

2014 Annual Conference will Shine in Wildwood

The 2014 Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church will “Shine” with dynamic guests speakers, a new day of workshops and much more. With a theme of “Shine” each day of the conference will focus on how the people of the United Methodist Church shine the light of the Christ in the world.



Bishop Sally Dyck of the Northern Illinois Conference will be the featured speaker.



Pastor Olu Brown from Impact Church in Atlanta will be leading the teaching sessions.

Joining the conference this year is Bishop Sally Dyck of the Northern Illinois Conference who will be a featured preacher. Bishop Dyck, ordained in 1981, was consecrated a bishop in 2004 and assigned to lead the Minnesota Area of the Church beginning in September of that year. She became a leading voice in Urban Ministries when she was appointed to the Northern Illinois Conference in Chicago in 2012. She is on the Board of Directors for UMCOM and is a member of the General Commission on

Communication. She is also a passionate advocate for Imagine No Malaria, one of the focus areas of Greater New Jersey’s Mission Fund Campaign currently underway.

In addition to Bishop Dyck, Pastor Olu Brown from Impact Church in Atlanta, where church is done differently, will lead the teaching session. Pastor Brown is a native of Texas and graduated from the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. He was an associate pastor at Cascade United Methodist Church for six years prior to starting Impact Church. Impact Church is one of the fastest growing examples of a vital congregation in America and has welcomed more than 1,500 worshippers in its first six years. Their vision statement is “a multicultural gathering of people committed to sharing the love of Christ with the world.”

The Conference has several exciting new things in store for 2014 including a full day of learning and mission on Wednesday, May 28th. The new Connectional Ministries staff will lead a series of Spotlight Sessions focused on important aspects of the strategic plan. Workshops will cover **8 Vital Questions for Your Congregation** and include:

- Where are they now? (Why are young people leaving the church?)
- Does worship matter? (Moving worship that moves)
- Am I on a mission? (Where to begin, evolve, and grow in missions)
- Where are all our members? (Membership vs. Attendance – What Counts)
- Show me the money! (Stewardship that really makes a difference)
- God’s Activities or Our Activities? (Recognizing the difference)
- WJD? What Did Jesus Do? (Identifying the leadership skills of Jesus)
- Death by Meetings or Life Out of Them? (How to hold meetings that don’t burnout leaders)

Everyone is welcome to the workshops, but advanced registration is required. More information on the workshops is available at www.gnjumc.org/annualconference.

Finally, Bishop John Schol and his wife Beverly are hosting a preconference dinner on Wednesday May 28th. Registration is required and information, including costs, can be found on the conference pages of the web site.

Also new for 2014, is that **all registration must be completed online**. Registration will be open April 1, 2014 on the GNJ website. Questions can be directed to Beverly Karlovich at 1-877-677-2594.

Lacey UMC Grows Partnership with AFWH

The Lacey United Methodist Church has made a generous gift to A Future with Hope for Sandy recovery in Lacey and the surrounding towns. The \$64,000 donation will be used to repair and rebuild homes damaged by Sandy in the area, like the hard-hit Lanoka Harbor neighborhood. The church has been an integral part of the community’s relief and recovery efforts since the night of the storm, and continues to house volunteers from A Future with Hope and other groups working in town.

When Sandy hit, many churches and municipal buildings became disaster relief hubs overnight, but Lacey United Methodist Church immediately distinguished itself as one of the most robust

and comprehensive of these spontaneous community centers. The church sheltered dozens of storm survivors (and their pets) distributed thousands of hot meals, many delivered to residents’ doors. Hot showers, laundry facilities, and all-important phone charging stations were also open to the public at Lacey UMC. The former priory next to the main church building was well-suited for those forced from their homes by the storm. Much of the community rallied behind relief efforts spearheaded by the church, which provided information, food, shelter and counseling for thousands of area families. The partnership between Lacey UMC and A Future with Hope is a long stride forward for the many storm

survivors in the area who have been unable to recover alone.

The church is firmly committed to the often long process of rebuilding homes and lives damaged by Sandy. The pews have been filled with storm survivors, flood buckets, and volunteer workers as the church adapts to shifting local needs. As relief transitions into recovery, that resilience and flexibility should serve as inspiration and impetus for other churches and community organizations. The church has emphatically demonstrated its long-term commitment by helping to fund local rebuilding, and is an excellent example of how churches can go further in their mission to restore the shore.



Volunteers well-cared for by Lacey UMC host site.

Howell Youth Learn Lessons and Raise Money for Hunger

Howell – On February 21st, 2014, The Church of The Master’s Youth Group held their “30 Hour Famine” for World Vision. Senior and Junior members participated by beginning their fast in school at 12pm and ending it on 6pm of Saturday. They came to The Church of The Master on Friday at 6pm and stayed there until the end.

In the past 20 years, groups that participate in 30 Hour Famine have helped drop the numbers of children dying from hunger from 40,000 a day to 19,000. Still, 19,000 is an unbelievable number for our world to ignore. The Howell group had a goal of \$1,250 and through generous donations; they collected \$1,388.

The group enjoys this event every year. They raise money for world hunger and the members spend 30 hours together fasting and growing closer to each other.

Senior members do most of the planning for the event and were led by Brittany Daly. Their advisors Sherry Daly and Dee Leonardi assisted with supplies and guidance.

From the time they come at 6pm, to the closing “Love Feast” with their Pas-



Pastor Yohan Baik lead the youth of the Church of the Master in devotional during 30 Hour Famine.

tor YoHan Baik, they are kept busy with various events. Some of these events are picking of tribes, decorating T-shirts, Ice Breakers, Songs by camp fire, a devotional, Christian movies, and a Candlelight Prayer Service. This year’s tribes were Peru and Brazil, who compete against each other for first eating rights. The tribes played 9 games. The games taught the participants that they are truly lucky to live in the USA. Games include “Crossing the Nile” where children have to navigate the hostile waters of the Nile to go to school. Another game is “Food Grab” which taught that foraging for food can be dangerous and hard to do! The youth also had to build shelters which could withstand heavy wind, rains, and earthquakes, as well as keeping unfriendly foes out. The members also did a Community Service Project, which was a detailed cleaning of The Church of The Master’s narthex.

The group has many to thank for their support, time and donations including Heather Neary, Kathy Defusco, John Ayres, Adam and Michael Rogers, the congregation, and their parents.

A Message from the Bishop



The world needs passionate Christ-like disciples who are stirring up faith, hope and justice in the community. These disciples are being made and formed in vital congregations of all sizes that are engaging disciples in vital worship, small groups and mission. Turnaround spiritual leaders are leading congregations to become more vital.

Part 2 - From 14 to 41%

This article is part two of a series about growing 41% of our congregations to be highly vital by 2018. Vital congregations are vibrant congregations whose disciples are testifying how they, the congregation and the community, are changing because of God's movement in and through the congregation. These congregations are also growing worship, professions of faith (new disciples), small groups, community justice and mercy ministries, and giving to mission.

In the last article I shared that there are five movements congregations need to be exploring:

1. From membership to discipleship
2. From static to vitality
3. From activity to transformation
4. From manager to turnaround spiritual leader
5. From wandering to metrics

I focused on exploring "membership to discipleship" in the last article. In recent history, we have been a membership-focused church which leads people to think like a member and ask questions like, "How will the church serve me?" Disciples, on the other hand, ask "How will I serve God?" and "How will I be more like Jesus?" The first century church found in Acts 2 and throughout the epistles speaks of a discipleship church. The gathered believers actively reach out to make new disciples and serve the world.

From Static to Vitality

Today we will explore the second movement, "from static to vitality". The church in the early 1900's began to move toward a static state because people naturally came to church. All the church had to do was open their doors and people came. The culture literally drove people to want to go to church. In addition, mission began to be somewhere else. As the United States became more affluent, mission work did not happen right outside the doors of the church but was moved to other communities and other parts of the world. Disciples no longer had to actively seek new believers nor be active in serving others in their community. They only had to come through the church doors and send money for someone else to do the mission. This was the beginning of a movement that took us from discipleship to membership. With no clear mission, the members became the mission. The church became more inward focused and the mission was static. A static church functioned for a long time until the culture changed so that going to church stopped being an expectation within the community.

Vitality in the New Testament is most often described as fruit bearing. Jesus said, "This is to God's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." - John 15:8 Jesus withered trees that did

not bear fruit. Jesus told the disciples that he was the vine and they were the branches and that if they remained in him they would bear much fruit.

Vitality is demonstrated by signs, healthy signs. For instance when the doctor checks your vital signs, she measures your pulse, blood pressure, sugar levels, blood count, weight and a variety of other signs. These signs tell us that the body is working well. It is the same with the body of Christ, the church. There are signs that God is at work in and through the congregation. These include growth of the congregation in five critical areas: disciples in worship, new disciples, disciples in small groups, disciples engaged in justice and mercy, and disciples' generosity.

But a person can have all of the physical signs of vitality but not demonstrate a vital life. In other words a person can be physically well but inactive or lack purpose. We commonly call people that fit this description coach potatoes.

Churches can be growing in some areas but not show evidence of spiritual vitality, or what is referred to in the scriptures as the fruits of the Spirit - love, peace, joy, faith, hope and compassion. Vital congregations evidence fruitful growth and the fruits of the Spirit. Some churches exhibit the fruits of the Spirit but lack fruitful growth. Membership congregations lack one or the other and many times both. They are good at sharing the gifts of the Spirit among the members but not at looking beyond themselves and having meaningful relationships with people in the community. These are static congregations and even sometimes, declining congregations. They are enjoying one another's company but have not figured out how to broaden their ministry to involve new people.

Moving from static to vitality begins first by reassessing your purpose, your calling and your reason for existence. If after thoughtful examination you determine your reason for existence is to serve your own people, you are a static congregation. If you think of yourselves as a place that makes new disciples, deepens disciples' faith and challenges disciples to go into the world to change lives and the community, you are on the path toward vitality. All of our churches can join us on the path to vitality. There is no doubt in my mind that we will exceed 41% highly vital congregations by 2018. With God's help and your giftedness God will do great things through us.

Here are a few questions you might consider asking:

1. Are you considered a friendly congregation but are not attracting new friends? Are you helping people be friendly with each other and not with the people in the community? Is your friendship more with each other or are you being friends with Jesus and patterning the church after his life your primary aim?
2. Is your congregation static, not growing, drifting downward or declining? Why are you in a static state? What does God have next for your congregation?
3. What will it take for your congregation to have vital fruit of the Spirit? Have you prayed about fruitfulness? Have your prayers led to concrete plans and strategies to help people grow in their faith and connect with the community?

John chastised the church in Laodicia because they were lukewarm and not making progress toward the mission. The Laodicean Church was happy with a static state. Together, we will heed John's words. The Greater New Jersey Conference will be working closely with congregations who are willing and ready to take the next steps in their vitality. Our desire is for our congregations to be vital. We will be the branches of Christ that bear fruit by equipping spiritual leaders to make disciples and to grow vital congregations to transform the world.

John Schol

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EDITORIAL

Innovation or Isolation?

In his book, *The Naked Sun*, noted science fiction author Isaac Asimov posits a cosmic culture in which humans are divided into two distinct types: *Earthers*, who live in an oppressively crowded world where issues of privacy and personal space are critical, and *Spacers*, who live alone in a society in which the very idea of human contact is repugnant. They 'meet' only by hologram and even couples only physically meet to procreate. Other culturally necessary interactions are carried out by robots. The book explores some of the problems that are created with advances in technology, particularly the problem of alienation.

The central idea is that, though our technology often makes life better, we must guard against the ways that it separates us from one another lest we find ourselves in a fractured and isolated world. We can already see the irony of using "social media" in that, rather than bringing people together it encourages users to substitute technology-enabled communication for human companionship.

Not everyone who uses the technology falls into this trap, but there are enough who do to raise some concerns. An entire generation of young people is growing up in a world where the dominant mode of communication is texting. Instead of getting together for fellowship or even picking up the phone and talking to one another, texting suffices. An older generation has the same issue with respect to using e-mail rather than personal contact.

So we find it more and more the norm that people are becoming isolated, depending on their technology to take the place of personal interaction.

It appears that a similar dynamic is threatening to overtake the Church. Just last year a debate arose within the United Methodist Church about the advisability of having "online communion."

According to Religion News Service, "about 30 denominational leaders met after Central United Methodist Church in Concord, N.C., announced plans to launch an online campus that potentially would offer online Communion. Some nondenominational churches already offer online Communion, according to United Methodist News Service, but leaders urged the denomination's bishops to call for a moratorium on the practice and do further study of online ministries."

The article continued, "The majority of the leaders agreed with the statement that Communion "entails the actual tactile sharing of bread and wine in a service that involves people corporeally together in the same place." Not everyone, however, agreed that congregants must be in the same place.

"The debate raises fundamental questions at the heart of the church experience: the definition of community, individual participation, the role of tradition and basic theological understandings of the meaning of Communion."

Now there are churches that have instituted the practice of offering "Drive-thru ashes" on Ash Wednesday. The idea is to offer a fast and convenient way for people on the go to receive what they otherwise might just ignore. Churches are trying a multitude of ways to reach out to the unchurched, thinking "out of the box," and being bold in their efforts to make contact with their communities. Their creativity and intentions are to be lauded.

There is, however, a cautionary word to be spoken here. As with online Communion, there are fundamental questions to be addressed. The primary theological purpose for the imposition of ashes is that the ashes function as a sign of repentance. Repentance is a serious matter and ought not to be reduced simply to the act of wearing ashes on one's forehead. Inviting people to just drive up to receive them sends the wrong message. It says that you don't have to think about what you're doing, that you can do this quite apart from the community of faith, and that expediency is the new model for the Church.

The imposition of ashes should take place (and has historically taken place) within a context of worship where the Scriptures are read and the Word is proclaimed. Without that context, the ashes become just another thing to be done, devoid of much meaning. In addition, this practice further isolates people from the assembled Church, the body of Christ.

A generation ago, Church leaders were decrying the movement of a number of people who were becoming followers of television evangelists. A primary reason for their concern was that it separated people from being part of the assembled Church. Without being together in the same space, fellowship cannot be created and what little there might be soon withers and dies.

It is certainly true that offering things like online communion and drive through ashes creates many more opportunities for the Church to interact with the community. However, unless there is some mechanism in place to do follow-up wherein people are assimilated into the Church, what we're doing is telling people that the Christian faith is all show and no substance. What we're doing is adding to the isolation that characterizes much of contemporary life.

-GCF

(For a different point of view, see the article, elsewhere in this issue that describes the experience of one church that offered drive through ashes this year.)

**The May Issue Deadline
is April 5, 2014**

Wings of the Morning Grand Caravan Continues to Soar in the DRC



Grateful patient boards plane for flight to hospital.

What started out as a God-sized dream in 2009, became a reality on July 1, 2013. Believing deeply in the worthiness and effectiveness of the North Katanga *Wings of the Morning* flight ministry in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a small group of visionaries dared to believe that there was a way forward for the ministry, even in the face of increasingly scarce and cost-prohibitive (\$19/gallon) aviation gasoline. The answer to the fuel challenge was a Cessna Grand Caravan which can use widely available and affordable Jet fuel. The answer to the financial challenge was a host of saints from Ohio and New Jersey, Arkansas and Pennsylvania, New York and North Katanga who gave freely of their earthly treasure to buy a treasure of eternal significance. The Greater New Jersey Conference has generously given more than \$275,000 to this vision.

Wings of the Morning is a United Methodist sponsored flight ministry that provides the only means for critically ill persons in isolated areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo to reach medical facilities.

Since 1995, one pilot, Gaston Ntambo, and his wife, Jeanne, have been serving 6 million people over an area the size of Texas. This story was recently shared:

"This week we would like to share with you the story of Umba Monga. Umba is a 55 year old lady from the village of Malemba Nkulu. After falling a year and a half ago, Umba believed that she had severely sprained her leg when, in fact, her leg was broken. She suffered in great pain. Umba shared that the pain would go away for a time, but she was never able

to put weight on it or even walk.

Umba lives in a village of 70,000 people, but Malemba Nkulu is without an x-ray machine or a hospital that is equipped to treat patients like Umba. Finally, the family decided to seek modern medicine hoping to relieve Umba of her agony.

After contacting Wings of the Morning, this medical flight was combined with other medical mission flights on that same day.

It was a very long and difficult few moments while we watched Umba practically crawling backward up into the airplane one step at a time. She was in a lot of pain!

The village of Malemba Nkulu is just one of the many villages in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that is so very isolated. There is only one road going through this village, but it is a very difficult road to travel on even for a motorcycle or a bicycle.

After landing in Lubumbashi and being transported to the hospital, the doctors discovered that Umba's leg was broken below the knee and a gap existed between the bones. Surgery was scheduled and now we hope and pray that it is not too late and that Umba will someday walk again. Please keep Umba Monga in your prayers this week. We are so thankful that Wings of the Morning was able to be of assistance to Umba and her family."

You can hear more about this exciting ministry by viewing a documentary available on youtube.com, North Katanga Conference: Wings of the Morning. Or: NEW! Join the North Katanga Facebook Page for the latest news and to meet other fans of the work of North Katanga.

Association of Retired Ministers and Spouses (ARMS)

The Spring Meeting of the will be held on
Tuesday, April 22, 2014
at Francis Asbury Manor,
70 Stockton Ave., Ocean Grove, NJ 07756

Following a Fellowship Time at 11:00 A.M., and lunch at 12:00 P.M., the program will feature Margaret Winkelman, a Senior Benefits Consultant in the Employee Benefits Division of Willis of New Jersey, Inc. (Willis is the health care consultant/advisor for our Conference Board of Pensions) responding to the question, "HealthCare Reform – Latest Events & Changes"

Lunch is \$10. Please call Garey Hope (609) 291-5003
by April 15 to make a reservation.



Global Relay

Brief Reports from around the world
via United Methodist News
Service and Newscope

Africa University selects new top executive

MUTARE, Zimbabwe (UMNS) - Munashe Furusa, dean of the College of Arts and Humanities at California State University in Dominguez Hills, was elected unanimously as the new chief executive of United Methodist-related Africa University during the school's board meeting March 18.

Education conference invites pastors

HIROSHIMA, Japan (UMNS) - The International Association of Methodist-related Schools, Colleges and Universities invites United Methodist pastors to attend the 2014 conference May 24-28 in Hiroshima. The event's theme is "Peace, Reconciliation and Human Rights." Established in 1991 during the World Methodist Conference, IAMSCU is affiliated with more than 800 Methodist educational institutions around the world.

Seeking solidarity with people on margins

CHENNAI, India (UMNS) - A March consultation attended by some 50 church leaders, theologians and activists from India, Singapore and the United States called for more attention to people on the margins. The Rev. Donald E. Messer, executive director of the Center for the Church and Global AIDS, was one of the speakers.

Change the World reaches five-year milestone

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - On May 17-18, United Methodists around the world plan to pull together events to help "Change the World." For the fifth year, local churches will take on service projects that improve the circumstances of others and spark public interest in volunteer activities. Register your project now at umcom.org/changetheworld. Churches that register their projects early can receive a free promotional kit while supplies last.

Appeal granted in Schaefer defrocking case

WASHINGTON (UMNS) - The Committee on Appeals of the Northeastern Jurisdiction has agreed to hear the case in which a Pennsylvania pastor, Frank Schaefer, was stripped of his clergy credentials after officiating at a same-sex wedding ceremony for his son. Schaefer was convicted of violating the United Methodist Book of Discipline, the law book of the denomination.

Bishop Khegay offers prayer for Ukraine

ZAKARPATIE, Ukraine (UMNS) - "In this politically conflicting time, the church continues to share the gospel way - the way of active ministry to people, preaching of hope and faith, proclamation of God's power and providence in the history of humankind," writes Bishop Eduard Khegay of The United Methodist Church in Eurasia. The Huffington Post reports that 97 percent of voters in Crimea supported leaving Ukraine to join Russia.

Philippines seminary holds commencement

MALAYBALAY, Philippines (UMNS) - Ten United Methodist graduates received Master of Divinity degrees from the Bishop Han Theological Seminary during a March 18 ceremony. The seminary's president and founder is the Rev. Sang Ho Han, senior pastor of Joann Methodist Church in Incheon, Korea

Communique From the Bilateral Dialogue Between Moravian Church Northern and Southern Provinces and the United Methodist Church



From left to right: Bishop Sudarshana Devedhar, Dr. Ulrike Schuler, the Rev. M. Lynette Delbridge, Dr. Glen Alton Messer, II, the Rev. Gary Harke, the Rev. Dr. Robert Williams, the Rt. Rev. Christian Giesler.

Representatives of the Moravian Church and The United Methodist Church met February 27 to March 1, 2014 at the Alma Matthews House in New York City for the third session of the dialogue. After having explored areas of church life and structure as well as theological aspects of our faith communities the dialogue team easily came to the understanding that we not only share historical connections but also present day understandings of being church and doing mission. As we have moved through our dialog we have found that in fact, a wonderful partnership already exists at both the judicatory and congregational level.

The centrality of Christ in our theology and piety, and the significance of singing in our churches are essential for both of us. As such we recognize each other as brothers and sisters in Christ who try to fulfill the great commission.

Following our initial discussion we are now preparing a document to be reviewed according to the process of each Church for eventual affirmation by the Synods of the Moravian Church and the General Conference of The UMC.

The dialogue is co-chaired by Bishop Sudarshana Devedhar, of The United Methodist Church the Rev. Gary Harke of the Moravian Church.

Other members of the team include Dr. Ulrike Schuler, and the Rev. Dr. Robert Williams representing The UMC, and the Rev. M. Lynette Delbridge, and the Rt. Rev. Christian Giesler representing the Moravian Church. We have been supported also by Dr. Glen Alton Messer, II from the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships of The UMC.

The participants began each session with devotions and finished with the celebration of the Eucharist.

The next meeting is planned to be in Winston-Salem, NC.

Stewardship Stories

By Rich Hendrickson
Coordinator of Stewardship Education
and Development, GNJAC



Don't be Shy...

Pat Springle, in her essay, *The Genesis of Generosity*, makes the observation that "a growing number of church leaders today are taking bold steps to help their people become truly generous." Leaders that teach, preach, celebrate, and model the idea that giving is much more than financial stewardship and tithing. As these leaders preach, teach, and model generosity as a way of life in their ministry setting changes are happening in the churches, agencies, and institutions to which they are connected. Churches that are becoming known for their generosity are moving away from a campaign mentality that focuses on giving primarily in response to needs like building programs or church budgets. Instead they are creating an atmosphere or culture which stewardship is not a program they run but rather, an honest expression of who they are as the church of Jesus Christ.

Senior Pastor Brian Tome, of Crossroads Church in Cincinnati, OH puts it this way, "By not talking about God's perspective on money and possessions, we condition people to become consumers instead of givers. We wanted to communicate with our parishioners that we're not here just to fund our local church ministry. We're part of a revolution God initiated to change the world." Friends, the "revolution" begins with each and every one of us being a blessing to the people around us—and eventually, being a blessing to people around the world. Generosity is not a program—it's a way of life. Being a blessing should be a passion that inspires everything we are, everything we say, and everything we do. Pastor Brian works with this theology, "We unapologetically present giving opportunities to our congregation. We're happy to give everybody the opportunity to have an impact on the world."



**GENERAL COMMISSION
ON RELIGION AND RACE**
of The United Methodist Church

Religion and Race Grants Available

The United Methodist Church's General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) is seeking to fund **innovative, bold, high-impact initiatives** that will increase intercultural competency or support vital conversations about race, cultural diversity, and systemic equity.

Share your idea for transforming the Church and the world. Apply today for a \$20,000 to \$80,000 CORR Action Fund grant. Annual Conferences, Churches, Seminaries, Jurisdictions, and Caucuses – all are invited and eligible to apply.

We've created an easy-to-follow application process. Learn more by going to www.gcorr.org/CORRActionFund. **(Applications must be received via email to grants@gcorr.org no later than June 30, 2014.)**

Apply today! Help us reach more people, younger people, and more diverse people through groundbreaking and creative initiatives that result in long-term change and can be replicated across our Church and the world.

Hope and Dismay at Forum to Resolve Same-sex Wedding Issue

By Linda Bloom

Could a decision by New York United Methodists to promote conversation over consequence offer a model to a denomination divide over issues of same-sex marriage and gay clergy?

Some attending the March 10 news conference announcing the dismissal of a complaint against the Rev. Thomas Ogletree, 80, who presided over the wedding of his son, think so, including Ogletree himself.

The New York Annual (regional) Conference has published "Terms of a Just Resolution in the Matter of The Rev. Dr. Thomas W. Ogletree"

"I'm really committed to this idea of encouraging dialogue among people who have sharp disagreements," he told United Methodist News Service after the announcement of a "Just Resolution Agreement" by the New York Annual (regional) Conference. "I think it's going to add to the momentum for change within the church."

Neither the Rev. Randall C. Paige nor the Rev. Roy E. Jacobsen, the original complainants against Ogletree, were present at the news conference, but they released a joint statement expressing dismay at the settlement. "It makes no acknowledgement of the breaking of our clergy covenant, the clear teaching of Scripture and our agreed upon way of discipleship expressed in our Book of Discipline," they said. The two clergymen were not involved in the agreement discussions. "The comments of the complainants were received and considered as part of the just resolution process," said the Rev. William S. Shillady, secretary of the court, "but they are not signers of the just resolution agreement."

'Cessation of church trials'

New York Bishop Martin McLee gave the agreement some of its weight by calling for "a cessation of church trials" for those who conduct same-gender wedding or union ceremonies. In a statement, he pointed to the harm, expense and distraction of trials. He noted later that nearly a third of his time over the past year had been devoted to such complaints.

Instead, the bishop will convene a public forum, with Ogletree as one of the participants, "to contribute to the healing within the body and greater understanding" among those in the conference. He expects the forum, which will include a panel of 10-12 people and an audience, to be in April or May before the 2014 New York Annual Conference meeting in June.

In their statement, Paige and Jacobsen acknowledge that "dialog and deep listening are good" but not a substitute for vows of obedience to the denomination. "Bishop McLee's commitment to have no more trials for those accused of performing same-sex services means that numerous complaints that are in process will be held in abeyance and further complaints will be discouraged," they added.

Ogletree's trial had been scheduled for March 10 at First United Methodist Church in Stamford, Conn. Retired Bishop S. Clifton Ives, the presiding officer or the equivalent of a judge, postponed the trial date Feb. 10.

Ives, who had returned the complaint to McLee for a further attempt at just resolution, told UMNS he hoped "there might be a discussion" about the agreement by some level of the denomination's Council of Bishops. "I would like colleague bish-

ops to begin to understand there may be other ways to solve problems other than a trial," Ives said.

Facts not in dispute

As the Rev. Timothy J. Riss, who served as counsel for the interests of the church at large, pointed out, the facts of the case were not in dispute. Ogletree did perform a wedding ceremony "for two grooms," violating Paragraph 2702.1b of the Book of Discipline, which prohibits United Methodist pastors from officiating at same-gender marriage ceremonies. The question, he noted, was what type of penalty would be imposed. Based on the persistent advocacy by many of the conference's clergy and lay leaders for the inclusion of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning) people, Riss said, he thought the retired pastor would have been more likely to receive sympathy than sanctions.

Ogletree and others signing on to the resolution "have agreed to forgo the expense, trouble and pain of conducting an unnecessary trial which would only achieve a result equivalent to what we have negotiated," Riss explained. The just resolution represents the best of interest of the church by allowing it to keep lines of communication open and "stop demonizing those we disagree with," he said.

The Rev. Scott Campbell, who served as counsel for Ogletree, and is a signer of the agreement, lauded the agreement and McLee's action. "He has had the vision and the courage to move us in the only direction that may save our church from schism," Campbell said in his remarks at the news conference. Paige and Jacobsen disagree with that assessment, noting that some faithful

United Methodists will feel ignored. "Far from avoiding schism, today's settlement increases the probability that schism will take place," their statement said.

Looking for more

For those who are waiting for a full reversal of church prohibitions, the dismissal of the Ogletree complaint is not enough.

Dorothee Benz of Methodists in New Directions, an advocacy group that has provided direct support to the retired pastor, commended McLee's "very bold step" to find "a new way out of this problem," and said the time for complacency is over.

Frank Schaefer, who was defrocked as a pastor after his own trial in November, also thanked McLee. "This indicates further how big our division is on the issue, but it also shows the advances we are making," he wrote in an emailed statement.

The Rev. Amy DeLong, who had a June 2011 church trial and is part of the Love Prevails advocacy group, described the systematic oppression represented by church policy as an enormous rock, with the New York Conference action taking only a small chip out of it. "The piece that was missing was the church apology to him and his family," she added.

"I'm heartened, but we're not there," said Lyn Ellis, co-coordinator of Affirmation, a long-time advocacy group. "Justice can't be served if this can happen again."

*Bloom is a United Methodist News Service multimedia reporter based in New York. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/umcscribe> or contact her at (646) 369-3759 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

Winter Volunteers Keep Recovery from Sandy Moving Forward

With record amounts of snow you might imagine that construction on homes being built through efforts of A Future with Hope, Inc., would come to a standstill – but not so, thanks in large part to the willingness of Greater New Jersey churches who continue to organize and send volunteers to housing sites.

One of those churches is Morrow Memorial, Maplewood, where the Rev. Brenda Wheeler Ehlers, Associate Pastor, is no stranger to hurricane relief and recovery. Ehlers was driving home from a United Methodist Women's Mission Institute when Katrina struck Louisiana and Mississippi. Her phone started to ring even before the storm had moved out of the region with calls demanding that "we must do something." After organizing numerous trips to help with the recovery effort from Katrina, Hurricane Irene struck North Carolina which became the focus of their volunteer efforts, but, per Ehlers, "Sandy happened right here!" Ehlers indicated that recovery takes longer than anyone anticipates. There is a cover of "oh, we're ok" immediately following a disaster that eventually gets blown away and that's when you're really needed. When asked what motivates her, she replied, "This is just what we do, we respond where there is need, and we've told the staff of A Future with Hope to use us wherever they most need us." The

first team Ehlers organized was in April, 2013, followed by three teams during the summer months, and most recently both a college-aged team and a high school team used their Christmas/winter school breaks to help in the rebuilding effort. The next group of volunteers is scheduled with the high school youth during their April school break this spring.

But now the church is expanding their volunteer recruitment even further by reaching out to the community. Sue Goodman is the point person at the church and is recruiting from the greater-Maplewood/South Orange community to organize volunteers. She believes that this area is looking for an outlet to help rebuild New Jersey. Goodman indicated that thus far, word-of-mouth is working well. They are inviting the youth groups from three other churches in the area to join Morrow Memorial during the April school break and to bring a friend and/or neighbor. These efforts are being done at the same time that Ehlers is putting together a youth team from all churches within the Gateway North District to volunteer during the summer months.

Morrow Memorial is only one of many churches heavily involved within GNJ providing much needed assistance during these difficult winter months. Thanks are given for each and every one of them!

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DRIVE THRU ASHES at Church of the Rockaways



Prayers and ashes awaited those who drove to The Church of the Rockaways on Ash Wednesday.

For many years, the tradition of the Church of the Rockaways, was to have one Ash Wednesday service at 7pm. However, this year they thought that if they imposed the ashes early in the morning, people could wear them as a witness to their faith throughout the whole day.

This year the church offered for the first time a Drive Thru Ashes service. United Methodists have been called to rethink church and try to make the church not only some place to go, but something we do as faithful Christians. "In times where church and spirituality are not a priority, we need to be creative to grow in faith and reach out to everyone with God's love," said Rev. Lyssette Perez, pastor at Church of the Rockaways.

The Drive Thru Ashes experience started early at 5am with two new members of the church helping to set the ash station, brewing fresh coffee, and blessing the ashes to be distributed. "Some of those who stopped by are regular church members, but we also met new people who said that it was a great idea for them," mentioned Pastor Perez. "Even if I didn't know the person, I felt their connection as a disciple of Jesus Christ. We had people of all ages from Rockaway and the surrounding area. Devin Higgins, a 7 year-old who faithfully comes to our Sunday School, insisted that his mother bring him to receive ashes to show the kids in school that he was Christian," Mrs. Perez added.

The Church of the Rockaways offers several outdoors activities during Lent and Easter, including a Sunrise Service on Easter Sunday, and community luncheons on Fridays during Lent. For more info about the church's activities and vision for ministry, visit them online at www.umcrockaway.org.

Bethany UMC, Wayne, Goes Deeper

One of this winter's many storms was not enough to keep nearly 300 members of Bethany Korean UMC from attending a Wednesday evening service focused on ways to radically serve like Christ and featuring A Future with Hope. Construction Director Lou Strugala and Volunteer Coordinator Lisa Park had been invited to speak on the work of the mission, the

owners that have received help, "Lieu's Story" and "Rick's Story". Both were subtitled in Korean. One worshipper said they felt 'woken up' by the stories. After the presentation, volunteers had the opportunity to sign up for service weeks. In fact, one group of leaders joined a one day work team that was scheduled for the following weekend.



The team from Bethany Korean pauses for a photo before returning to the task of rebuilding.

needs of the community still suffering as a result of the storm, and ways to volunteer.

Last year, Bethany Korean UMC had given extremely generously to the Sandy recovery effort through the Mission Fund. As a congregation, they made an initial pledge of \$300,000 but when the depth of the need became obvious, they increased their pledge to \$400,000.

The church's leadership invited A Future with Hope to speak in order to challenge the congregation to do more than give financial support. The leadership was convinced that the congregation was truly committed in serving by giving time and money but felt they could be stretched more.

The goal was to see the congregation engaged not only in meaningful Sunday Worship experiences, but in extending their scope of influence by loving and serving others in the community.

The opportunity to engage in local mission through A Future with Hope would have real meaning in the lives of people in New Jersey and move the congregation in new ways. As one church leader put it "What God has been doing through A Future with Hope, and the many volunteers and servants who have so faithfully served in rebuilding these neighborhoods would serve as great examples of those who have surrendered themselves to Christ. We want to hear about their stories."

The presentation included a presentation of two video testimonies from home-

ECUMENICAL CHOIR CONCERT



An ecumenical Unity Choir of sixty voices presented a concert on Sunday, January 26 at First Church in Newton as a culmination to Christian Unity Week. The singers, representing twenty-six churches sang the Christmas portion of Handel's *Messiah* plus the "Hallelujah Chorus" and "Worthy is the Lamb." Singers included Rev. Dr. Jennifer Cho of the Newton Church and her husband, Rev. Dr. Brandon Cho, pastor of First Church in Blirstown. The bass soloist was Rev. David Young pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Newton with his daughter Molly Young as soprano soloist. Kathleen and John Meredith sang the alto and tenor solos. A warm time of fellowship and refreshments followed despite the cold weather.

Bishop John and Beverly Schol

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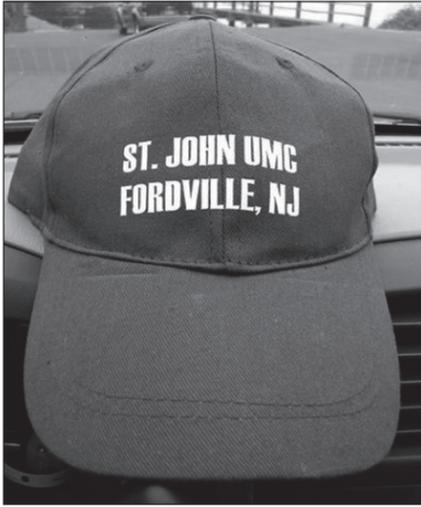
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Ministries with Native Americans in Local Churches



According to the 2010 census, there are 30,000 persons of Native American heritage living in New Jersey alone. Out of the 30,000 there are 20,000 who live here because of school or work. The other 10,000 are permanent residents.

United Methodists in the Greater New Jersey Area have historically lacked a purposeful ministry directed to our Native American members. They mostly remain hidden among non-Native American congregations; however, there are a number of United Methodist churches in the conference that do have a known history of Native American membership.

Thiells United Methodist Church started as a Native American mission and ended up with a completely different ethnicity membership around 1800. The churches who embraced Native American members illustrated their welcoming spirit. Some of the congregations also integrated portions of their now Native American Christian heritage

The Fairport United Methodist Church is one of the oldest congregations in the conference and has a history of taking social stands from anti-slavery to temperance. But what is not known to most is that they also have a history of Native American membership. Today Fairport is engaged in ministries such as SJ Operation Christmas Child, Spring Sale Fund Raiser and an active youth group to name a few.

Indian Mills United Methodist Church has a strong historical connection to the area Lenape-Nanticoke. The church sits on land where once a number of Lenape campfire stories were told including the Story of Indian Summer, Story of the Evil One, Tower of Babel and Snow-Born Child Legend. All these stories have parallels with Biblical stories. Combining these traditional stories makes it possible to present a richer Gospel while still retaining aspects of their Lenape-Nanticoke spiritual heritage.

Contemporary ministries reach out to the Shamong community through a robust camp meeting ministry, prayer meetings, discipleship studies, music and Bible adventures.

Last but not least is the story of Native Americans at St. John's United Methodist Church in Fordville. St. John's originated as an African-American congregation that was part of the former Delaware Annual Conference of the defunct Central Jurisdiction. Over the years other groups became members of this multi-cultural congregation. It took some time for Native American Methodists to make St. John's their final stop. Many members arrived in Fordville after a difficult path through other local Methodist congregations where expressing their heritage proved to be more of a hindrance than blessing. St. John's open hospitality to all persons provides avenues for accepting Lenape-Nanticoke members and their traditions to become part of their church. As a result, Native American spiritual understanding and expressions became an important part of St. John's congregational life. Today, St. John's is recognized as a unique Native American congregation by our annual conference, General Board of Global Ministries and New Jersey Senate and General Assembly. St. John's is a model of synergistic spirituality that we all can embrace from our Native American members within our own congregations.

Yet the path by which our Greater New Jersey Lenape-Nanticoke and other localized tribal Christians took to get to this contemporary point is heart breaking and humiliating as is much of the history of Native Americans over the past two hundred years. The heroic perseverance and grit from the local churches embracing Native Americans brings dignity to both their heritage and reinforces our call to make disciples for Jesus.



St. John's Fordville celebrates parish hall grand opening.



God's people.

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disciples from the sh
water from the well
and hope for the all

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News, letters, photos, or other material must be in the hands of your associate editor by that time to assure consideration for publication. Viewpoint articles may be e-mailed to the editor at editor@umrelay.org.

Journeying



Red Bank Couple Reports on Church Extension in Tanzania

RED BANK – When Janie and George Schildge returned home from a Christmastide trip to Africa where they viewed the United Methodist Church in action, Janie could barely contain herself. A longtime member of the Red Bank Church where she had led programs ranging from CROP-walks to anti-fracking campaigns, she was excited to see the African church at work. It was a story that had to be told – the story of new-church development thanks to the partnership of Tanzanian Christians and United Methodists from New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania.

The trip was an opportunity to renew an acquaintance with Mutwale wa Mushidi, the Bishop's Representative in the Tanzanian Conference, and his wife, Kabaka Alphonsine, whom they had met six years ago on an itineration here. During the visit they witnessed the first steps in establishing a new church center in Dar es Salaam.

"It is a marvelous vision, and is on its way to reality," declares the Red Bank woman. "Our Church, and we personally, have been enthusiastic in our support of Mutwale and Kabaka since we first met them,..." Ms. Schildge explained. "We hosted them in our home then and again in 2012 and were very impressed by their passion as missionaries."

"A number of churches in our conference and Eastern Pennsylvania have donated financially to the Advance Specials connected to the Missionaries and the church center," she continued. The Schildges came to know Rev. David LeDuc and his team from Vincent Church, Nutley, and Paul and Becky Raines from the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, when they were in Tanzania on a work team in 2013.

"It's an awesome experience." The Red Bank lay woman said in reference to her Tanzanian hosts, "to feel their joy and gratitude and enthusiasm for spreading United Methodism in Tanzania."

The Schildges' enthusiasm for the Tanzanian work found expression in an article and photos which they have submitted to the *Relay* and which appear on this page.

Report from Tanzania

We greet you in the name of the Tanzania Conference of the United Methodist Church, where we recently witnessed the purchase of land for a new church center in Dar es Salaam. The first week of January, 2014, was an exciting time for the church in Tanzania and our United Methodist missionaries there. Mutwale wa Mushidi, the Bishop's Representative, and his wife, Kabaka Alphonsine, wanted us to see their church, a newly planted church, and this big step in the process of establishing a church center in Dar es Salaam where a guest house will be built,



Members of the team stand in front of the new First UMC in Dar es Salaam.

and offices for the Bishop and a place to worship, along with a pre-school and a future primary school. It is a marvelous vision, and is on its way to reality.

Thanks to the efforts of churches in our (Greater) NJ conference, and Eastern Pennsylvania conference, and a campaign to raise money led by Vincent UMC of Nutley, following a week of working there in June, (Relay Aug. 2013) enough funds were donated to make possible the purchase of 14 acres of undeveloped farm land not far from the airport. The 14 acres were purchased for the price of \$65,000 US dollars, and the owner of the land graciously gave another acre as a gift. The church has the option of purchasing more land in the future, if needed.

We were delighted that our visit coincided with the arrival of Bishop Ntambo of North Katanga, Congo, who presides over the Tanzania conference. We were warmly greeted by Rev. Mutwale and Kabaka plus a number of pastors, a District Superintendent, missionaries,

students and local members of the Dar es Salaam UMC, and from the 67 churches which have been established in the last two decades. The newest church which we visited is on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam in a seemingly remote area - and consists of a thatched roof open-sided structure, with another smaller one nearby for the Sunday School children. They still need a well and a latrine, but we were greeted by one of the new members, a father and two small children, and we could see in the distance the roofs of homes, so the church will grow. For us it was a wonderful, refreshing experience in evangelism and service.

Bishop Ntambo held meetings with visiting missionaries from far parts of the country, and also went over ongoing church business, but the main purpose of the Bishop's visit was the land purchase. All legal formalities were concluded at the signing, and now, a month later, Mutwale writes that congregation members are clearing the land three days a week, in preparation for construction. This is a

congregation with no personal vehicles, and all visits and business is done on foot, bicycle, or public transportation, in a wide area. Everything takes many hours to accomplish, but with the passion and deep faith of these fellow United Methodists, it will be accomplished, provided that we in the U.S. help to fund this Advance Special #12635N.

Many challenges lie ahead - water, sanitation, roads, but these enthusiastic Christians are working toward their vision. We are inspired by their work, their joy and their faith, to be part of this vision. Please contact us to set up a time to share our photos and experiences with you.

George and Janie Schildge
Red Bank UMC, Red Bank, NJ
jschildge@optonline.net

Rev. David LeDuc and team
Vincent UMC, Nutley, NJ
vincentumc@verizon.net

BOOK REVIEW

Just Jesus Is a Grand Book for Walter Wink's Final Book

The complete title is "*Just Jesus—My Struggle to Become Human*" by Walter Wink, with Steven Berry. Walter Wink was a Biblical scholar, theologian, and activist before his death in 2012.

Just Jesus is a book made up of short vignettes of parts of Wink's life – sharing with the reader his beliefs and theology, his times of civil disobedience, his involvement in Selma, South Africa, and Chile, and his life reflections.

For instance, he goes from one vignette titled "Worldviews," to one titled "Union Theological Seminary," to one labeled "Gangs in New York," to one listed as "Peavine." It's a book to read

once, and then again, and then again.

On the back of the book Marcus Borg, author of *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* wrote: "For those who knew Walter Wink, this book is a treasure. For those who didn't know him, *Just Jesus* provides a rich encounter with one of the most important New Testament scholars of the past half century. *Just Jesus* is in part a memoir, but it takes the striking form of brief memories of his early life with snapshots of his last years and months, and all of that integrated with essays on some of the most important matters that he wrote about. *Just Jesus* is memory and testimony."

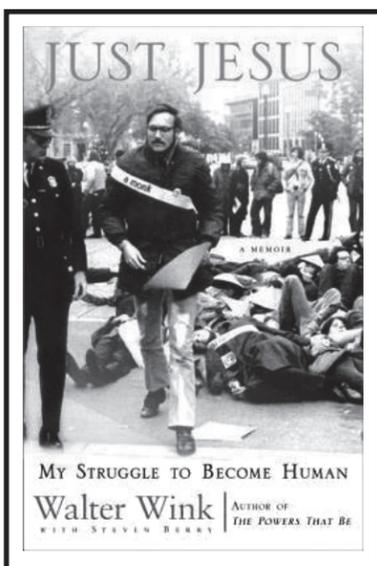
I took one of his five-day workshops in 1994 at Auburn Theological Semi-

nary titled "Worldviews," His wife, June Keener-Wink was a co-presenter and her part took the form of movement and dance. It was an honor to experience that course with them.

His most well-known trilogy is *The Powers Trilogy* – made up of three books, *Naming the Powers – The Language of Power in the New Testament* (1984); *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (1986); and *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World Domination* (1992).

— Ann Freeman Price

(Ann Freeman Price is lay leader at Sparta United Methodist Church, Sparta, NJ. She was head of the GNJ Conference Church and Society Committee from 2000 to 2008.)



Women Pastors Growing in Numbers

By M. Garlinda Burton



In front, Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, center, president of the Council of Bishops, celebrates opening worship at the 2012 United Methodist General Conference with Bishop Larry Goodpaster and the Rev. April Casperson. While some clergywomen, like Wenner, reach top positions in the denomination, a study shows that a lack of support is the reason other women pastors leave local church pulpits for other ministries. Photo by Mike DuBose, UMNS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — Women pastors in The United Methodist Church are finding more acceptance and more reasons to stay in local church ministry than any time in the denomination's history, according to a survey of clergywomen.

"Retention [of women pastors] has improved, but the question is, 'What more can be done?'" — The Rev. Hee An Choi, director of the Anna Howard Shaw Center

Still, women are more likely to leave congregations for ministries beyond congregations, citing lack of support by bishops and cabinets and underuse of their "gifts" for ministry, the survey found.

And racial-ethnic clergywomen are still less likely than white women to experience acceptance and support from their congregations and their supervisors.

Patterned after a similar study done 20 years ago, the United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Survey, conducted in 2010-12, was co-sponsored by the Anna Howard Shaw Center at Boston University School of Theology and the Clergy Lifelong Learning office of the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Of the more than 10,300 active and retired women clergy in the United States, 1,906 women participated in the survey. Among the key findings:

Women clergy serving local congregations have increased by 20 percent to 30 percent in all five U.S. jurisdictions. In each region, 95 percent or more of clergywomen are appointed to local churches, either as senior or associate or assistant pastors.

The most dramatic jump in women serving local church appointments has been among African-American women (from 59 percent 20 years ago to 98 percent of those surveyed). Asian and Asian-American clergywomen serving congregations increased from 65 percent to nearly 100 percent of those participating in the survey.

White clergywomen and racial-ethnic clergywomen leave and later return to local church ministry at about the same rate (17.8 percent versus 17.4 percent), and the rates are similar regardless of the marital status of a clergywomen.

The No. 1 reason women leave local church ministry is to pursue extension ministry (beyond the local church); 22 percent cited that reason for leaving.

The number of women clergy citing "lack of support from the hierarchical system" as their reason for leaving actually increased. The number of racial-ethnic women citing this reason rose from 27 percent 20 years ago to 44 percent in this research.

Men and women who accept the call to ministry — particularly those who are called to be elders — most often say they are called primarily to serve congregations. However, for many, their experience in local congregations — from dealing with some truculent laity to the

pressures of oversight by superintendents, bishops and cabinets and boards of ordained ministries — often results in gifted pastors fleeing the pulpit for pastoral counseling, conference and churchwide agency posts or some other expression of ministry.

That the status and role of United Methodist clergywomen has improved in the past 20 years is evident, says the Rev. Hee An Choi, director of the Anna Howard Shaw Center and one of the researchers on this project. Still, she says, more study is needed to determine more practical and long-lasting solutions to supporting and inspiring excellence in women who answer the call to ministry.

"Retention [of women pastors] has improved, but the question is, 'What more can be done?'" said Choi, an assistant professor of practical theology at Boston University.

"I believe the church must look more closely at the appointment system in light of the impact on all women, particularly racial-ethnic women. There are still discrepancies in job security, opportunities to serve larger congregations and, related to that, to have the salaries that come with upward mobility," she added.

The Rev. HiRho Park, director of lifelong learning with the Board of Higher Education and Ministry, hailed the "good news" that "clergywomen are making progress." She pointed to a small but growing number of women now serving as lead pastors of 1,000-plus members. There were 64 women leading large U.S. churches in 2008; recent numbers found 137 women senior pastors of large churches.

However, women of color occupy only two of these pulpits, and the denomination has yet to elect an Asian or Native-American woman as bishop — all signs, Park says, that the church still struggles with institutional racism, sexism, work-family stress that affects women disproportionately, and the "economic stratification" within the United Methodist clergy system.

Dawn Wiggins Hare, a laywoman and top executive of the United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women also welcomed the positive upswing in women serving local churches. At the same time, she expressed "tremendous sadness" that some clergywomen still cite lack of support and "rejection by churches" as reason they feel forced to leave congregational ministry.

She called for continued study and action to bring equity and fairness to the ministerial system. "We have heard the cry of clergywomen asking for support and affirmation of the authority upon which their ordination is based," Hare declared.

*M. Garlinda Burton, a writer, editor and diversity and ethics consultant, is a member of Hobson United Methodist Church, Nashville, Tenn.

'A Band of Angels'

By Susan Kim (reporting for UMCOR)

March 20, 2014 — A family in New Jersey was barely hanging onto a faint glimmer of hope when a "band of angels" came to their door. Before Hurricane Sandy swirled through, the father, an ironworker, became disabled when he hurt his back at work. Then, the family was devastated when they lost one of the children, 6 years old, to cancer.

"In taking care of the medical and funeral bills, they had no money left to help themselves," said Norm Hardin, disaster response coordinator for the California-Nevada Annual (regional) Conference of The United Methodist Church. "Then Sandy hit."

The superstorm was a kind of final blow to the house, though the family continued to live there, Hardin said. "With all of this happening all at once, the husband went into a depression," he said. "There was this patio chair, and he told us that he used to just sit there staring at the house, smoking cigarettes, and drinking beer."

That was before the angels came and turned this into a story of resurrection.

Twenty-Eight Volunteers, One Home The "angels" are 28 volunteers from California and Nevada who flew across the country to New Jersey. Most of them have worked together for several years, and they are trained and experienced in traveling to disaster sites.

But when they got to New Jersey, their task list was a lot shorter than usual: it was one house. For a group used to splitting into smaller teams and tackling multiple repair jobs, this was surprising—and, to be honest, worrisome at first. Would there be enough work? Even if there was, would there be enough room to tackle the job?

It was challenging and it required the volunteers to be flexible, admitted Diane Jackson, a volunteer from First United Methodist Church of Santa Rosa in California. In the end, the group became closer than ever. "A lot of the people liked the feeling of being all together in one place," she said. "We're from seven churches. This gave people a chance to get to know each other much better."

Extended Family

The volunteers were also able to sit down and have meals with the family, who often worked alongside them, said Bill Walker, a volunteer from the Presbyterian Church of Novato, Nevada. "We learned their family story. They were down. They had almost given up."

The volunteers saw the family as not just hurricane survivors but as "real people," said Kay Walker, Bill's wife. "It was just great to be able to sit on the ground and have a bag lunch with them and talk about so-called normal things."

What started out as a questionable experience for the volunteers turned into, by the time the work was completed, an unprecedented time of closeness with each other and with the family, she said.

"They called us their band of angels. When they answered the door the first day we came, they believed the angels had come."

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) trains "angels" in waiting like the volunteers convened by the California-Nevada Annual Conference. Your gift to UMCOR US Disaster Response, Advance #901670, ensures conference training in early response, long-term response, disaster case management, and spiritual and emotional care.

RELAY MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the *United Methodist Relay* is to provide print communication to the leadership and membership, clergy and lay, of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. It shall be a **vehicle** to tell the church's story and a **forum** for the exchange of ideas regarding Christian Faith and Practice.

In fulfillment of this mission, its **purpose** is:

- to inform the readership of events and resources at local, district conference, area and denominational levels
- to promote the mission of the annual conference, the area, and the general church
- to invite discussion of and response to important and controversial key issues facing the church
- to encourage readers to grow in their commitment to diversity and inclusiveness in church and society
- to inspire readers to grow in their faith and commitment to Christ and the Church

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Thanks to the generosity of the United Methodist Churches of Greater New Jersey, the Mission Fund campaign has raised more than \$3.4 million of our \$12 million goal to help repair homes damaged by Superstorm Sandy, help stop death by malaria in Africa and help energize local mission projects. With your help we have already achieved so much.

Think what can be done when we reach our goal.



4,600 lives have been saved from Malaria.



28 families have returned to their homes.



111 United Methodist Congregations in Greater New Jersey have engaged in new or renewed mission projects in their local communities including:

People to People Food Pantry
Family Promise
ESL programs
Coat collections
Camden Neighborhood Center

Prayer Shawl Ministry
Caring Closet
Crop Walk
Home First Garden Project
Peter's Pantry

GreenFair Mission
Brandywine
Senior Living Center
Homeless housing
GreenFaith Mission



HOW ARE YOU AND YOUR CONGREGATION INVOLVED?

To find out how you can be involved
Contact Rebecca Nichols, Field Coordinator for the Mission Fund

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