

Bishop Names New Superintendents of Skylands and Capital Districts



Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar has named the Rev. Steve Bechtold as the soon to be superintendent of the Skylands District. The bishop, in making the announcement, said that Bechtold is "a person with great integrity and passion for an inclusive church. He is a pastor par excellence, and an administrator with true servant leadership." He has served pastorates at the Branchville and Butler churches. He has also given outstanding leadership as the director of the Aldersgate Center and as Associate Council Director for Camps, Conferences and Retreats. Under his pastoral leadership at the Butler church a new Hispanic/Latino congregation was started and the first Natural Church Development cycle completed. Bechtold also consistently used books

recommended by Bishop Devadhar to develop ministry and mission within the church. Both congregations at Butler are "making disciples for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," remarked the bishop.

Bechtold has led the Board of Ordained Ministry with attention to details and with a deep commitment to raise leaders for the twenty-first century. "I have also observed and appreciated his leadership at the Jurisdictional Board of Ordained Ministry," commented Bishop Devadhar.

He continued, "I am excited that (Bechtold) has agreed to be part of the conference leadership at such a time as this, and know that both the conference and the district will be blessed by his leadership. Rev. Bechtold will come to the cabinet table with the gifts of a pastor's heart and the passion of a teacher."

Bechtold is married to the Rev. Ellen Mearns Bechtold, pastor at the Milton Church, Oak Ridge. They have two adult children and one grandson. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Albright College in 1976 and his M. Div. and D. Min. degrees from The Theological School at Drew in 1979 and 1994 respectively, and holds a certificate in spiritual direction from the Guild for Spiritual Guidance. Bechtold is also a Certified Minister of Christian Education, and a Natural Church Development coach. Through his years in ministry, he has written children's and adult curriculum for the United Methodist Publishing House.

The new superintendent's vision for his ministry on the Skylands District is to equip congregations and pastors for excellence in ministry; encouraging and equipping them to look beyond themselves to ask the question, "Who are we not reaching for Jesus Christ and what must we do differently to be in ministry with these persons?" Bechtold observes, "It is too easy to be inwardly focused, to reach out only to those who are most like us, and to be in survival mode. We cannot afford complacency in such a time as this. We need bold, creative and outwardly focused ministry to the poor, the marginalized, the disenfranchised, the hurting, and those who have found the church to be irrelevant in their lives. We need to embrace new strategies, new languages, and new images that will make the good news of Jesus Christ come alive, and to encourage our congregations to live with a spiritual authenticity that is contagious. It all begins and ends with prayer, Bible study, and intentional spiritual practices. It is my prayer that, together with the pastors and laity of the district that we can offer hope that is uniquely found in Christ."



In completing cabinet appointments effective July 1, 2011, Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar has named the Rev. Varlyna D. Wright to serve as superintendent of the Capital District. In his announcement of the appointment, the bishop said, "Rev. Wright is a person with a love for the gospel and a passion for a multicultural community. She has a pastor's heart and a great passion to break down the walls of -isms." After being ordained and serving as a clergy member in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, Wright transferred her clergy membership to the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. She has led the Leadership Development Team of the Conference as Coordinator and since July of 2010 has served as Interim Director of Connectional Ministries of the Conference.

In all, Wright has served the local church as pastor in Pennsylvania, St. Croix-United States Virgin Islands, and New Jersey. She is certified as a pastoral psychotherapist by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and is trained in mediation and conflict management.

Bishop Devadhar said of his association with Wright, "I have been blessed to minister with her since September 2004, and have always appreciated her connectional spirit and boundless passion to make sure every child of God is included at the table." Wright served as Dean of the Program Cabinet since 2007 and also shouldered the extra assignment as Interim Pastor of the Franklin-St. John's Church, Newark, for seven months in 2005-2006. She is known as a team player and brings a healing presence to her ministry. Besides serving and providing leadership in Jurisdictional committees, she was also a member of the General Board of Church and Society from 2000-2004.

The bishop concluded, "I am excited that she has agreed to be part of the conference leadership at such a time as this, and know that both The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference and the Capital District will be blessed by her prophetic mind, pastoral heart, and servant leadership.

She has adopted as her mission statement Luke 4:18-19

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because God has anointed me;
God has sent me to preach good news to the poor;
To proclaim release to the captives and
The recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty
Those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord".

Wright says that she looks forward to working with the clergy and laity in the Capital District: "The district has a variety of opportunities for ministries both in the urban and suburban settings and I'm excited about the possibility of connecting and strengthening our relationship with Princeton Seminary and its students. I want to focus on developing leadership among the youth and young adults and empowering laity to engage in ministries outside their local church. I'm committed to creating a world of peace and justice for all people and will continue to work to make that happen. I know that together, with God's help, we can make a difference in the lives of people in our communities."

Search for Christian Maturity Retreat

At a time when older high school students are losing interest; college students have little to come home to; and young adults are caught in the middle - too old for youth group and feeling out of place in other adult settings - the Search for Christian Maturity retreat is a dynamic and energetic experience with the living Christ.

Eighty enthusiastic young people braved a 12 inch snow storm to attend the Search Retreat at Johnsonburg Retreat Center as well as the Alumni Retreat at the Hope Conference Center on January 7, 8, & 9, 2011.

In its 27th year, a "Search for Christian Maturity" is one approach to the challenging task of helping young people better understand their faith and find meaning in their lives. It is much more than a retreat! Always held on the first full weekend after the new year, "Search" is a weekend during which young men and young women come together for a sharing of faith, fun and fellowship. Although it is very helpful, it is not a cure-all for the problems youth may have. Rather, it is an opportunity for them to gain a greater insight into the meaning of Christ in their lives as well as greater clarity into the way their faith may find expression in the world. This is done through the Search 'youth to youth' approach.

The core of the weekend is a series of talks and discussions that transition from 'Who Am I?' (Am I the person God wants me to be?) to 'Fourth Day' (Who am I going to become as God and I move into the rest of my life?). These talks

and discussions thread their way through the weekend amongst many other trust building activities. A team of young people receive 'peer to peer' leadership training and share experiences in their lives which have tested or strengthened their beliefs. Their talks are prepared over a four month period under the guidance of pastors and the other team members.

The Search weekend is not only the beginning of a relationship with Christ it is also the beginning of friendships with other youth and young adults who are also growing in their faith. The intention is that youth will return to their churches or cam-



pus and become more active in ministry. The hope that they will also share what they have learned about themselves during a weekend with others who also have questions, doubts, fears, and faith as they journey with Christ and the Church.

Much more than a one-time retreat

experience, Search has become a year-round outreach ministry to youth and young adults. This ministry offers young people year round opportunities for meaningful leadership training, Christian music, Bible studies, and prayer; with other youth who have the same challenges and questions about their faith. An annual Fourth Day (alumni) retreat is



held the same weekend as the Search retreat, and a spring retreat for all Search alumni is held in Ocean Grove each year. The Search organizers are grateful for the support given by the leadership of the conference, Erica Munoz who coordinates GNJ Youth & Young Adult Ministries and to the Skylands Walk to Emmaus Community.

For more information contact: Rev. Beth Whalley Mitchell, 201-569-0263.

Comments from those who attended!

"Search has had a great impact on my life, causing me to re-examine some of my values and beliefs, and reaffirm others. I've gotten more involved in my church and plan on going on a mission trip. Search has helped me grow and continue on my spiritual journey." ~ College Senior

"At Search I learned that it's OK to be the real me because of God's love for me. As a Sunday school teacher I can now better share who Jesus is because he's really a part of my life." ~ High School Senior

"For me, Search means the giving and sharing of a special Christian love that will also keep me moving toward a more perfect and stable relationship with God." ~ College Junior

"After running away from Christ for a long time, I renewed my commitment to him while on the Search weekend. I now attend church more regularly and teach a church school class." ~ Young Adult

"This weekend brought me back to Christ. The talks were important in helping me sort out my thoughts regarding Christianity and being a Christian in our society. I learned that there is a God who loves me and I can therefore accept and love myself. My faith was strengthened so much!" ~ Young Adult

"The retreat really made me think about my life and my relationship with God and Christ. It just wasn't something that I thought about a lot. I believed but I didn't do anything about it. I used to feel that my prayers were not really heard, but I now realize that God does hear me. I also discovered that there are a lot of young people who believe as I do and that is comforting to me." ~ High School Senior

EDITORIAL

What it means to serve...

If the present issue of the Relay seems somehow less stylish and erudite than it usually does, chalk it up to the miracles of modern medicine. Were it not for the fact that surgeons are able to do the remarkable things they do, our editor in chief, Robin VanCleeef would have been at the helm again this month. However, since he is recuperating following surgery, the task of putting the February edition together was left to his staff. It has been an education. The amount of time it takes to gather the materials, edit them, put them in some kind of sensible order, and meet the publishing deadline is daunting. To know that this is done month after month after month by a colleague who has been "retired" for more than seventeen years is humbling.

The work that is done in the name of Christ by those among us who are in the retired relationship is as varied as it is vast. Some continue to work as local pastors. Some do counseling. Others teach or serve as chaplains in hospitals, prisons, or schools. Still others continue to serve God as active participants in local congregations. The lesson is that whatever your status might be at a given stage in life, the vocation of Christians is to be ministers of the Gospel. Christian service is incarnational in character and the circumstances of life change. So the nature of our service may change with the context, but the call to serve is always a present reality.

This is no less true for the ministry of the laity. Christians are called, not by ecclesiastical order, but by virtue of our baptism. "All members of Christ's universal church are called to share in the ministry which is committed to the whole church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, each member of The United Methodist Church is to be a servant of Christ on mission in the local and world-wide community." (Discipline, ¶220)

One of the ongoing dilemmas for pastors and local church leaders is the growing trend among congregants to remain uninvolved in the work of their church. The vows all UM's take upon entering into membership are to support the Church with their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Despite numerous attempts to recruit members of local churches to serve on committees, work areas, and in other ministries, a growing number of people are refraining from committing themselves. In many cases, it has become simpler to raise the level of financial support for the work of the church than it is to get people to give of their time and talents. When confronted with a need, many are far more ready to pay to have someone else do what needs to be done than they are to do something themselves.

The reason most often given for failing to be more personally involved in the work of the Church is that people haven't enough time. What they mean is that they don't have time that they're willing to take away from other things that for some reason have a higher priority in their lives. Where is the failure? Does it lie squarely on the shoulders of our churches' members? Is it that pastors and other Church leaders don't expect enough from new members? Do we make becoming members of The United Methodist Church too easy? Have we defined the meaning of membership too narrowly or superficially? Whatever the cause or combination of causes, the meaning of membership needs to be explored fully with prospective UM's, including, and perhaps especially, with confirmation classes. Changing the culture of witness and service in our churches will take time. We should start now.

— GFC

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A Message from the Bishop

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Greetings in the precious name of
Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



As we journey from the "Manger to the Cross" in our Christian tradition during the Epiphany season, one of the questions that keep coming before us is, "How do we witness for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as people of God, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit?"

Though there are several possible answers to this question, one of the answers may be that we become stronger faith communities in our respective neighborhoods so that others may see Christ in us in powerful ways!

As we reflect on this question, one of the resources that might be of help to us is a book written by Dennis Reina & Michelle Reina, *"Rebuilding Trust In the Work Place: Seven Steps to Renew Confidence, Commitment and Energy"*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2010). Though primarily written for the work place, this book may be of help in creating a culture of trust and enhancement in a faith community. The authors offer many valuable tools on how betrayal occurs in intentional and unintentional ways, how one needs to respond to such

betrayals, what it means to bring healing to a community, and what it really means to forgive someone, get healed and move forward. As I was reading this book one of the scenarios that kept coming before me was a situation that happened in one of the churches I served many years ago.

On a particular Christmas Eve, a faithful parishioner was deeply hurt for the simple reason that I had asked someone else to serve Holy Communion. The person who was hurt and the person who assisted in the Holy Communion service had been good friends and it did not take me long to realize that there was deeper pain between these two wonderful church-going people. Now it was spilling over to the congregation. After much reflection and prayer, I decided to bring a group of people together so we could talk about issues that had been under the surface, wearing away the fabric of the Christian community. As I was getting ready for this, a respected elderly member of the church called me to say, "Pastor, please do not move forward with this meeting. This issue was there before you came and it will be there after you leave. If you address this you may be injured and we do not want to lose you as our pastor because of your attempt to bring healing..." Though I always appreciated the wisdom of this parishioner, I respectfully answered this person by saying that we needed to address this for the well-being of the community!"

Thanks be to God! Though it was a very difficult process, we saw healing among the parties and beyond, and this enabled the church to make some changes as we journeyed from the manger to the cross in that Epiphany season.

When conflicts arise, it is a human tendency not to address it for the sake of keeping a false peace. One of the great contributions of the Reinas in this book is advice on how to rebuild broken trust that may even happen in a healthy Christian community in intentional or unintentional ways. This book might be a great gift to those who are looking for resources for a Lenten study. God has placed the Church in the midst of a society which is being broken by different kinds of -isms. The individual Christian and the Christian community are called to be advocates of breaking and dismantling those -isms. We cannot do so unless we are united and healed!

The people of God, the baptized Christians, are given the task of beaming the radiance of Christ's light in our respective communities through acts of forgiveness and healing. We cannot beam that light unless and until we forgive ourselves and others as a part of Christian healing.

As we journey in the Epiphany season, like the Magi who were asked by God to take a different way in their journey forward and journey home, may we also take a different way, no matter how long, laborious, and risk-taking that journey may be to us for the sake of our Christian witness for the glory of God. May we be strengthened and blessed by the Holy Spirit in our journey.

In Christ's love,

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar



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New Subscriptions, renewals, address changes, and corrections should be addressed to the subscription manager, Beverly Karlovich, BKarlovich@gnjumc.org or by mail to Beverly Karlovich, Subscription manager, United Methodist Relay, 1001 Wickapecko Dr., Ocean, NJ 07712-4733

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ALL NEWS ARTICLES, photos, letters and viewpoints should be sent to the Editorial Staff member serving your district or agency, at the listed address.

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Web Address: www.UMRelay.org - Send all NEWS and PHOTOS to the staff member serving YOUR district or agency.

The UNITED METHODIST RELAY is published monthly except January and August by the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Office of Publication: Office of the Bishop, 1001 Wickapecko Dr., Ocean, NJ 07712-4733. Second Class postage paid at Brick, N.J. 08732. Mailed free to selected Charge Conference members and clergy of each church. Others may subscribe at the rate of \$9.50 per year. Back issues may be obtained as available at \$1.50 for first copy and 50 cents for each additional copy sent in the same wrapper. POSTMASTER: Send Address changes to UNITED METHODIST RELAY, 1001 Wickapecko Dr., Ocean, NJ 07712-4733.

VIEWPOINT

BLACK HISTORY: A Slice of Human History

by Gilbert H. Caldwell

I spent a year, 1962-63, as a graduate student at Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I entered HDS after serving for 4 years in my first appointment, a two-point charge in southeastern Massachusetts. I went to Harvard with the faint hope that I would have the intellectual/academic substance to enter the Ph.D. program. That year proved that I had neither the academic nor motivational qualities to achieve my goal. But, while at Harvard I met Professor Krister Stendahl and was deeply impressed by his writing and teaching. He wrote, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" that appeared in the 1963 Harvard Theological Review. I had not paid much attention to Paul in my M.Div. studies at Boston University, but Stendahl's writings made me more attentive to the insights of Paul on our human condition.



I paraphrase his "the good that I ought do and do not, and that I ought not do, I do" as a way of addressing our flaws of omission and commission on many matters, including race. Black History Month is with us because for a variety of reasons, Black history has been ignored, revised or distorted too often in our history books. We find it difficult to explore honestly, the reasons why a study of Black history makes so many of us uncomfortable. We know that it is essential to be historically correct about the issues in England that energized the efforts that established the USA. We understand that Israel exists in the main because of the history of the oppression of the Jews. But, there is difficulty for some persons in admitting that the existence of American slavery made necessary the abolition movement and the reality of racial segregation provoked/evoked the Civil Rights Movement.

If we do not remember accurately the negatives of the past, Santayana reminds us, we may repeat them. We may not only repeat them, failure to remember them deprives us of the opportunity to celebrate the magnificent progress we have made as a nation since slavery and legal racial segregation. Whatever our politics or our responses to the politics of Barack Obama, every American should have rejoiced at his election as an expression of our national journey toward racial justice.

I prefaced my address/sermon given at the Martin Luther King service at Asbury Church in Atlantic City where I am pastor by giving examples of some of the foolishness of our racial history that is now seen as so contradictory and foolish that we want to cry and laugh: There was a time when Blacks were forced to sit in the back of busses and the front cars of trains. The latter because the fumes from the coal and wood that propelled the engine were breathed in by the passengers who sat in the front cars...What did colored and white rest rooms look like?...How did white and colored water in water fountains taste?...Harry Golden a journalist in my home state of North Carolina, with tongue-in-cheek, suggested, "Vertical Racial Integration". He observed that whites and blacks had no difficulty standing together in lines, but when they sat down, the gene that inflicted and infected the segregationist took over. (My words, not his). Today those few persons who speak of Islamic terrorists as a way to negatively brand all of Islam, would never speak of the KKK as Christian terrorists who reflect negatively on all of Christianity. The reality of our biased and bigoted contradictions cannot help but be viewed, when looked at through the eyes of faith, as child-like foolishness.

Most of us in our moments of candid introspection acknowledge that we have committed sins of omission (silence) when we should have spoken and acted. I have admitted that there were times when I should have challenged segregation, but I quenched the spirit by remaining silent. I finished college in 1955 and did nothing to challenge segregation in Greensboro, but in 1960 four young men from my college created history by sitting in at the Woolworth lunch counter that I avoided because of its practice of racial segregation.

I believe Black History Month provides a special opportunity/challenge for those of us who claim commitment and adherence to the Christian faith. We can ask ourselves how and why people who seek to follow Jesus and claim to be "people of the book" (The Bible), in the past and some in the present, "use" Bible and circumvent Jesus to justify their racial bias and bigotry.

But as I point a finger of blame at those persons, I know that on matters of gender in the past, I had to realize that I pointed 3 fingers at myself. Once I "used" the Bible to justify my opposition to the ordination of women, just as some used the Bible to support their racial biases, Whenever I remember grandmother Mama Irene's; "There is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us, that it doesn't behoove any of us to talk about the rest of us," I admit the good and the not-so-good within me.

Krister Stendahl wrote of the Apostle Paul's contributions to "The Introspective Conscience of the West". I suggest that a deeper exploration of Black History, rooted in the discipline of prayer, will touch those deep places in our lives that transcend race and the introspection this prompts will not only touch conscience, it will transform our lives.

Gilbert H. Caldwell, Pastor
Asbury United Methodist Church
Atlantic City

Hope for Haiti

By Molly O'Brien



Haiti Team: front row, left to right: Kathy Ahmad, Molly O'Brien, Rev. Valerie Garron, Rev. Kyewoon Choi, Rev. Darlene Schott, Tim Roebuck and Roy Kepler. Back row, left to right: Russ Condon, Lyn Stake and Bill Ehlers.

Before January 12, 2010, Haiti was the poorest nation in the western hemisphere, with more than half of the population living under an average income of \$2 per day. Amenities like education, health services, and steady income were for the privileged. A nation with potential to be a tropical oasis was battling government corruption, the spread of AIDS, and over consumption of natural resources. On January 12, 2010, an earthquake of 7.0 magnitude hit Haiti; the greatest impact centered near the capital of Port-au-Prince, home to an estimated 3.5 million people. Without the proper infrastructure to react to and recover from this catastrophic event, an overwhelming number of Haitians were left striving for basic necessities like food, water, shelter and safety.

On November 6, 2010 a team of 10 people from the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference landed in Port-au-Prince International Airport. Although we had been current on the situation in Haiti, reading news articles and viewing photos; seeing it in person was a completely different experience. Almost 10 months after the earthquake hit, the evidence of destruction was still apparent. Crumbled concrete buildings, cities of tents as far as we could see; it looked as if the earthquake hit

Methodiste d'Haiti to organize recovery and determine priority projects. Our team stayed in Methodist Guest House, which fittingly decked a sign that said "Port-au-Prince Hilton." With running water, bunk beds, and 3 home cooked meals a day, this was certainly luxury compared to the conditions on the other side of the compound walls. Our team spent the week working on two projects, a priority bathroom on one of guest house buildings and repairs and renovations to Sister Paulette's House next to the Methodist Children's Home. These projects were led by Haitian engineers, contractors, and skilled laborers. Although our team funded the projects, we were impressed by the way the organization made sure to support the local economy and adhere to indigenous practices by putting Haitians in charge; we were there to work for them.

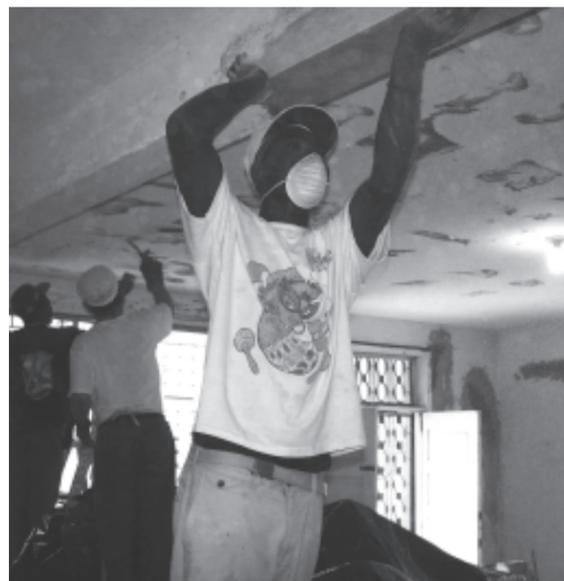
After a week of lugging cement bags for some, sanding and painting for others, we left at the end of the week with the successful completion of our projects. We finished the foundation and saw the walls of the future bathroom, and covered the entire interior and exterior of the house with a fresh coat of paint! No matter how sweaty and exhausted we were after a day of

work under the hot Haitian sun, the physical work we did on the trip was the easiest part.

The hard part was driving by all the tent cities into our gated compound after a day of work, watching a woman 8-months pregnant cooking for her family over an open fire outside her tent, prying your hand away from a little girl who has been following you around all day. The problems of Haiti are overwhelming: earthquake recovery, cholera epidemic, food supply shortage, public safety concerns, proper education, and health service are all in need of immediate attention. Haiti is an example of what happens when there is nothing left.

Haitians are thriving to survive day-to-day, but even in this condition, the lessons we learned from them were invaluable. Haitians are extremely loyal to their families, uniting and working for each other. Haitians are also unconditionally faithful. Even with all they live without, Haitians have the strongest faith in God. Life in Haiti goes on. If they can do it, we certainly can help.

In 2011, GNJAC is sponsoring two more UMVIM trips to Haiti. If you are interested in participating or would like more information, you may contact the GNJAC UMVIM coordinator, Kathy Ahmad. Her email is kahmad@comcast.net and her cell phone number is 732-865-3730.



Hard at work - Rev. Kyewoon Choi of Embury UMC in center with two Haitian workers.

just weeks before. With suitcases full of vitamins, tools, and coloring books and our able bodies ready to work, we set out with prayers that we would be able to help.

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) is a global mission agency that organizes trips all over the world. After working in Haiti for over thirty years on health, education, and housing issues, UMVIM reacted to the earthquake devastation with a 3-year response plan. Conscious of Haitian structure and beliefs, UMVIM Jurisdictional Coordinators collaborated with Reverend Gesner Paul (President) and additional leaders of the Eglise



Global Relay

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

Imagine No Malaria joins social network

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A new social network for changing the world has just launched, and The United Methodist Church's Imagine No Malaria campaign has wasted no time in taking advantage of it. Jumo, created by Facebook founder Chris Hughes, has plenty of potential, said the Rev. Larry Hollon, top executive of United Methodist Communications.

Global Fund expands fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria

GENEVA — The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, a partner of The United Methodist Church, has expanded its reach to people touched by these diseases. The Global Fund announced Dec. 1 that the programs it financially supports have provided antiretroviral treatment to 3 million HIV/AIDS patients, a 20 percent increase over last year; tuberculosis treatment for 7.7 million people, a 28 percent rise; and the distribution of 160 million insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria, a 53 percent jump.

Grant to aid mental health patients obtain housing

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The city's homeless population will get mental-health treatment and help to obtain stable housing through a federally funded program at Meharry Medical College, one of The United Methodist Church's historically black universities. Meharry's department of psychiatry and behavioral science received a \$1.5 million grant that will fund the care for these patients from 2010 through 2015. Meharry will get more than \$330,000 a year for the program, said Dr. Rahn Bailey, chair of the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Meharry Medical College. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration gave out \$40 million over five years to community service organizations. It targets people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness because of mental-health and substance-abuse issues.

Nigerian Muslims, Christians seek peace

JALINGO, Nigeria — One hundred Nigerian Muslims and Christians came in peace to Taraba, where they sought ways not only to coexist but also to work together to improve the lives of their beleaguered fellow citizens of all faiths. Tensions between the religions have flared into violence in recent years. While history cannot be overcome in three days, the restorative justice seminar was a start.

United Methodists pray for peace in Côte d'Ivoire

ABIDJAN, Côte d'Ivoire — Amid post-election violence, the United Methodist Church of Côte d'Ivoire is calling for prayer and trying to reinforce its ministries to the people. The outcome of the West African nation's Nov. 28 presidential election is in dispute, leading to renewed tension in a country that has been trying to regain stability following a civil war earlier in this decade. Both the current president, Laurent Gbagbo, and his opponent, Alassane Ouattara, are claiming victory.

United Methodist, British Methodist leaders discuss mission

NEW YORK — Leaders of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries held a two-day meeting in December with British Methodist representatives. "This is the first time in a decade that we have had the chance as British and United Methodists to talk together about our common objectives in mission," said Thomas Kemper, the board's chief executive. "Our exchange was open, filled with trust, and we began to forge new ways to collaborate in doing God's work around the world."

Young People's Ministries launches new website

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The United Methodist Board of Discipleship's Young People's Ministries has revamped its web site, www.globalyoungpeople.org, with interactive features to better serve young leaders across the globe. Some of the new features include chat, text message subscriptions, free monthly webinars, grant and scholarship information and weekly stories highlighting ministries with young people throughout The United Methodist Church.

Faith leaders condemn Egypt bombing

NEW YORK — Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders have condemned the New Year's Eve bombing that killed 21 worshippers and wounded many others at All Saints Church in Alexandria, Egypt.

"The perpetrators of this outrage are apparently so blinded by hatred that they have lost touch with the tenets of any known faith," said the Rev. Michael Kinnamon, top executive of the U.S. National Council of Churches. "It is simply agonizing to think that many around the world will mistake this horror as the attack of one religious community on another. Christians, Jews and Muslims around the world are united by their outrage and condemnation of this soul-less act."

Arizona bishop asks for prayers after shootings

TUCSON, Ariz. — Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño is calling for prayers of healing following the Jan. 8 shootings in Tucson that left six dead and more than a dozen - including U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords - wounded. The bishop expressed concern about whether the shooting was an expression of "growing intolerance."

Bishop Carcaño offers Words of Hope at Vigil in Tucson

A UMNS Report By Barbara Dunlap-Berg and Joanie Faust - Jan. 13, 2011



Children can lead adults to become agents of hope, Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño told those who had gathered to remember the dead and pray for the living in Tucson, Ariz.

"While we adults have been shocked and stunned into numbness because of what has occurred," Carcaño said, "I have seen hope through the children among us."

The Jan. 11 vigil in Tucson was among many interfaith gatherings held in response to the shooting rampage three days earlier, which left six dead and more than a dozen wounded. President Barack Obama also sounded a note of hope in the face of violence when he addressed an overflow crowd during an emotional memorial service Jan. 12 at the University of Arizona.

U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., remains in critical condition.

Carcaño, like the president, cited the example of the shooting's youngest victim, 9-year-old Christina-Taylor Green.

"She was there at that tragic moment because she had been elected to serve on the student council of her school," the bishop said. "Her neighbor thought she would find it interesting to meet Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords. We mourn Christina-Taylor's death, but at the same time, we give God thanks for her witness of hope. At a tender age, she had already come forth to serve."

The Rev. Ed Bonneau, senior pastor at Catalina United Methodist Church, said about 300 people attended the vigil. Catalina was one of several sites across the region for ecumenical services "of mourning, healing and hope" that evening.

People from United Methodist, Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Jewish and other traditions attended, he added, and "it truly was a citywide event."

The Pima County Interfaith Council was instrumental in helping to plan the service, which included three speakers: Carcaño, leader of the United Methodist Desert Southwest Annual (regional) Conference; Roman Catholic Bishop Gerald Kicanas; and Rabbi Stephanie Aaron from Temple Chaverim. Temple Chaverim is Giffords' synagogue.

'They will not be forgotten'

Some 125 miles north of Tucson, people of all faiths gathered at Temple Solel in Paradise Valley to pray.

The service was a collaborative effort among Rabbi John Linder of Temple Solel; Jan Flaaten, executive director of the Arizona Ecumenical Council; Carcaño; and Joe Rubio of the Valley Interfaith Project.

The Rev. Robert Burns, superintendent of the United Methodist Central East District, read a description of each of the lives lost, including Green, Dorothy Morris, U.S. District Court Judge John Roll, Phyllis Schneck, Dorwan

Stoddard and Gabe Zimmerman. As Burns read each name, the diverse congregation responded, "They will not be forgotten."

"If nothing else, we are a community of *tekva* — of hope," Linder said. "So tonight, with our communities together in mourning, healing and hope, come together as one."

"At a time like this," Flaaten said, "when words do not come easy, we are not healed by easy explanations, by simple answers. Instead, we find healing in the presence of each other."

Bonneau of Catalina United Methodist Church agrees.

"Social-networking sites only take you so far," he asserted. "Being with others is so important."

At a nationally televised evening service Jan. 12, Obama called on Americans of all beliefs to be more empathetic toward each other and not use this tragedy to become further divided.

"At a time when our discourse has become so sharply polarized, at a time when we are far too eager to lay the blame for all that ails the world at the feet of those who think differently than we do," he said, "it's important for us to pause for a moment and make sure that we are talking with each other in a way that heals, not a way that wounds."

'Hope is the message'

Back in Tucson, Carcaño urged continued prayers "for those most affected by this tragedy — and for each other, without exception."

While the family of the young man arrested for the shootings — Jared Lee Loughner — was not known to be active in a church, Bonneau said, "One of the specific prayers was for (them), for they, too, are hurting."

Outside Giffords' office, the bishop said, children have covered the sidewalk in colorful drawings.

"Colored chalk is the medium, love is the heart, but hope is the message," Carcaño said.

She recalled walking with a clergy colleague to the congresswoman's office when a boy of about 10 stopped in front of the two. The boy declared that his picture on the sidewalk had been ruined but he would make it better.

"With a confident smile, and chalk in his hand, we saw him walk with great determination toward the sidewalk of hope," Carcaño said. "In that moment, that boy made us part of his family, speaking to us as if we had always known each other, and letting us know that things could be made better. It was a word of hope, great hope."

She encouraged worshippers to "be agents of hope by working for reconciliation knowing that we are all children of God in need of love and hope. ... Let us be agents of hope by committing to work for justice, that peace, God's own peace, may come upon us. Our children expect no less of us."

PRE-LENTEN GATHERING

Tuesday, March 8, 2011

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St. Johns United Methodist Church - HAZLET

Clergy — Gathering 8:30AM

Lunch will be available ~ \$10 donation for lunch

SPECIAL LAITY SESSION - 7PM

Register at your district office

Bishops Call for Peace in Korea

A UMNS Report By Heather Hahn



A North Korean guard looks south in this August 2007 file photograph by U.S. Army Photographer Edward N. Johnson.

The United Methodist Church's two Korean-American bishops are urging prayers for peace and reconciliation in the wake of the North Korean military's recent deadly attack on a South Korean island.

Chicago Area Bishop Hee-Soo Jung and New York Area Bishop Jeremiah Park each released letters condemning the loss of life. They also each asked church members to use this Advent season to embrace the message of the Prince of Peace, citing Isaiah's image of a time when "Nation will not take up sword against nation."

The bishops, both natives of Korea, are among Christian leaders around the globe — including the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches of Korea — that have decried the deaths and destruction on Yeonpyeong Island and called for hostilities to ease in the Korean Peninsula.

On Nov. 23, the North Korean military initiated an artillery barrage of the small island, resulting in the deaths of two South Korean marines and two civilians. Eighteen more people were injured and a number of homes were destroyed on the island, which is seven miles from the North Korean border. The incident occurred eight months after the sinking of the South Korean warship, Choenan.

"The most recent conflict in the Korean Peninsula is extremely serious with sufficient volatility that could lead to another war," Park said in his statement. "As you may know, the Korean War waged between 1950 and 1953 resulted in millions of deaths and injuries... Another war must never be repeated."

Torn emotions

Since 1988, The United Methodist Church has called for the "peace and the reunification of Korea" in its Book of Resolutions.

However, the current strife presents a difficult situation for many of the roughly 50,000 Korean-American United Methodists in the United States.

Many have provided aid to North Koreans, who have long suffered from fam-

ine under the government's economic mismanagement. For the past 15 years, more than 100 Korean-American United Methodist congregations have given some \$2 million to the Five Loaves and Two Fish Mission in North Korea, said the Rev. Kevin Ryoo, secretary of the denomination's Korean-American caucus.

But most Korean-American United Methodists trace their roots back to South Korea, and many still have family and friends in the country, he said. They worry for the safety of their loved ones and do not want to enable North Korean aggression.

"Any time tension between the North and South occurs, we ask the question: Should we continue to help North Korea?" said Ryoo, who is the pastor of Rapid City Korean Church, a United Methodist congregation in South Dakota.

Ryoo believes such aid needs to continue. Food assistance, he said, helps keep open lines of communication between the North Korean people including the country's nascent Christian churches and Christians in the United States and could help lead to reunification.

Like Jung and Park, Ryoo plans to spend the Advent season praying for peace.

"What other options do we have?" he asked. "We have to continue on our journey, continue to pray, continue to support and continue on the road to reconciliation."

Reason for sympathy

Thomas Kemper, the top executive at the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, agrees. The United Methodist Church has long cooperated with the autonomous Methodist Church in South Korea on mission projects, including a joint mission in Cambodia.

"This is our Christian conviction that we should give aid, independent of religious or political belief, where there is need," Kemper said. "At the same time, we need to work toward a peace treaty that will replace the (1953) armistice."

In his statement, Jung wrote that United Methodists have reason to have sympathy for people on both sides of the peninsula's demilitarized zone.

"My prayers are for the people of the North, suffering in a desperate economic climate, cut off by embargo, living in want and fear," he said. "My prayers are for the people of the South, flourishing economically but living as if on a thin sheet of ice that may crack under their feet at any moment."



United Methodist Bishop Jeremiah J. Park. A UMNS file photo by the Rev. David Kwangki Kim.

Multi Ethnic Grants

The Multi Ethnic Coordinating Committee of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference offers a limited number of grants each year for churches which are broadening their ministry to explore, celebrate, or strengthen ministry across ethnic and cultural boundaries.

THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA APPLY:

- Only United Methodist local congregations can apply for this grant. Groups of churches, caucuses or other organizations will not qualify.
- Grants are intended to help start **new ministries** at local churches and not to sustain established programs.
- Grants are provided for one year at a time and not awarded for more than three (3) years to the same project.
- Preference is always given to new ministries at local churches that have not received funds previously.
- Only one project per church should be submitted.
- Project goals need to be according to the Four Focus Areas: (1) Leadership Development; (2) Congregational Development; (3) Ministry with the Poor; and (4) Global Health.
- Grants cannot be used to fund staff positions, equipment or capital improvement.
- Churches and ministries receiving grants must submit a copy of the Safe Sanctuaries Certification.
- Preference is given to local churches which have paid their fair share in the previous year.
- Multi Ethnic programs **must** be endorsed by the Local Church Council.
- District Superintendent of the local church requesting funds needs to recommend the project.
- Follow the instructions on the application.

Applications for these grants should be requested from Rev. Varlyna D. Wright, Interim Director of Connectional Ministries, (732-359-1041 or 1-877-677-2594 x1040) or may be downloaded from the Conference Web Site:

www.gnjumc.org

Completed applications must be returned to the Conference Office no later than 4:00pm on Friday, March 4, 2011.

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The March Issue Deadline is February 5, 2011

Richwood United Methodist Church Celebrates 150th Anniversary



On October 17, 2010, the Richwood Church on the Delaware Bay District marked its 150th anniversary. Over 200 members, friends, and neighbors from the community celebrated with a special service and luncheon. Located at 104 Richwood Road in Gloucester County, the church has witnessed events in history since the Civil War.

Rev. Dr. Steven Herman, current pastor, welcomed guest speaker Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar, Resident Bishop of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. In addition, the District Superintendent, Rev. Richard Nichols, and former pastors participated in this historic milestone. The church honored 12 congregants who have been members for over 50 years.

Sharptown's Second Campus Gaining Momentum

Sharptown Church is launching a second campus, called "Sharptown North" this year. They have targeted March 27th as the date to begin regular weekly worship. A lot of preparation has gone into this new church development. Exciting things are happening in the greater Woolwich Township area in the Delaware Bay District where the new campus will be located about eight miles from the original campus. People from the area are learning about this new opportunity to become part of a Christian community of faith.

The Reverend Jerry Ruff serves as the pastor of the new campus. He works in partnership with Senior Minister Doug Smith and Associate Mike Bill as well other staff and laity from Sharptown. The dream of a second campus began several years ago when Sharptown offered a high quality summer Soccer Camp for Woolwich area residents. They partnered with the Woolwich Township municipality for a Christmas Tree lighting ceremony in 2008 and again in 2009.

When Ruff came on staff in July of 2010, he began "nesting" in the original campus, building relationships with folk in the church. He then began to reach out to people in the targeted area. On Sunday, November 7, 2010, they sponsored a "Community Work Day" where volunteers both new and old repainted world and U.S. maps on the playground of the Stratton School in Woolwich.



420 people attended the eve of Christmas Eve service that began at 7 p.m. They met under a heated tent at the Locke Avenue Park. Sharptown's praise band provided music and Ruff preached on the "Reality and Difficulty of Christmas" citing the passage in Luke, chapter two. Those attending also learned of upcoming events as the church makes preparations towards the launch of weekly worship.

On Saturday, December 4th, for the third year in a row, Sharptown church partnered with the municipality of Woolwich Township to host a community wide Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony. 1500 people came to Locke Avenue Park in Swedesboro (an athletic complex) for hayrides, pictures with Santa (in a heated tent), arts and crafts activities and to enjoy cookies, hot chocolate for the kids or coffee and tea for the adults. Children made gingerbread houses and played on an inflated slide and in an inflated maze.

By filling out forms for the pictures with Santa and for a free drawing of an

Ipad, the church was able to collect over a thousand names. These names form the basis of a database to reach out to the community with news of future events.

At 7:30 p.m. the mayor of Woolwich Township, Joe Chila, pulled the switch to light the township Christmas Tree. Others from the Township Committee looked on as well as Pastor Jerry Ruff. Later the mayor pulled the name for the free drawing of an Ipad. Everyone went home happy. They also knew from flyers, banners and lawn signs that Sharptown North would be hosting a community candlelight service on

Thursday, December 23rd.

Sharptown North will be holding monthly "preview" worship services at the Woolwich Township Municipal Building. The first preview was held on January 9th with over 120 in attendance. Other preview services are planned for February 13th at 7:00 p.m. and March 13th at 10:00 a.m. The launch of regular, weekly worship will take place on Sunday, March 27th at 10 a.m.

On January 17th Sharptown North joined others in Swedesboro to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. day.

The leaders of this initiative in new church development envision one church in two locations. Everyone in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference is asked to pray for Sharptown church as it moves forward toward launch day of their new campus, Sharptown North, and that through their ministry more people may be reached with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

RED BANK GOES GREEN

The Red Bank church has recently joined a growing number of churches that

are taking advantage of the economic benefits of environmental stewardship and at the same time reducing their carbon footprint, their impact on Creation. As with practically every church, the high cost of energy was a driving concern in the decision to explore alternative ways of providing electricity. In 2005, the cost of doing a solar installation was deemed too expensive. Intermediary steps; an energy audit and lighting upgrades helped, but in 2009 a second proposal was made. A company was formed called

Hudson Solar Power LLC. It was registered in NJ for the purpose of financing and installing solar power for the Northern Shore District church. The proposal featured an installation that was at no cost to the church and no risk to the church. Hudson Solar Power included managing partners George Schlidge and John Walradt and seven investors who were all members of the congregation.

The company identified the investors, wrote the specifications, solicited contractor bids, and negotiated a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with the church. The plan was to install and operate the system and repay the investors with interest in about 8 years. The partners will then make a gift to the church of the fair market value of remaining ownership shares. Hudson Solar Power's income is derived from the discounted sale of power to the church, a federal 30% renewable energy incentive grant, and the sale of Solar Renewable Energy Certificates (SRECs.).



The installation was completed on November 30, 2010 with the first billing to the church taking place January 1. To date, there are still some details to complete and system monitoring tools under development. As

with many solar installations, repairs, upgrades, or replacement of the roof preliminary to the solar work was needed at Red Bank. With the plan put in place, the church realized a \$20,000 savings on that part of the project. The church should save an additional \$800 per year in electric costs, increasing as rates rise. The congregation has also reduced its carbon footprint and is confident that the witness of an environmentally conscious church will be a drawing card for prospective members. Once the investors are repaid, the church will have a net effect of 60% lower cost for electricity, a savings of over \$12,500 per year. The income from the sale of SRECs should total \$20,000-\$25,000 per year in years 9 through 15 netting the church an income of about \$175,000. Green indeed!





Attention all Christian Educators

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Check out the United Methodist Church Youth Gathering that happens only every 4 years. This amazing experience will gather thousands of UM youth from around the country to worship, learn and play together. You can register your youth group at www.youth2011.org. Early Bird discounts are available. If your youth group needs transportation to the Youth 2011 event at Purdue

University in West Lafayette Indiana sign up today to travel with the GNJ Conference Youth Team. The cost for bus transportation is \$100 per person for a R/T ticket. To register your group for bus transportation visit www.gnjumc.org for more information.

Space is limited so sign up your youth group soon!!



Taize 2011

If you are between 16 and 29 years of age, you are invited to join Bishop Devadhar and chaperones on a weeklong spiritual development experience. Additional adults may request to attend as space provides opportunity. The group will leave the USA on July 22 and return on August 1, 2011.

For more information check out www.gnjumc.org

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For additional information contact
K. Edward Jacobi, President
at 732-747-4891 or
ejacobi07739@yahoo.com
or Jay Kim at the
GNJAC Office 732-359-1032.

Mrs. Virginia Keeper Turns 100



Mrs. Virginia Keeper celebrated her 100th Birthday during worship at First United Methodist Church, Vineland. Pictured with her are Sen. Jeff Van Drew and Assemblyman Matt Milam, a member of First Church, after presenting Mrs. Keeper with a proclamation from the First Legislative District. Bishop Devadhar also sent personal congratulations which were shared.

WHAT IS YOUTH LAY SPEAKING?

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- ❖ Committed to witnessing his/her faith through church and community leadership, care giving ministries, and spoken communication
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A Youth in Lay Speaking Ministry Witnesses to the Christian Faith by:

Leading

- ❖ Serving in your youth group or on committees in church
- ❖ Serving as a liturgist for worship
- ❖ Helping start a new church school class or Bible Study
- ❖ witness and serve in school and community

Caring

- ❖ Welcomes newcomers
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- ❖ Reaching out in love in times of crisis
- ❖ Providing services for persons challenges before them

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- ❖ You will commit your time and energy to the service of your neighbor
- ❖ You desire to share God's Love!

Youth Lay Speaking Course offered April 1-2, 2011.

Youth ages 14-18 invited to attend. Cost is \$40 per youth.

Registration Deadline March 7th.

For more information visit www.gnjumc.org

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or Rev. Emil F. Winkelspecht
ENJWink@aol.com

VITAL CONGREGATIONS

Christian Vigor at 87 Years Old!

By Douglas Ruffle

Coordinator of Congregational Development, GNJAC



On November 7, 2010 I stood with a giant who is about 5'4" tall.

His name is Federico Pagura. He was Bishop of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina when I served there as a missionary in the late 70s and through the mid 80s. He led courageously during a period in Argentine history when many Christians remained silent. He spoke and acted to bring the gospel to bear during difficult times when thousands of persons were kidnapped and killed without due process of law.

I visited Bishop Pagura at his home in Rosario, Argentina. It was a joy to be able to spend time with this giant of a man who continues to love and serve his Lord at the age of 87. He is a living testimony that when one has a Ministry (with a capital "M"), one has something to live for. He still makes a difference in people's lives today.

He is revered in his own country where during the month of November of 2010 he received special recognition from the current government for outstanding commitment to social justice and human rights advocacy going back to the difficult years of Argentina's history.

Currently he is writing the lyrics to a series of Christian songs. A recording that included his "We Have Hope" song lyric, a tango, received a Latin Grammy award in 2010. He continues to preach and serve in his own city of Rosario and wherever invited.

There is an old saying that ministers never really retire. As Christians, we are all ministers whether lay or ordained, and our mission and ministry can go on with vigor for as long as our God grants us breath.

I give thanks for the privilege of having served under Federico Pagura, a giant of a man. May God grant him many more years of service.



Pre-Retirement and Financial Security Seminars

March 3, 2011 - Pre-Retirement Seminar

March 4, 2011 - Financial Security Seminar

The Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits has announced the dates, times and locations for the annual Pre-retirement and Financial Security Seminars.

March 3, 2011 - Pre-Retirement Seminar. This seminar is scheduled for 9:15am - 2:30pm and focuses on those pastors that are planning for retirement in the next five years. This session will also feature a speaker from the Social Security Administration on Social Security and Medicare.

March 4, 2011 - Financial Security Seminar - Scheduled for 9:15am - 1:00pm This seminar is designed to assist clergy who are more than five years from retirement. It focuses on financial planning for future needs.

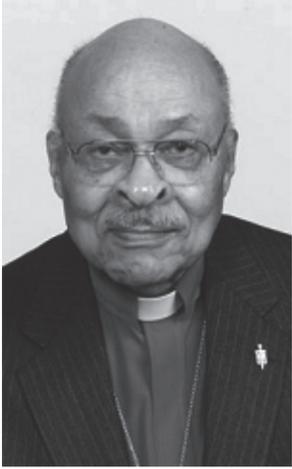
Both seminars will be held at Saint Mark United Methodist Church, 465 Paxson Avenue, Hamilton Square, NJ 08690.

Please go to <http://www.gnjumc.org/580/> for the online registration where payment by credit/debit card is available. You may also download the registration form and directions.

Further questions may be directed to Alexa Taylor, Conference Pension Coordinator at 732-359-1038.

Trailblazing Bishop Ammons Dies

By Heather Hahn



UMNS Photo by Mike DuBose

Retired United Methodist Bishop Edsel A. Ammons, who helped lead the church during the transitional time of integration, died Dec. 24 in Evanston, Ill., after a lengthy illness. He was 86.

Ammons was a professor at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary when he became one of the first African-American bishops elected to the episcopacy by the denomination's North Central Jurisdiction in 1976. He served the Michigan Area until 1984. He then served as bishop of the West Ohio Area until his retirement in 1992.

"He was a brilliant person," said retired Bishop Melvin G. Talbert, a friend and colleague who lives in Nashville, Tenn. "He was a person of a strong faith and dedicated to the work and mission of the church. He also had a strong commitment for justice."

Ammons became a bishop less than a decade after The United Methodist Church dissolved the Central Jurisdiction, officially ending the system of racially segregated church governance.

Retired Bishop Forrest C. Stith of Upper Marlboro, Md., pointed out that his friend had a difficult task as an African-American bishop in a predominantly white denomination, serving episcopal areas where the African-American presence was minimal.

"He had a lot of hurdles he had to make, and a lot of transitions he had to lead the church in, and he did that very effectively," Stith said. "He did it primarily because he brought such a respect to his office in terms of his knowledge and intellect and his stature."

Chicago upbringing

Ammons was born the son of noted jazz pianist Albert Ammons and his wife Lila, an occasional church organist, on Feb. 17, 1924, in Chicago. He spent much of his life in and around his hometown, attending grade school, high school and earning his bachelor's degree at Roosevelt University in the Windy City.

After serving in World War II, he was initially ordained a deacon and elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, but he transferred into the Methodist Church's Rock River (now Northern Illinois) Annual (regional) Conference in 1957. Stith said Ammons saw more opportunities for service and ministry within the Methodist Church.

That same year, Ammons completed his final year at Garrett Biblical (now Garrett-Evangelical) Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill. He later earned a doctor of ministry at Chicago Theological Seminary in 1975. He also received honorary degrees from Westmar College, Albion College, Adrian College and Mount Union College.

As a new elder in the Methodist Church, Ammons was pastor of what is now Ingleside-Whitfield United Methodist Church in Chicago. He later became the director of urban ministry for the Rockford (Ill.) District, and then a member of his annual conference's program staff.

In 1968, he joined the faculty of his alma mater Garrett as professor of church and urban society. There, he developed a program on the church and the black experience before joining the episcopacy.

Minister to all people

Ammons in his early days as bishop assured church members he would minister to all those in his area and promote the strength of the church's pluralism.

"I can't imagine a black bishop, on the basis of his own history of pain and denial of opportunity, not being terribly interested in the hurts and aspirations and the growth needs of all people," he told the Michigan Christian Advocate in 1976. "I think in that sense, I may be able to make a somewhat unique contribution."

Longtime friend, retired Bishop Charles Wesley Jordan of Upland, Calif., has known Ammons since they were both students at Garrett.

Jordan said his friend brought a sense of clarity and vision to his trailblazing role in the church's racial integration. He also was an articulate advocate for those living in poverty. "He provided a theological conscience for the Council (of Bishops) and a quiet resolve," Jordan said. "He was always speaking in the context of the gospel."

Talbert also counted on Ammons for invaluable advice when Talbert was the first general secretary of the United Methodist Board of Discipleship and Ammons served on the board. "He had a keen sense of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ," Talbert said. And he was eager the share that knowledge with others. "He just believed every human being is entitled to be treated as a person precious in the sight of God," Talbert said.

Ammons was president of the Board of Discipleship from 1980 to '84. He also served the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries as chairperson of the Health and Welfare Program Department from 1984 to 1988 and chairperson of the Missionary Personnel and Resources Program Department from 1988 to 1992. In addition, he was a member of the Black Methodists for Church Renewal, the denomination's black caucus, since its start in 1968.

His survivors include his wife Helen Fannings Ammons and children Edsel Jr., Carol, Kenneth, Carlton, and Lila. He is preceded in death by his daughter Marilyn and his wife of almost 40 years, June B. Ammons, who died in 1990.

OBITUARIES

J. MICHAEL SLOANE - Son of Rev. Dr. Ken and Pauline Sloane. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that gifts may be sent to the Memorial Fund at Christ UMC, 508 Franklin Rd., Franklin, TN 37069 or to Children's Hospital in Boston, Children's Hospital Trust, 1 Autumn St., #731, Boston, MA 02215-5301. Gifts in Mike's memory should be designated for "research."

WILLIAM LINTON EVERETT - Husband of Retired Associate Member, the Reverend Jackie Lou Everett, died on January 9, 2011. Messages of condolence may be sent to Reverend Everett, 36 Heather Place, Southampton, NJ 08088. In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made to the Vincentown United Methodist Church or to the Salvation Army.

MONA MAGLONE - Retired Local Pastor, died on January 3, 2011 in Lakewood, New Jersey. Her pastoral charges included Toms River: Cedar Grove and Asbury Park: First Assistant. Messages of condolence may be sent to Mr. Ernie Tilton, 238 Church Road, Howell, NJ 07731. Memorial gifts, in lieu of flowers, may be made to the Cedar Grove United Methodist Church, 797 Bay Avenue, Toms River, NJ 08753.

BERNICE GESNER - Lay Member to the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, representing the United Methodist Church of Mantua, died on Wednesday, December 29, 2010. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to the UMC of Mantua Memorial Fund at 201 Mantua Blvd. Mantua, N.J. 08051. Messages of condolence may be sent her son, Ed Schaufler, 500 Maple Ave., Horsham, PA 19044.

NANCY KEMP - Widow of The Rev. Wesley A. Kemp, died on Monday, December 20, 2010 in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Kemp's son, Wesley Kemp, 135 Beech Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702. Memorial donations may be made to any local chapter of the American Red Cross.

NORMAN G. BRITTON - Retired Local Pastor, died on Saturday, December 11, 2010 in Toms River, New Jersey. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to his spouse, Patricia Britton, 128 Caldwell Avenue, Forked River, NJ 08731. In lieu of flowers memorial donations may be made to Good Luck Christian Church, 128 Parker Avenue, Forked River, NJ 08731.

JOHN RENVILLE BOWERING - Retired Elder of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, died on Monday, December 13, 2010. His service record includes: East Millstone, Linden, West Creek and Warren Grove, Island Heights, Manasquan, Hightstown, Lakewood, Pemberton, and Bayville and Ocean Gate. Messages of condolence may be sent to his daughter, Jani Rae Bowering, 506 Buhler Avenue, Pine Beach, NJ 08741. Gifts of remembrance may be sent to the American Cancer Society or the Pine Beach Chapel, P.O. Box 438, Pine Beach, NJ 08741.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth...that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

— Rev. 14:13

African-American Clergy Address Unique Concerns

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) – African-American pastors face a plethora of issues unique to them, including the effects of lingering racism within the denomination. Earlier this month, 320 black clergy convened in Nashville to confront their personal and professional challenges.

The event affirmed participants' gifts, addressed their specific concerns and provided "resources for ministry growth and assistance," said the Rev. Vance Ross, an executive with the United Methodist Board of Discipleship. The board sponsored the "Convocation for Pastors of Black Churches."

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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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2011 CALENDAR OF DISTRICT RESOURCE DAYS AND CONFERENCES

The District Resource Days in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference bring some of the most prominent and inspirational thinkers and opinion-makers to where you can see them and interact with them in person. Here is the list of remarkable learning opportunities coming to the conference in 2011. Mark the Dates Now!

	RESOURCE DAY	RESOURCE DAY	DAY OF LEARNING	DISTRICT CONFERENCE
CAPE ATLANTIC	March 17 Rev. Barbara Day Miller - "Vital Worship" Clergy: 8:30am-2:00pm Laity: 7:00pm-9:00pm At: TBA	April 28 Rev. Tyrone Gordon - "Evangelism: Focusing on Prayer and Disciple Making" Clergy: 8:30am-2:00pm Laity: 7:00pm-9:00pm At: TBA	February 13 Time: 2:00pm-5:45pm At: St. Peter's UMC, Ocean City	May 7 Time: 8:30am-12:00pm At: Central UMC, Linwood
CAPITAL	TBA	TBA	January 29 Time: 8:30am-3:00pm At: First UMC, Moorestown	May 7 Time: 9:00am-11:30pm Place: First UMC, Delran
DELAWARE BAY	March 28 Rev. Charles Anderson Clergy: 8:45am-3:00pm Laity: 7:00pm-9:00pm At: Sharptown UMC, 24 Church Street	May 9 Revs. Rich and Gina Hendrickson Clergy: 8:45am-3:00pm Laity: 8:45am-3:00pm At: TBA	March 5 Time: 8:30am-3:00pm At: Pitman UMC, 758 North Broadway, Pitman	May 21 Time: 9:00am-11:00am At: Asbury UMC, 149 S. Main St., Woodstown
GATEWAY NORTH	February 14 Bishop Michael Coyner Time: 8:30am-9:00pm At: Community UMC, Roselle Park	April 4 Paul Nixon Time: 8:30am-9:00pm At: Emmanuel UMC, Springfield	January 22 Time: 8:30am-1:00pm At: Morrow Memorial UMC	May 15 Time: 3:00pm-5:00pm At: TBA
GATEWAY SOUTH	February 17 Dr. Joel Comisky Clergy: 9:30am-2:30pm Laity: 7:00pm-9:00pm At: Asbury UMC, Woodlynne	May 12 Rev. Richard Blackburn Clergy: TBA Laity: TBA At: TBA	January 15 Time: 8:30am-3:00pm At: Hope UMC	TBA Time: TBA At: TBA
NORTHERN SHORE	February 10 Rev. Dr. Bruce Robbins Clergy: 8:30am-2:00pm Laity: 7:00pm-9:00pm At: Red Bank FUMC	April 9 Rev. Dr. F. Belton Joyner Time: 8:30am-2:00pm At: Matawan UMC	March 19 Time: 8:30am-2:30pm At: St. Andrew UMC, Toms River	May 21 Time: 8:30am-11:00am At: St. Paul's UMC, Brick
PALISADES	March 16-17 Rev. Dan Glover & Mrs. Claudia Lavy Laity: 3/16 3:00pm-5:00pm Clergy: 3/17 8:30am-3:00pm At: Arcola KUMC, Paramus	April 10-11 Rev. Dr. Esther Chung-Kim Laity: 4/10 3:00pm-5:00pm Clergy: 4/11 8:30am-3:00pm At: TBA	February 5 Time: 8:30am-3:00pm At: Ridgewood UMC	May 15 Time: 4:00pm-7:30pm At: Hackensack UMC
RARITAN VALLEY	TBA	TBA	February 26 Time: 8:30am-2:00pm At: Bridgewater UMC	TBA
SKYLANDS	April 13 Rev. Marcia McFee Clergy: 9:00am-4:00pm Laity: 7:00pm-9:00pm At: TBA	TBA	February 19 Time: 9:00am-3:30pm At: First UMC of Newton	TBA

Tucson Violence Can Be a 'Watershed Moment'

A UMNS Commentary - By Stephen Drachler



Stephen Drachler

On the heels of the tragic shootings in Tucson, January 8, politicians everywhere are calling for an end to incivility in politics.

The question is: Can they do it?

Can we, as a culture, change how we debate our differences?

Nastiness has become ingrained in our political discourse. It's no longer enough to simply disagree. In our political campaigns, and in our capitals, the polarization of our political process turns opponents into evil demons. This evolution from disagreement to hate has infected the political spectrum, contaminating Democrats and Republicans, and conservatives and liberals.

Within minutes of the shooting, journalists and partisans began the blame game. First it was Sarah Palin and other right-wingers. And then it was Keith Olbermann and left-wingers. The truth is no

one really knows what caused the tragedy in Tucson. It may simply turn out that Jared Lee Loughner is another of those insane persons who feel possessed in some way to go after a public official.

No matter what the shooter's reasons end up being, these events can serve as a watershed moment in American political life. Our discourse – on both the right and the left – has gotten way out of hand in recent years. Civility has become a relic, when it should be one of our key values.

In many places, even being seen having a casual conversation with an opponent is seen as disloyalty, say nothing of sharing a meal with your political opposite. It happens in Washington, D.C. It takes place in state capitals, and in county courthouses and city halls across the United States.

Come election time, political consultants of every philosophical stripe tell candidates they must go negative in order to win. Extensive research repeatedly shows that extremely negative campaigning does work. It moves polling numbers.

Anyone who watches television during campaign season recalls the grainy, dramatically voiced television commercials that make opponents appear to be bad people. Not simply an opponent, but a truly bad person deserving of scorn and hate, and maybe by extension, deserving of a bullet to the brain.

Demonizing your opponent is no longer confined to campaigns. We see and hear it on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. We see and hear it on the news every day.

While the immediate aftermath of the Tucson shootings sparked a bipartisan call for civility, politicians continue to fall prey to the temptation for the extreme negative. During debate on repealing the 2010 health care bill this week, one House Democrat compared Republicans to Nazis. It seems he just couldn't resist the razor-edged quote.

This latest rhetorical episode shows it's going to be really difficult to change the behavior of our elected leaders.

Fixing this problem will require a lot of people stepping forward: One, to take responsibility for their words and actions of the past. Two, to learn and practice better, more civil ways to debate the important issues of the day. Three, to hold one another accountable for the language we use. And, four, to begin teaching our children to model this new behavior. Remember that children mimic adults. That's not a comforting thought in today's environment.

This is a problem of the heart and soul. It's not about needing more laws, especially laws regulating speech. They won't work.

For those of us who profess to follow Jesus, we should do just that. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offers a clear lesson on hate speech, and how we should respond. It's no stretch to say this should apply to political speech as well.

"I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44, NKJV).

As our nation continues to examine its heart and soul in the wake of this senseless violence, I pray that a change in how we deal with our differences will begin to emerge. I pray that our leaders will begin to talk with one another, not simply yell at each other. I pray that our leaders will learn the power of building relationships across the political and philosophical divides.

Disagreement is a vital part of our democratic process. Let's learn how to disagree in a healthy, not destructive, way.

Stephen Drachler is executive director of United Methodist Advocacy in Pennsylvania and former executive director of public information at United Methodist Communications in Nashville. This is an adaptation of a commentary first published in the Harrisburg (Pa.) Patriot-News.

OPPORTUNITY FILE

A roundup of coming events in the Greater New Jersey Conference and beyond. Send items of conference-wide interest to the Opportunity File at Editor@umrelay.org or UMRelay, 1 Mayflower Ct., Whiting, NJ 08759.

February 21 - March 3, 2011 —

Clergy & Laity Educational Journey Korea

GNJAC — There may still be time to sign up for this cultural and spiritual journey to South Korea sponsored by the GNJAC Laity Council. Check details on the conference website, www.gnjumc.org.

February 27 - March 2, 2011 —

NEJ Clergywomen's Consultation 2011

LANCASTER, Pa. — "Bold & Bodacious: Bubbling up, Bursting Out, Building Up, Breaking Through." That's how they describe this four-day Northeastern Jurisdiction event at the Holiday Inn Convention Center featuring Drew's Traci West, Claremont's Marjorie Suchocki and a bevy of women bishops. FFI: Contact Tanya Linn Bennett, tbennet@drew.edu

March 13, 2011- Breakfast with Bishop Devadhar

HADDONFIELD, NJ- Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar will be at Rhoads Temple Church at 11:30 A.M. Rhoads Temple is located in historic Saddlertown in Haddonfield N.J. A continental breakfast will be a part of the event. For further information and directions call Rev. Alice Cook 856-661-9366.

July 13 - 17, 2011 — Youth 2011

LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Youth 2011, the four-day national youth gathering for the United Methodist Church at Purdue University, will bring together top United Methodist leaders, the best ecumenical speakers, bands and talent and thousands of youth from all around the nation for what is sure to be a life-changing event. For information about the event and bus transportation from the GNJ conference office, log on to www.gnjumc.org.

July 22 - August 1, 2011 — Taizé Pilgrimage

GNJAC — If you are between 16 and 29 years of age, you are invited to join Bishop Devadhar and chaperones on a weeklong spiritual development experience. Additional adults may request to attend as space provides opportunity. For details, see conference website, www.gnjumc.org and click on Taizé Pilgrimage link.

October 3, 2011 — India 2011 with the Bishop

GNJAC — Eleven days of discovery on the Asian sub-continent where the passion of Jesus Christ is moving and stirring the people. See conference website, www.gnjumc.org for details.

The March Issue Deadline is February 5, 2011



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Stewardship Stories

By Rich Hendrickson

Coordinator of Stewardship Education
and Development, GNJAC



It may only be February but the time for Stewardship is now! Don't wait until fall! Here's list of ways to address stewardship now and all throughout the coming year.

- Highlight a different Shared Ministry Fund each month using your Newsletter, worship bulletins, and dvd/multi-media resources. Print and multi-media resources are available from umcgiving.org, umcom.org, or from the Conference Stewardship Office.
- Hold stewardship studies throughout the year like: (These are just a few samples)
 - o **Money Matters: Financial Freedom for All God's Children**, Michael Slaughter with Kim Miller, Abingdon Press. Provides a congregational stewardship program with three primary advantages: 1) it begins with personal finances; 2) it is based on a year-round model; and 3) it is easy to implement. The kit includes worship resources, small group studies, and video clips.
 - o **Transformed Giving**, John Ed Mathison, Abingdon Press. This approach helps make the shift from stewardship as a program to stewardship as a way of life. Transformed Giving focuses on giving as primarily a spiritual decision not financial. The kit includes a study guide, leader's guide, campaign handbook, and media resources for an annual campaign.
 - o **Irresistible Invitation: Cultivating Joyful Giving in Your Church**, Maxie Dunham, Abingdon Press. This is a church-wide program that will guide your congregation through forty days of spiritual growth. The program kit includes all the tools needed to plan a successful forty-day campaign.
- Offer opportunities for folks in your church to tell their stewardship stories.
- Have the pastor share their three foundational stories with the congregation: 1) "This is who I am," 2) "This is why I'm here," 3) "This is what I hope we can accomplish together."
- Attend the stewardship workshops that will be offered at each District Day of Learning
- Contact the Stewardship Coordinator to schedule a consultation for your congregation.

Rev. Dr. Rich Hendrickson, RHendrickson@gnjumc.org, 732-359-1045

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