

our own truth and act on it," Clinton said in urging the gathering to educate themselves and organize to work against the "persistent effort to disenfranchise millions of people."

She noted that during the campaign some people said she didn't display enough anger.

"But anger is a not a strategy for good leadership," she said. "I look for ways to find common ground, if not a higher ground."

When she tried to speak more about love as a community concept during the campaign, some questioned what she was doing.

"There is a large group of people with the strong opinion that if you are a Christian . . . you can only have one set of political beliefs and if you deviate from those beliefs, you somehow aren't really a Christian," she said. "I reject that completely."

Clinton encouraged participation in faith-based movements like the "Sacred Resistance" project at Foundry UMC that presents the congregation with a weekly list of causes and actions in which to enlist. She noted that resistance grounded in the church can provide a sustained response. "It allows one to rest as others step up . . . as it says in Galatians, 'do not grow weary in doing good.'"

While not naming President Trump, she lamented the decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

"You have to ask, where does that cruelty, that mean-spiritedness come from? It is not from the church, it is not from Christianity, it is not from people of faith," she said.

But it is her faith that allows Clinton to be hopeful and optimistic about the future of the country.

"That great arc of justice that we have tried so hard to follow—with our faults and our setbacks—keeps moving toward a better life, a better time, a better place, on this earth as well as after," she said. "We have faith to guide us in the right direction."

"We can't let politics dehumanize anyone, or it dehumanizes us all," Clinton said.

And how should Christians speak up or speak out?

"Speak out with compassion—good humor if you can," she said. "Do it with a song in our hearts. We can't be turned into a mirror image



DAVE CROSS PHOTOGRAPHY

Metropolitan District Superintendent Denise Smartt Sears, left, and Rev. Patrick Perrin and members of the St. John's of Elmont UMC were recognized by the City Society for their dedication to, and work with, children's ministries.

of those peddling hate and bigotry."

Two of the young clergywomen who supported the candidate with prayer and devotions in the "#wepaywithher" project were heartened by what Clinton had to say.

Rev. Shannon Sullivan of the Baltimore-Washington Conference was particularly moved by how Clinton's faith helped her deal with the process of grieving after the election.

"She was so open about that, and so optimistic about continuing to do God's work," said Sullivan who has been dealing with her own grief because of a miscarriage shortly after the election.

Rev. Lauren Godwin came from West Virginia with her father to hear more about Clinton's journey after the loss.

"She's such a strong role model as a person of faith . . . as a woman of faith," Godwin said. "I'm going to go back home and challenge people to share their own faith stories."

Part of the evening included awards to an individual and church for their support of Camp Olmsted and work on behalf of children. Metropolitan District Superintendent Denise Smartt Sears was honored for her advocacy for children and work on educating youth about the gifts of diversity. St. John's UMC of Elmont, which is led by Rev. Patrick Perrin, was recognized for its children's outreach,

including Vacation Bible School and an after-school program. The church partners with the City Society and the Five Points Mission in these programs.

Bickerton also announced the establishment of the Hillary Rodham Clinton "Make Our Kids Strong" Scholarship for Olmsted campers. Some 60 percent of the children receive financial assistance to attend the camp. It was reported that \$80,000 had already been raised for the fund. The City Society expected to raise more than \$50,000 at the Riverside event for the camp.

Ticketholders were to have received a free copy of the book of devotions at the gathering, but instead were offered a refund for a portion of the price, if they so chose. Abingdon Publishing pulled their sponsorship of the event after announcing the book recall.

Shillady has said that he deeply regrets the situation, and has apologized to those whose work was not credited, to Secretary Clinton, Abingdon Press and all the writers who helped publish the book. The book contained 365 of the 635 daily devotions that were emailed to Clinton. They were first written by Shillady, and then a team of other clergy persons, including Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, was invited into the project.

More information about the [UM City Society](#) can be found on their web site.

Response to Hatred: “Do Something About It”

Dear Friends & Colleagues of the New York Annual Conference,

This one has taken a little while. Having a virus in the middle of the summer will do that to you; so will the virus that seems to have affected life all around us, . . .

When the word began to emerge from the horrific events in Charlottesville, Va., a few days ago one of my first reactions was a genuine one: “What will I say this time that will be any different than what has been said over and over again these past several months?” It has happened to us again—an intolerable, unacceptable, egregious act of racism, violence and injustice. This is an event that once again calls every leader to speak out against every white supremacist, neo-Nazi, and hate group that exists, calling for justice, civility, and a better way. Lives have been lost and others have been scarred for a lifetime.



Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton

It just isn't right.

As I laid in bed dealing with my own virus, I began to reflect on the virus that was being described on the television in front of me. It's an illness that has crippled and paralyzed us in so many ways. My first emotion was one of sadness. I began to think about innocent victims on site in Charlottesville and the chaos they were immersed in when a car plowed into the crowd. My sadness grew when I thought about family members of a young woman and two police officers who died. It grew even more when I thought about those who have seen this happen all too often in other settings and have been victimized by racism and alienation all their lives.

It just isn't right.

My sadness quickly turned to feelings of anger. I was angered at the hatred being thrown around in vulgar signs and inappropriate words. I grew angry when I saw people who somehow felt as if they had a right to do what they were doing and even more so when a former leader of the KKK stated that they were carrying out the mandate “to take our country back.” My anger boiled over when I began to think about what I would say if I were in that setting and how I would retaliate with rebuttals to such narrow thinking. I watched it all and kept thinking to myself one thing.

It just isn't right.

In the hours that followed, I found my anger being “ministered to” when I read a “tweet” from Barack Obama. In a very appropriate and well-timed moment, the former President quoted Nelson Mandela in his book, *“Long Walk to Freedom:”*

“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

Mandela was right then and Obama was right in quoting it in the midst of this situation. And in that moment, I felt guilty for my own sense of hatred that had been stirred in the midst of this unfolding tragedy. Hatred.

It just isn't right.

Those emotions led me to a feeling of disappointment. Disappointment that we were having to experience yet another scene of pain, discord, and inappropriate behavior. Disappointment in leaders who could not appropriately or accurately name the wrongness of the action.

Disappointment that, no matter the progress being made, we were once again forced to

step back and start again from the beginning. Disappointment that racism continues to deeply affect people within our communities and churches in ways that are oppressive and sinful. And, if I'm honest, disappointment in myself.

I began to wonder, as I have before, things like: When were the times when I did not address a situation properly when I had the chance? When were the times when I looked the other way and did not deal with a matter at hand that needed a strong word of advocacy and justice? What were the occasions when I leaned inappropriately on my own white privileges and failed to see clearly the racism around me that needed a voice that declared the wrong and projected the right? You see, I was always taught to remember the old phrase that says, “when you point the finger at someone else, there are three fingers pointing right back at you.” Jesus made a similar reference when he talked about our tendency to point out the speck in someone else's eye all the while ignoring the log in our own. For all of my disappointment over what was happening in Charlottesville, I couldn't help but be disappointed in myself as well.

As the statements addressing what happened in Virginia began to emerge, nothing seemed to satisfy me. I read one statement and thought, “That didn't go far enough.” I read another and thought, “Yep, I read almost the exact thing the last time.” Nothing seemed to reach me.

That is, until I read a response written by my friend, Julius Trimble, the bishop of the Indiana Annual Conference. In Bishop Trimble's statement, he made a reference to our baptismal and membership vows as United Methodists. That article led me to my hymnal. And my hymnal led me to the words that inspired and challenged me in the midst of this latest act of violence and hatred.

Continued on page 9

Journeys of Paul Cruise with Bishop Bickerton

Anyone who has dreamed about walking in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul will have the opportunity during a special cruise in October 2018 with Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton. The bishop will host the nine-day journey aboard Royal Caribbean's “Jewel of the Seas,” in conjunction with Educational Opportunities Tours.

Beginning and ending in Rome, the October 14–25 trip includes stops in Taormina and Pompeii, Italy; Mykonos, Santorini, Athens, and Corinth, Greece; and Ephesus, Turkey.

There is also an optional two-day tour of Vatican City on October 25–26.

Dr. Peter Walker, professor of Biblical Studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Pennsylvania, will be guest lecturer during the trip. He has written the book, “In the Steps of Saint Paul.” The voyage will also include time for daily worship and Bible study, as well taking in the ancient sites and natural beauty of the region.

A letter and brochure have been mailed from the conference office, or you can find

[reservation information](#) online. The first registration deadline to receive a discount is October 15.

In the letter, the bishop wrote: “I look forward to the possibility of sharing this journey with you as we build a deeper relationship with one another and with the Word of God as it comes alive in the midst of these ancient cities.”

If you have any questions, contact [Rev. Chuck Ferrara](#), the regional representative for Educational Opportunities in our area.

Response to Hatred: “Do Something About It”

Continued from page 8

In each liturgy found in our hymnal, these words are repeated over and over again:

- Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?
- Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?
- Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?
- Will you remain faithful members of Christ’s holy church and serve as Christ’s representatives in the world?
- Will you faithfully participate in its ministries by your prayers, your

presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness?

Read these vows again. Pay attention to the words underlined. These are the “strongest possible terms” anyone could use in addressing the injustices associated with the actions of white supremacy, neo-Nazism, and blatant racism. They just so happen to be the words associated with what we have been asked to do every day as United Methodist Christians. We renounce wickedness, reject evil, resist oppression! We accept God’s power and confess our need for God’s grace! We strive for faithfulness, long to represent Christ in the world, and pray for the courage to strengthen our witness! This is who we are called to be!

So, what is the appropriate response to the actions in Charlottesville? We shouldn’t be afraid to point the finger at these actions and say, “It just isn’t right!” But should also see the fingers pointed back at ourselves as

well. Read those vows again. Repeat them. And ask yourself the question, “*How am I renouncing wickedness, rejecting evil, resisting injustice, confessing Jesus Christ, trusting God’s grace, serving as Christ’s representatives, and witnessing to it all in the way I live my life?*”

Don’t wait for someone to write an article or make another statement about something that has happened in our midst. Go do something about it!

There’s only one thing to say if anything less is done.

It just isn’t right.

The Journey Continues, . . .
Peace & Joy,



Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop



Drawing the Circle Wide

Participants grasp hands during a “Welcoming Our Neighbor” service on August 16 at First & Summerfield UMC in New Haven, Conn. The service was held in to show support for Ecuadorean immigrant Marco Reyes, who took sanctuary in the church early on August 8 to avoid being deported. Reyes continues to live at the church as his case is being reviewed.



Continued from page 2

Village from noon to 4 p.m. Cost is \$80 person in advance. Call the church office at 718-523-5570 for more information.

10/19–22 Women's Walk to Emmaus

The women's Walk to Emmaus will be held at Montfort Spiritual Center in Bay Shore, N.Y., on Long Island. The Walk to Emmaus is a spiritual program intended to strengthen the local church through the development of Christian disciples and leaders. Each participant needs to work with a sponsor before registering for the weekend. The experience begins with a 72-hour course in Christianity beginning on Thursday night and ending on Sunday. For additional details and registration info, click [here](#).

10/20–22 Zenkert Celebration Weekend

The life and ministry of Carl Zenkert, who died in January, will be celebrated during a work weekend at Camp Quinipet. A memorial service is planned for 2 p.m. on Saturday. Participants are encouraged to bring a story or photos to share, and a favorite book to donate to the Quinipet library. Donations may be made to the Camp Quinipet Scholarship Fund in Zenkert's memory.

Register for the weekend by October 11 on the [Quinipet web site](#).

10/27 Advent/Christmas Worship Planning

Union Theological Seminary is reintroducing the "Got Sermon?" lectionary study series as a twice-yearly conference corresponding to the liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent. The October 27 Advent/Christmas program will be led by Lisa Thompson, assistant professor of homiletics; Cláudio Carvalhaes, associate professor of worship; and David M. Carr, professor of Old Testament, with other faculty members to be announced. The cost of the 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. conference is \$50, which includes lunch. [Pre-registration](#) required.

Vision Deadlines for 2017

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. Deadlines for 2017 are: October 6, November 3, and December 1. Please send any stories, photos, ideas, or questions directly to vision@nyac.com.

JOB OPENINGS

Archives Offers Intern Position

The New York Conference is undertaking a project to digitize the files of its district offices, and is looking for an intern to assist with this project.

Tasks will include:

- Preparing documents for scanning
- Identifying documents that do not need to be scanned
- Placing items in chronological order
- Sending documents through the scanner
- Checking the accuracy of the scanning
- Assigning index terms to the documents

Attention to detail and maintaining confidentiality are very important. The intern will work with the conference archivist, who will provide training and guidance. All work will be performed at the conference center at 20 Soundview Ave., White Plains, N.Y. A stipend of \$15/hour is available and the hours are flexible, but must be performed during regular business hours. We are looking for someone to start as soon as possible.

If you know of anyone in your church that might be interested in this internship, or if you have additional questions, please contact Beth Patkus, conference archivist, at archives@nyac.com or 914-615-2241.

Newtown Youth Director

Newtown United Methodist Church in Sandy Hook, Conn., seeks a dynamic disciple of Christ as youth director. Working with the senior pastor and church leadership, this person will be responsible for the planning, development and implementation of a youth ministry concentrating in mission, outreach, group building and discipleship. We seek an individual with a bachelor's degree, excellent communication skills, and a proven ability to work effectively with youth, parents and teams of volunteers. Certification in youth ministry is a plus. Hours are 20-27 per week; salary commensurate with experience. For more information please reply to churchoffice@newtown-umc.org.

OBITUARY

Linda Turner-Dash

Linda Turner-Dash died on July 18, 2017, in Georgia at the age of 67. She is the widow of Rev. Michael Inego Dash, who served in the New York Conference for 29 years from 1977 until his retirement in 2006. He died on September 21, 2014.

At this time, we have no other information on Turner-Dash's life and ministry.

**We're transforming the world
through Christ ...
but sometimes
WE NEED
COFFEE
FIRST!**



**Get your NYAC logo mug for \$12
at the conference center.
Email Carol Merante to reserve.**

Proceeds benefit Young Clergy Debt Assistance Fund



DS Sylvester Celebrated

Continued from page 1

UMC in St. Albans, Queens, lent their gifts to the celebration through liturgical dance and the Voices in Spirit choir and band.

One remarkable moment came when Gerald Placid, who arrived with duffle bag in hand, sang, “How Great Thou Art.” Placid, a military veteran who described Sylvester as a father figure, explained that he had just returned from Rockport, Texas, and would be deployed the next day with Homeland Security to aid FEMA in Florida hurricane relief.

Sylvester’s gifts were affirmed by former church members and clergy colleagues as an unwavering commitment to excellence, profound love and humility, and deep spiritual foundation. After the bishop led the gathering through the covenant service, he presented Sylvester with a Bible as one of the symbols of superintendency. Pairs of clergy and laity offered other symbols including a globe, bread and juice, a Book of Discipline, hymnals, water, basin and towel.

Sylvester, who is a native of Trinidad & Tobago and apologized for his West Indian accent, could be understood readily in his message to “Go Forward,” based on God’s sending of the prophet Joshua.

He stressed the importance of good leadership to move the church forward and the need to shake off dead things.

“Some are embracing the past. But God is saying ‘the past is gone, you got to get up.’ God is directing us where we go,” Sylvester said.

Just as God sent Joshua across the Jordan River, clergy and churches face barriers that may impede their journeys and need to remember that God is always there.

“Some days I thought I was going to drown,



PHOTOS BY JOANNE S. UTLEY

Clockwise from above: Voices in Spirit choir from Grace UMC in St Albans; members of Grace UMC and other clergy members affirm the gifts that Sylvester brings to his new role; Rev. David Gilmore and Sylvester offer communion to Sylvester’s 95-year-old father, Elon McEwen.

but God got me through.” Sylvester said . . . “You’ve got to go over, even if you don’t want to go.” Every step one takes is given by God, he added.

He urged the group to never give up and to work hard to succeed.

“We cannot be fearful, Sylvester said. “God started this race without you and will see you through. Stop giving up.

“You’ve got to exercise to be strong . . . exercise your faith . . . pray until something happens,” Sylvester said.

At the close of his sermon, Sylvester invited the crowd to turn and touch their neighbor, saying, “Get up, get up and go! You can’t stay where you are!”

An offering was taken to benefit youth and young adult ministries in the district. The sacrament of Holy Communion drew the worship to a close. Following the late afternoon service, a reception prepared by North UMC in Hartford was held in the fellowship hall.