

GNJ Kicks Off Sandy Repair Ministry in Sayreville



Volunteers from the Upper New York and the Virginia conferences began work on the first two home repairs in Sayreville, NJ. A town hard hit with flooding. GNJ through *A Future with Hope* will repair 300-500 homes over the next 3-5 years. Our relief efforts have been awarded two grants, The Robin Hood Foundation, \$600,000 and The Red Cross, \$1.5 million toward our Sandy ministry. To learn more or to volunteer go to www.gnjumc.org.

It's A Work in Progress

By Brett Miller, GNJAC Writer

It's a work in progress. That's how Pastor William Williams describes the rebuilding efforts at Asbury Church in Atlantic City.

From across the street you can see tin patches covering the holes Hurricane Sandy tore in the century-old

ated, spending her time in the cold and the dark praying. Asleep on her fifth day without power, she woke up to her heat and power coming back on.

Other parishioners, like Gerald Singer, evacuated during the hurricane. When the island was reopened and



Asbury UMC in Atlantic City, NJ works to repair damage left behind by Superstorm Sandy.

slate roof. Inside, the ceiling tiles have mostly been replaced, but water damage is still evident in places. In one upstairs room a freshly insulated wall awaits drywall.

Sandy left her marks on Asbury's parish too.

"I froze for five days," said Virginia Randolph. "I had no heat, I had no electricity, but I hung in there." Randolph lives in Atlantic City's Venice Park section, a flood-prone neighborhood even at the driest of times. She chose to stay in her home when the city was evacu-

Singer returned to his home, he found damaged heating and electrical systems. His garage flooded and his shed was carried off of its foundation by the overflowing bay.

But the church and its people carry on.

Every Saturday Asbury opens its doors and serves lunch to the people of Atlantic City streets. Often, other area churches volunteer to step in and take a Saturday every month, but when they can't, the parish at Asbury is there, continuing their ministry to the city's

Continued on page 4

Cena Latina Brings Hope During A Long, Cold Winter

By Brett Miller, GNJAC Writer

It's been a long winter for Ocean City's seasonal workers. During the summer they work at the restaurants, stores and tourist attractions that give Ocean City the title "America's Greatest Family Resort." But in the off-season they often struggle to provide for their own families. Their struggles surged after Hurricane Sandy hit.

"When I got home, everything was wet," said Reynalda Reina through an interpreter. "I had nowhere to go." Already facing a language barrier, Reina and her family, like so many struggling families, now had no shelter and few other possessions to speak of. "This is the community that does the behind the scenes work that makes this little tourist machine run," said Karin Gleason, who helps organize the Cena Latina, a monthly dinner organized by St. Peter's United Methodist Church and Ocean City's Spanish-speaking churches.

Gleason helped many families to find temporary housing after the storm, but said it wasn't an easy task. "They're very quiet. They don't want to ask for help," she said. And in many cases,



Volunteers prepare food for the February Cena Latina at St. Peter's UMC in Ocean City, NJ.

they simply didn't know how to ask. Crystal Phillips Quijano says she was one of the first Spanish-speaking families helped by the church. "When they asked me if there were others who

needed help I said - Yes!"

And little by little they started coming. Spanish speaking families came to the church, some looking for housing, others looking for basic needs like food,

clothing and toys for their children.

To look at the faces at Cena Latina four months after the storm, they don't seem like the faces of people who have seen perhaps the longest winter of their lives. They don't look like they were forced out of their homes by crashing waves and rising tides.

Instead, these faces make up a community. Not a Spanish speaking community and an English-speaking community thrust together by natural disaster, but one community brought together by faith. At Cena Latina, neighbors from wildly different backgrounds serve each other as they chat their way down the buffet line. Those who can't say "Thank you" in English smile broadly and nod their gratitude.

In the kitchen, a group of children learn how to wrap a perfect tortilla. Adults bustle around them as a team carrying vegetable oil or trays of fresh rice. No language barrier to speak of. "Ever since the Hurricane the community is more united," Reina said, taking a break from supervising the kitchen. "Everybody knows everybody now."

A Message from the Bishop



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

In a draft of the strategic ministry plan that is still being developed, it states

The answers for our future are not “quick fixes” or small changes or working harder on what we are already doing. It will require Holy Spirit transformation by the renewing of our minds and hearts (Romans 12:1-2). This requires a major shift in the way we think and do ministry both as a conference and as congregations:

- from *managing* clergy and congregations to *being in relationship with* clergy and congregations
- from Conference *programming* to Conference *resourcing* local congregations from *telling* clergy and congregations *what to do* to *supporting* clergy and congregations *to innovate and create* how they will make disciples and transform the world in their context.

It further states:

The Greater New Jersey Conference seeks disciples that will sit at the feet of Jesus and become life-long learners and followers of Jesus Christ, leaving behind safety and complacency to serve like Christ to end poverty, save souls, be graceful to those at the margins, connect with people who are different from us, and magnify God’s presence in the world.

And the plan says we need to call and recruit clergy and lay spiritual leaders that have a heart for Jesus, passion, vision, creativity, perseverance and want to connect with people in the community.

I applaud the strategic ministry plan task force for the bold calling they are putting before us. In a time of deep challenge we cannot shrink behind a Gospel with no power, a love that only seeks love in return, and a desire to hold onto what makes us comfortable.

Why do we need a strategic plan?

In 2011, the annual conference empowered a task force to develop a strategic plan for the conference. The conference recognized that we need a road map, strategic direction or we would get more of the same. The draft plan notes that over the last 10 years

- Worship attendance declined by 20%
- Professions of faith declined by 34%
- Shared ministry collection rate between 2006 and 2011 declined from 86% to 79%
- The number of churches declined from 610 to 578
- Baptisms declined from 3,321 to 1,882
- The number of children and youth in our congregations declined from 28,581 to 25,271
- 50% of our active pastors are over 57 years old and 50% of our members are over 58 years old

While many conferences are experiencing trends like this, these trends point to an unsustainable future. The plan calls for renewed focus and commitment to what is core to our beliefs and calling. The draft plan calls us to a renewing vision that is both biblical and Wesleyan:

We see a church like Jesus Christ that is radical and humble, teaching and healing, soul saving and soul tending, leader and servant, unbound and outbound.

We also see a Wesleyan Church - personal holiness and social holiness, connectional and risk taking, thoughtful and inspirational, small groups and large vision, welcoming all and respect for diversity of thought.

Over the next two months you will be given the opportunity to help further shape the plan. Already more than 700 people have given input to the strategic planning task force. In April, others will be invited through small groups and online to give feedback to the strategic planning task force.

There is a future, and the strategic planning task force is calling us to a *future with hope* (Jeremiah 29:11). I invite you into the journey. There will be challenges along the way and difficult decisions but I have already begun to see the capacity GNJ has for loving Christ, the church and the world and I am confident God will do an even greater ministry through us in the future.

Keep the faith!
John Schol

Black Methodists for Church Renewal OK Major Restructure To Reflect Diversity of Denomination

By the Rev. Maidstone Mulenga*



The Rev. Cynthia Wilson sings during the memorial service at the Black Methodists for Church Renewal Annual Meeting last week as Bishop Jonathan Keaton prepares to preach. Photos for UMNS by the Rev. Maidstone Mulenga.

CHICAGO (UMNS) — A new Black Methodists for Church Renewal was born Friday, March 15, 2013, when members attending the 2013 annual meeting approved a major restructure of the official caucus that advocates for Black Methodists in The United Methodist Church.

The Rev. Cedrick Bridgeforth, who chaired the task force that worked on the restructuring, urged the members to be daring enough to confront the future. Bridgeforth is the Los Angeles District Superintendent in the California-Pacific Annual (regional) Conference.

Members voted to eliminate the use of “national” and limit the use of “African-American” tags from literature and promotions and to use “BMCR” in terms that reflect the greater diversity of the denomination. In approving the change, the caucus is taking a stand to be intentionally inclusive through effectively implementing its organizational purpose, goals and objectives.

“In order to remain relevant, we must readily acknowledge and intentionally build linkages beyond the shores of the United States of America for the cause of justice in every place and for all people,” the restructuring proposal said.

General meeting instead of annual

Among the major changes approved in the restructuring plan was to change from an annual meeting to a general meeting. According to the new plan, the general meeting will be in collaboration with other agencies and entities that could strengthen BMCR’s presence and voice.

“There is a residual and relational effect of programs with that emphasis, and BMCR is positioned to partner with those entities and rely on their expertise and resources to help with congregational and leadership development. BMCR needs to partner more with COSROW, GCORR,

Continued on page 4

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A Sandy Story

I am writing this for all of those who were survivors of Hurricane Sandy and now victims of institutional bureaucracy. I am writing for all their family, friends, churches, neighbors, and employers, for anyone who is serving or has the desire to serve this population. I am writing this to clear my mind.

For 140 days, I have not been in my home, I missed cooking Thanksgiving dinner in my kitchen, Christmas decorations did not get up, gatherings of friends and family did not happen, as I look ahead I know Easter will pass without our returning home. This makes me sad. No matter how nicely the house is "put back together" this has been a crisis for our family.

This storm has affected our health, our relationships, and our future. We were not in an area that was generally devastated by the storm; there are not others in our neighborhood whose homes were damaged. About 10PM the night of the storm, a freak, blast of wind blew off our roof. For the next 18 hours it rained into our home. All night long water poured through the ceiling light fixtures in our home, and then through the walls and finally breaking through in the super-soaked ceilings. All night long we emptied tubs of water that was coming through the ceiling and walls. The noise of the water pouring into buckets was disturbingly loud. When the ceiling started coming down in the one room it was actually frightening because we did not have any way to stop the water, the storm was still going on and it was dark.

Water came through walls, between the walls down to the basement; drapes were soaked from water coming down the walls. This is stuff that no picture can show. We did our best to cover our belongings and to mitigate the damage but it was still bad. Al-

though the damage to our home was substantial, we understood that this was a widespread, unprecedented storm and that the insurance industry was being bombarded. For that reason we have tried to be reasonable in our expectations of how quickly we would be responded to.

It was 14 days before an adjuster came out, by that time we had secured the roof, and removed the water soaked rugs. We stripped the house of our contents (which included a lot of wet items.) It could have been a lot worse, but in the middle of the storm Jill Herlihy, the youth leader at our church came with bins to collect water and tarps to cover our furniture. As soon as roads could be traveled we had a team of people helping us. Praise God!

We have insurance, we believed it is good insurance; we are to receive replacement costs and loss of use reimbursements. However, there is no way we come out of this without a huge bill. Our house has sat cold, dark, and wet for 3 months. When we were finally able to start, (aside from remediating the mold and tearing out the damaged walls, floors, and insulation) we also had to repair frozen pipes and a damaged heater.

I feel bad about complaining as people are far worse off than us, people who will get nothing to replace their homes, people who lost all their belongings. But at the same time I believe it's important that people see the wide range of damaged caused by the storm.

Please remember us, now that the "immediate disaster" has passed. Pray for those who need to trust that the state will help us get through this trauma. Also please pray that the insurance agencies can be held account-

Journeying



able. I understand that our frustration is not unique.

At the same time we have had great blessings in the midst of adversity. The congregation of Simply Grace UMC in Bloomsbury, especially our young adult ministry helped us pack up our entire home quickly and move it into storage.

The Asbury UMC has allowed us to use their basement for storage. Members of Clinton UMC came to help us pack and the congregation and their pastor Rev. Drew Dyson graciously opened their parsonage to us. I cannot image how we would have managed without the help of these wonderful people.

The weekend of the storm my husband was to be the Lay Director of the Skyland's Walk to Emmaus, this community has also been great. In addition, our contractor was good enough to install a new roof without a deposit; this saved us from far more damage. He had made storm repairs to the

church serve last summer. We had developed a nice relationship and he was willing to trust us.

The Sandy Recovery work that the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference is doing and plans to provide for many years to come will be priceless to so many people. Please be as generous with your time and money as possible. I am reminded of what Nehemiah said concerning the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. "The God of heaven will help us succeed. We are God's servants and we will rebuild this city."

We will rebuild too, God will help us to succeed.

Thank you for reading this.
Grace and Peace,
Gina
Simply Grace United Methodist Faith
Community in Bloomsbury
Asbury United Methodist

CUMAC Recovering After Break-in

While a recent break-in left CUMAC without a majority of their computers, the incident didn't shake the faith of the staff with a promise that they will replace the computers and upgrade their security, all while continuing to provide much needed resources to residents of Paterson and beyond.

"The good news is no one was here or harmed, but sadly most of our computers were taken," said Stephanie Ames, Volunteer Coordinator for CUMAC. "With this material loss has come a huge loss in productivity, but not a loss in confidence that we will recover and be stronger than before as we work to feed the hungry and minister to those in need."

Following the break in, the CUMAC staff responded as quickly and efficiently as they could to the crisis. Warehouse staff – which mostly live close to the building- responded to the alarms at 2:30 a.m. and spent the ensuing hours assessing damage with local police and alerting key staff. The administrative staff worked for the better part of the weekend and the week after to regroup, recover losses and get the office up and running again. "Thank you for your understanding if we've been slow to respond to emails," said Ames. "This has not been an easy process, your patience and kindness has meant a lot."

Ames continued that the CUMAC family would like to thank their friends from UMC's near and far for their incredible outpouring of support as they work through this new challenge. "The words of encouragement and offers of help have bolstered us during a time of vulnerability," continued Ames.

For those looking for a way to get CUMAC up and running again, a financial donation in any amount will move CUMAC toward recouping their losses while they continue to work with their insurance company to assess what damage and loss is covered. "It is very likely that the mounting costs of recovery will not be reimbursed in full," said Ames. She said that between staff overtime, the purchase of new computers, the cost of tech support, new locks, keys and surveillance systems, CUMAC estimates recovery will run at least \$3,500 beyond what insurance can cover. Ames said that at the suggestion of Paterson's detectives, CUMAC will need to update their security system to include digital imaging and infrared night capability. "These are not expenses our agency had budgeted for; they are not expenses that will be easy to cover," said Ames.

If you'd like to make a donation to help CUMAC recover and rebuild you can do so online at www.cumacecho.org or by sending a check to Po Box 2721, Paterson, NJ 07509. To discuss other avenues of support, contact CUMAC's office at 973-742-5518. For up-to-date information, CUMAC can be found via social media at www.facebook.com/cumacfeedspeople and www.twitter.com/cumacfeeds. They can be reached via e-mail at info@cumacecho.org or through our website www.cumacecho.org.

THE CUMAC \$25K TO FEED NJ

3 Ways To Help Raise \$25,000 For CUMAC By April 27th



Red Bank United Methodist Church
April 27, 2013 • 7pm



Chatham United Methodist Church
April 27, 2013 • 7pm



CUMAC

Feeding People & Changing Lives

To Make Your 1980s Song Request or Find Out How To Pledge To Receive Your Mohawk or Makeover For Hunger, contact Dave Philp at 917-204-1929 / Dave@MyYouChoose.com

www.MyYouChoose.com/Events



Global Relay

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

Summer youth mission opportunity

BIG ISLAND, Va. (UMNS) — Harvest of Hope has mission event openings this summer for middle school and high school youth groups. Harvest of Hope is the ecumenical study, worship and gleaning program of the Society of St. Andrew, a United Methodist partner. Events provide participants the opportunity to learn about hunger and to experience first-hand a common-sense solution to the problem: gleaning.

End to exclusion of women in combat welcomed

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — United Methodist chaplains and other denominational leaders welcomed news that the U.S. military is ending its policy of officially excluding women from combat. Combat is already a reality for women, said Chaplain Maj. Terri L. Jones, a United Methodist pastor who has been in the military for 15 years in the Army Reserve.

How one church is helping Newtown heal

NEWTOWN, Conn. (UMNS) — In a detailed look at how the community was “left to cope with the unthinkable” after the Dec. 14, 2012, shootings that left 28 dead, The Christian Science Monitor reports that Newtown United Methodist Church changed on that day. It became and has remained “an ark to protect them from an invasive outside world and a place to confront their anger and confusion and grief.”

Study: Common themes in church vitality and change

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — A new study about how a group of United Methodist congregations successfully dealt with change says three key elements were almost always present: a pastor not afraid to lead, laity who would partner as a team with the pastor and a God-led purpose or vision. Clergy and laity in leadership positions at 158 congregations, representing almost all of the denomination’s U.S. conferences, were interviewed for the Toward Vitality Research Project.

United Methodist Men give nearly \$180,000 to fight hunger

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — In 2012, United Methodist Men gave \$179,800 to Meals for Millions, a program of the Society of Saint Andrew to feed the hungry. Wade Mays, national director of Meals for Millions, honored Indiana Annual (regional) Conference United Methodist Men for giving the highest amount of money to the society in 2012.

Pennsylvania bishops urge Medicaid expansion

HARRISBURG, Pa. (UMNS) — Pennsylvania’s three United Methodist bishops on March 11 urged Gov. Tom Corbett and members of the state legislature to say yes to expanding Medicaid service to vulnerable individuals and families under the federal government’s new health-care law. The bishops — Thomas Bickerton of the Western Pennsylvania (regional) Conference, Peggy Johnson of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and Jeremiah Park of the Susquehanna Conference — met with the governor and legislators.

End to exclusion of women in combat welcomed

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WCC condemns arson attacks in Pakistan

GENEVA (UMNS) — In a letter to Pakistani churches, the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, top executive of the World Council of Churches, has condemned the March 10 attacks on Christians in Badami Bagh, Lahore. More than a hundred houses were burned after allegations of blasphemy.

A Work In Progress

Continued from page 1

homeless. And their hospitality isn’t limited to the homeless. It’s not unheard of for a stray tourist to wander through the church’s red doors to find themselves greeted, seated, served and handed a set of clean clothes before they can protest.

The men and women who come in on Saturday afternoons sometimes eat in groups, some by themselves, but all are fed and tended to. As the afternoon winds down, the die-hards that have accumulated through the afternoon get their second helpings and wander back onto Pacific Avenue.

The four months after Sandy have healed some wounds, and when confronted by the realities faced on the streets every day, the parish at Asbury can look back and laugh. “Now I have a swimming pool in my yard,” quipped

Randolph. Singer laughed too as he described opening his garage after the storm and immediately closing it as gallons of water gushed out onto his feet. A neighbor told him that during the hurricane Singer’s shed had floated off its foundation and into his yard before finally landing back in Singer’s yard.

They say if anything, Sandy made them more aware of the power of giving.

“It’s always in someone else’s community,” explained Singer. “Now I can say I’ve been a recipient of these faith-based charities.”

“It’s a blessing,” said Randolph about ministering to the city’s homeless after the Hurricane.

“We’ll be here. Till they turn their life around we’ll be here.”

It’s a work in progress.

Major Restructure To Reflect Diversity of Denomination

Continued from page 2

GBCS and community-based groups who share our values,” the plan stated. The references are to two other United Methodist commissions and a United Methodist general agency — the Commission on the Status and Role of Women, the Commission on Religion and Race, and the Board of Church and Society.

The members approved a plan for the next meeting to be in 2015, ahead of the next United Methodist General Conference, but far enough in the future for the board of directors to give attention to the transition plan and re-organization.

The restructuring plan calls for the general meetings to be centered on building partnerships and calling The United Methodist Church to a place of greater accountability in areas of justice and equality for all people instead of emphasizing fundraising.

The members asked the board to be more proactively engaged in the jurisdictions in years when there is not a gen-

eral meeting of the membership.

New officers selected

The Rev. Bridgeforth, district superintendent of the Los Angeles District in the California Pacific Annual (regional) Conference of The United Methodist Church, was elected chair of the Black Methodists for Renewal during the annual meeting.

As chair, Bridgeforth takes over from the Rev. Ronnie Miller-Yow, who could not run again because of term limits.

Miller-Yow is a full elder in the Arkansas Conference.

Deborah Bell was elected vice chair. Bell is the director of Community Development for Better Community Development Inc. of Little Rock, Ark.. Two board members were elected unopposed: the Rev. Danita Anderson as secretary and Angella Current-Felder as treasurer. Anderson is a pastor at St. Andrew United



The Rev. Cedric Bridgeforth presents the restructuring plan at the meeting of Black Methodists for Church Renewal.

eral meeting of the membership.

The members also removed the budget and costs for the general meeting from the operating budget and asked the program committee to generate a budget for each meeting that will make the meeting pay for itself. The membership meeting has been in place in the past to fund the overall operation but has not done so. “It (the previous form of budgeting) skews the budget that ends up being supplemented by several external entities without expanding the brand or advocacy core to BMCR,” the plan noted.

Advocacy planning for the jurisdictions

In terms of programming, the Black Methodists voted to assist each jurisdiction in establishing advocacy and training initiatives in the years when there is no general meeting. They also approved the creation of BMCR Advocacy Councils throughout the connection.

Members agreed that BMCR did not have a comprehensive or responsive mechanism in place to share issues and respond to them in a timely fashion. By creating a network that reports up-and-down-and-around the connection in an open forum, the hope of the members is to create “buzz” and a flow of information that to be used to inform agendas in annual conference, jurisdictional caucuses and in the general meeting.

As part of the programming, members agreed to establish a revitalized Harambee Program and to work in collaboration with the Division on Young People and other partners to accomplish this task. Every other year, BMCR sponsors the Youth Harambee, an event whose purpose is to be a celebration of gifts, talents and willing hearts of ethnic United Methodist youth.

Methodist Church in Homewood, IL, while Current-Felder is a well-known Methodist author.

Michelle Whittaker, director of communications and new media for the Board of Church and Society; the Rev. Jacqui Rose-Tucker, Rome-Carrollton District Superintendent in the North Georgia Conference, and the Rev. Paul Thibodeaux, associate pastor at St. James United Methodist Church in Alpharetta, Ga., were elected to the board to fill lay and clergy slots.

Earlier in the week, Sally L. Vonner, an executive with United Methodist Women, was elected president of the National Black Staff Forum of The United Methodist Church. The forum is dedicated to serving the needs of black staff working for the denomination’s boards, agencies, conferences, jurisdictions and districts.

The full slate of new officers for National Black Staff Forum includes: Vice President: Maidstone Mulenga, Upper New York Annual (regional) Conference; Treasurer: Bobby Smith, General Council on Finance and Administration; Assistant Treasurer: Jeri Lillian McKie, Board of Global Ministries; Secretary: Marva Usher-Kerr, United Methodist Women; Assistant Secretary: Michelle Whittaker, Board of Church and Society; Chair, Program Committee: Royya James, United Methodist Communications; Chair, Communication: Rori Blakeney, Board of Discipleship – Young People; Chair, Nominating Committee: Elaine Jenkins, Africa University Development Office; Chaplain, Co-Chaplains: Gloria Brown, East Ohio Annual (regional) Conference and Lekisha Reed, Indiana Annual (regional) Conference.

*Rev. Mulenga is the director of communications for the Upper New York Annual Conference. Contact him at maidstonemulenga@unyumc.org or (585) 455-5683

Cover Girl

For Callie Van Wallendael, 21, an active parishioner at the Oakhurst Church, life has presented its share of struggles. Born prematurely, one of a set of triplets, Callie faced more than the usual number of physical challenges with severe visual impairments, learning disabilities and a mild case of cerebral palsy. But for Callie, what for many would have been an insurmountable barrier became a challenge to be overcome.

An exceptionally hard worker, her combination of pluck, determination, and an optimistic spirit propelled her through Ocean Township High School, from which she was graduated in 2011. As a senior at Ocean she obtained a job at the Ivy Hedge Early Childhood Learning Center, Oakhurst, through her high school's Cooperative Business

Organization Education Plan.

At Ivy Hedge she enjoyed developing lesson plans, assisting with outdoor activities, and reading to the young children. Her efforts in school and at the Ivy Hedge center earned for her a "Yes I Can" award from the Council for Exceptional Children. The Yes I Can! awards recognize "children and youth with exceptionalities who shine."

The Yes I Can! citation declares that "throughout her life, Callie has made the choice to live with a positive outlook, never allowing her challenges to slow her down."

Upon her graduation from Ocean, she enrolled at Georgian Court University, Lakewood, where she is completing her sophomore year, majoring in childhood education, with an eye to a career in special education.

Whether on the college campus, or at the Oakhurst Church (left), Callie's constant companion is her Seeing Eye service dog, Misty. The two are featured in a cover story in the winter edition of The Seeing Eye Guide magazine.

"She's my Angel," says Miss Van Wallendael. "When I first met her, we immediately sensed a connection. She was so happy to see me, I just started crying."

Callie was at Misty's side last year, when her "best friend" was joined by other pets and service animals at a blessing ceremony at the Oakhurst Church. "I won't go back to what it was like before I got her," Callie says. "Having a Seeing Eye dog has changed my life."



Africa U. to Celebrate 20 Years of Progress

A UMNS Report
By Kathy L. Gilbert*

United Methodists from around the world literally built a world-class university from the red Zimbabwean clay in a little more than 20 years, and it is time to celebrate.

"Twenty years, this is just the beginning," said Jim Salley, who has been raising his voice — and millions of dollars — to tell the people of The United Methodist Church that a dream dreamed in the 1800s is still coming true in 2013 at Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe.

Salley, associate vice chancellor of the Africa University Development Fund, and dignitaries, bishops, pastors, students, faculty, donors and well-wishers will celebrate the milestone on the campus, March 22-24.

For Salley, the success of Africa University is in the graduates.

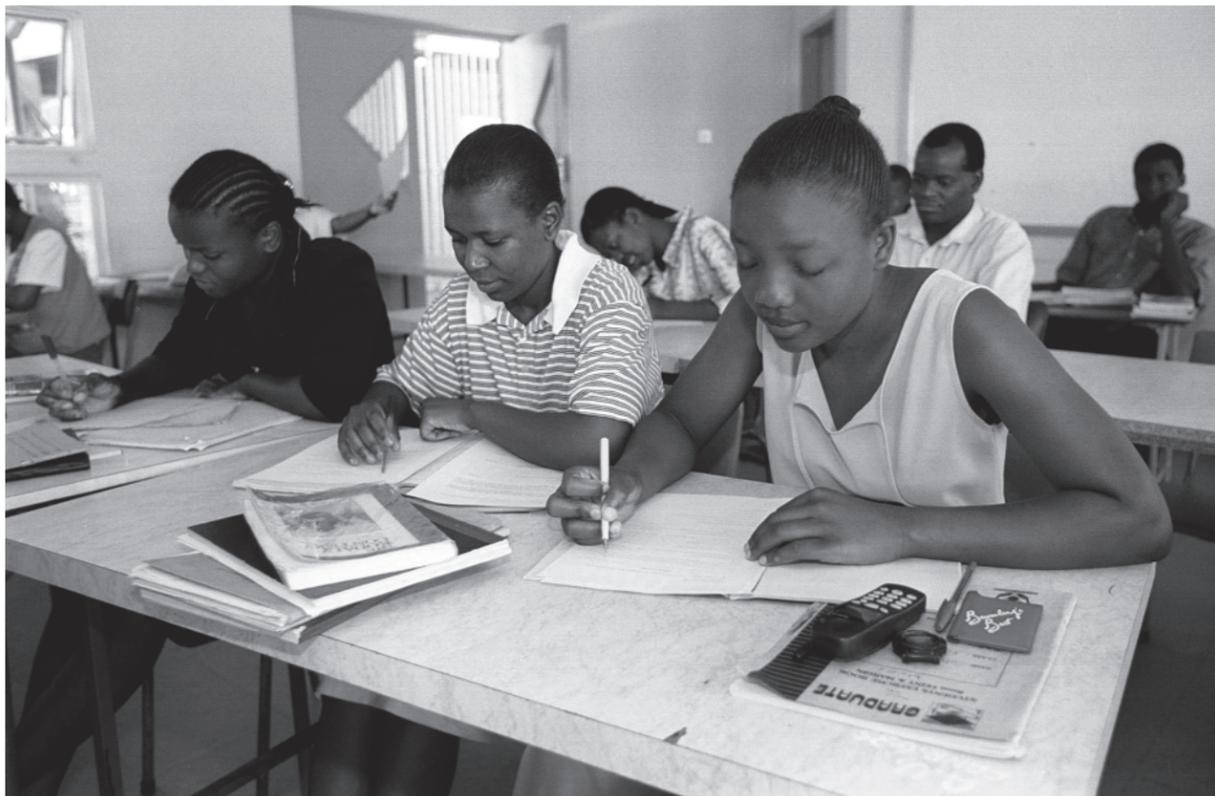
More than 4,000 young people from 23 African

countries have graduated since the first 40 students started at Africa University in 1992. The first graduating class in 1994 had 27 students who received degrees in theology and agriculture and natural resources.

Today, Africa University offers academic programs in six faculties (departments) as well as an institute focusing on peace, leadership and governance.

Students such as Rui Sant'ana Afonso, a Mozambican and 1997 graduate from the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources, is just one example of leaders making a difference on the continent of Africa. Afonso is the general manager of the Port of Beira, Mozambique. The Port of Beira is part of a four-port consortium of privately managed ports that includes Durban, South Africa, and Port of Dubai.

"The present-day reality of Africa University matches the vision and expectations I had for its ministry as an institution of higher learning for the African peoples," said Bishop Emilio de Carvalho. A passionate advocate and a leader from Angola, he helped the worldwide United Methodist Church to



United Methodist-related Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe, has graduated more than 4,000 students from 23 African countries.

A 2002 UMNS file photo by Mike DuBose.

embrace the idea of founding Africa University as a connectional ministry in the early 1980s. Now retired, de Carvalho was the founding chancellor of Africa University.

He said Africa University is "inclusive, pan-African and responds to the main concerns of the African continent." He cited a few critical "unfinished tasks — academic programs in medicine, pure sciences and technology, further infrastructural development aimed at reaching more students in Africa and making the university financially self-sustaining."

"Some said it could never be done ... it's never been done before," Salley said. "For 21 years, we have kept the lights on and are not one penny in debt."

"It speaks volumes to the commitment of the church. The church has been faithful."

Where are they now?

One of the goals of Africa University has been for its graduates to go back into their communities and use their education to improve the lives of as many as possible. Like a single tree

providing fruit for many, Africa University graduates are able to "pay it forward" with the knowledge they've gained. The following provides a sample of many Africa University graduates having a positive impact on the continent.

The Rev. Joao Sambo (Mozambique), pastor of Liberdade United Methodist Church in Maputo, Mozambique, and recently appointed as The United Methodist Church Mozambique's Flood Relief Task Force coordinator. Bachelor of divinity, 2007.

Dr. Tshiani Kasombo (Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC) is the medical superintendent at the Nyadire Mission Centre in rural Zimbabwe. Master's degree in public health, 2007.

The Rev. Tolbert Thomas Jallah, (Liberia) secretary general of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and

Churches of West Africa. Master's in peace and governance, 2006.

Alima Hussein, (Mozambique) principal adviser, Government Relations for Rio Tinto Coal, Mozambique. Bachelor of business studies (Management), 2005.

Martha Mutisi, (Zimbabwean but based in Durban, South Africa) Manager of the Interventions Department of ACCORD (African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes). Master's in peace and governance, 2004.

The Rev. Mazvita Margaret Machinga (Zimbabwe) is engaged with mental health support, pastoral care and counseling services at the community level and active in prison ministry. She is an ordained deacon and earned her doctorate in pastoral care and counseling at Claremont School of The-

ology in 2010. Bachelor of education degree, 2000.

Steven Mutsongodza (Zimbabwe) founded First Class Academy, a school for high school seniors in Mutare, Zimbabwe. Bachelor of education degree, 1999.

Zivayi Nengomasha (Zimbabwe) is director of programs and planning for ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) Africa Regional Office. She is the former country director of ADRA Zimbabwe and took over the regional post in April 2012. Bachelor's degree in agriculture and natural resources, specializing in animal science. She is one of the pioneering graduates in 1994.

*Gilbert is a multimedia reporter for the young adult content team at United Methodist Communications, Nashville, Tenn. She is part of a team traveling to attend the March 22-24 celebration and will be reporting on those events in the coming weeks.

News media contact: Kathy L. Gilbert, Nashville, Tenn., (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

To learn more about
Africa University or to donate,
visit
www.support-africauniversity.org/

GNJAC EMPOWERS HISPANIC LAITY FOR LEADERSHIP IN MINISTRY

During the days of 15-17 March, the Hispanic Committee of the GNJAC offered the first module of the Training Program for Lay Missioner and Pastor-Mentor Teams from The Hispanic National Plan of the United Methodist Church. A total of 21 laity, from Hispanic congregations around the conference participated in the three-day intensive course, which took place at the Pinelands Center at Mount Misery.

The Training Program is focused on the understanding of the church's role and mission as participation in God's purpose for humanity in order that each congregation and each leader become an active agent of change within the church and society. The fundamental purpose of this instrument is to broaden the human and missional vision of the church and to broaden the knowledge and pastoral skills of lay missioners and pastor-mentors. The goal is that they may become agents of change within the church and society who operate from the demands of the Gospel. In addition, this tool seeks to develop a style of team ministry to establish faith communities and community ministries. "This offering is part of a multi-year strategy that aims to reinvigorate Hispanic churches/ministries in the conference and empower and equip a new generation of lay leaders that can serve in different ministry settings" said Mrs. Jazelis Adorno-Burgos, chairperson of the committee.

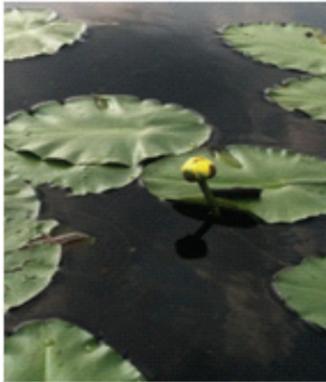
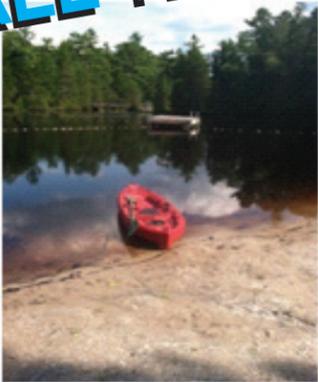


Participants in the Training Program from the Hispanic National Plan take a break during their intensive three day schedule at the Pinelands Center.

Pinelands Center at Mount Misery

ALL THINGS NEW!

Summer Camp 2013



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July 28-Aug 3 NINOS PARA CRISTO & JOVENOS PARA CRISTO A week for Latino/ Hispanic children to come together to share the Word of God through Nature, Music, Culture and each other all while enjoying all of the above Amazing Camp Activities!

Aug 4-10 BEAUTIFULLY CREATED TO SPARKLE AND SHINE Self esteem building from within. Beauty Health and Wellness for Girls of all ages and sizes! Make your own Natural Cosmetics and Jewelry. Learn Yoga, Spiritual Arts Dance, Makeup, Hair and Nails!

Aug 4-10 SUN MOON AND SPORTS STARS Basketball, Baseball, Soccer, Tetherball, Ping Pong, Volley Ball, Air Hockey, Field Games, Dodge Ball, Soft Martial Arts, Ropes Course, Relay Races, Ultimate Frisbee and Water Sports! Teams of all skill sets. Create Fun and Self Esteem!

Aug 11-17 MAGICALLY MESSY CRAZY CREATIONS CAMP Educational Fun, Science and Exploration with Mud, Paint, Goopy Goodness, Slime, Grime and Icky Sticky Messes! Prepare to be surprised and dirty, and perhaps learn how and why God Creates things~ Naturally!!

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Pinelands Center at Mt Misery ~801 Mt Misery Rd ~ Browns Mills NJ ~08015 Sun-Sat Camp \$375.00
For more Information / Registration: 609 893 3354 Fax 609 893 0472 pinelands@gnjumc.org

Donated SUV Aids St. Paul's In Sandy Relief at Bay Head



Rev. Scott Bostwick and Northern Shore District Superintendent Rev. Fran Noll accepted the donation of a car and other materials at St. Paul's UMC in Bay Head.

BAY HEAD — Six months after superstorm Sandy devastated the Jersey Shore, St. Paul's Church here continues to aid stricken local residents with a seven-day-week feeding program serving as many as 500 meals in a day at its peak.

How long will it continue? "As long as the need remains," replies the Rev. Scott Bostwick, St. Paul's pastor. "We don't know how things will change as the summer season approaches, but we'll be here... We are so blessed that the community and organizations and corporations are joining together in an effort to help one another."

A case in point: the Toyota Corporation has donated a year's use of a brand-new 4 Runner SUV. The sport-utility vehicle will be used to transport meals to people and for the church's ongoing ministries to the elderly, single mothers and others, as well as the rebuilding efforts in Bay Head, Pastor Bostwick said.

Toyota representatives presented the silver 4Runner to Mr. Bostwick on March 1, along with a \$10,000 donation to the church.

"This vehicle is going to be such a blessing for the ministries of the

church," the St. Paul's minister said. "We'll be able to resource and to reach people who perhaps don't have vehicles, or can't make it here, or who need transportation to social services, or for their FEMA or SBA loan — folks who are really falling between the cracks. It's really going to benefit them."

St. Paul's was instrumental in the town's Sandy relief initiatives immediately following the storm, serving as the nerve center of the town's emergency management operations. When the Red Cross sought a staging area, the church obliged. In a community where dozens of homes were rendered uninhabitable due to storm damage, the church provided a meeting place for residents and volunteers from the outside, offering basic needs including food, light, and a place to charge their phones.

As Sandy fades from memory for those beyond its lethal reach, and giving begins to lag, the Toyota donation will pick up some of the slack, combined with gifts from across the GNJAC, enabling the St Paul's congregation to continue to meet community needs.

Come Together



Transformation through Cooperation

Gathering in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 2013!

DATE: October 17-19, 2013
PLACE: Crowne Plaza Airport Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

SPONSORED BY:

Rethinking Church Cooperatively is a joint effort of the Rural Chaplains Association, Appalachian Ministries Network, United Methodist Rural Advocates and Rural/Urban Network (RUN) of the General Board of Global Ministries.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

Lay (including youth and young adults), clergy, persons involved in and exploring cooperative styles of ministry, persons working in rural and urban churches of all sizes, racial ethnic constituencies, judicatory leaders and other key leaders.

DESCRIPTION OF GATHERING:

The gathering will focus on transforming churches, communities and individuals through multiple styles of ministry; exploring new models and equipping leaders to move forward in collaborative efforts in both rural and urban communities; and identifying ways to work together with ecumenical, interfaith and community partners. The event will bring together dynamic, innovative presenters from a wide variety of settings to share vital ministries that are transforming communities across the country. Emphasis will be given to adaptive leadership, empowering persons living in poverty, developing ministries in new places for new people, and revitalizing existing congregations.



Bishop Mary Ann Swenson



Rev. Dr. Susanna Metz



Mr. George G. Howard

Credit: Cassandra Zilaryun



Rev. Candace M. Lewis

Committed plenary leaders include: Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, The Rev. Dr. Susanna Metz (Episcopalian) presently serving as Vicar in England, The Rev. Candace Lewis, Executive Director of Path 1 New Church Starts GBOD, and GBGM Deputy General Secretary, Mr. George Howard.

Meet the many faces of United Methodist Homes



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BRISTOL GLEN, Newton
200 Bristol Glen Drive
973-300-5788
Saturday, April 20, 11a.m.-2p.m.
Saturday, May 18, 11a.m.-2p.m.



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www.umh-nj.org

COLLINGSWOOD MANOR, Collingswood
460 Haddon Avenue
856-854-4331
Friday, April 12, 10a.m.-2p.m.
Thursday, May 16, 10a.m.-2p.m.

THE SHORES AT WESLEY MANOR, Ocean City
2201 Bay Avenue
609-399-8505
Tuesday, April 24, 11a.m.-1p.m.

FRANCIS ASBURY MANOR, Ocean Grove
70 Stockton Avenue
732-774-1316
Friday, April 19, 10a.m.-2p.m.
Friday, May 31, 10a.m.-2p.m.

PITMAN MANOR, Pitman
535 North Oak Avenue
856-589-7800
Saturday, May 4, 1-4p.m.

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→ One community at a time ←



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Stewardship Stories

By Rich Hendrickson
Coordinator of Stewardship Education
and Development, GNJAC



Beyond Money

There is a powerful scene in the movie, *Fisher King*, where the character played by Jeff Bridges is sitting in a wheelchair panhandling in New York's Penn Station. A man walks by and tosses in some money into his cup. The character played by Robin Williams offers this observation, "Did you see that? He didn't even look at you when he put the money in your cup." Jeff Bridges character responds, "He's paying, he doesn't have to look!"

The majority of all stewardship conversations center on money. We say that stewardship is time, talent, and treasure but most of the time we just focus on the treasure. There are times, however, when circumstances, challenges, and opportunities present themselves where our response needs to go beyond only responding by giving our money. Sometimes, many times, we need to "look" at where our money is going and be more fully present to the circumstances and situations to which we are called to make a difference.

Here are some things that I'm going to try: Look around at the mission and ministry being accomplished at my local church and ask, "How can I become more involved? What are some of the ways I can go beyond writing a check or putting money in the offering plate? What are some of the needs of my church and/or my community that might require me to get my hands dirty? I've been generous with my financial response to Super Storm Sandy. What more can I do to help with the rebuilding effort? How can I be more involved in providing *A Future with Hope*?" I pray that I would be open to the guidance Holy Spirit as I prayerfully discern the answers to these questions.

Stephen Ministry Workshop at Grace United Methodist Church in Wyckoff on April 27

Would you like to learn to be an active listener and reach out to others in a distinctively Christian way? On Saturday, April 27, Grace Church located at 555 Russell Avenue, in Wyckoff, NJ will host a Stephen Ministry Workshop from 9:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. Registration begins at 8:00 A.M., and refreshments will be served. The half-day workshop consists of three sessions designed both to enhance participants' caregiving skills and to help congregations explore ways to expand their caring ministry.

The workshop is sponsored by Stephen Ministries, the St. Louis-based Christian training organization that has been providing congregations with training and resources for Christian caregiving for more than 30 years.

In the first session of the workshop, "Ministering to Those Experiencing Grief," participants learn about the grief process — the stages of grief and how to minister to people in each of those stages. They'll gain the skills and confidence to better care for individuals

who are grieving.

The second session provides an introduction to the Stephen Series, a system of lay caring ministry through which congregation leaders can equip members to provide one-to-one Christian care to people in need. Since 1975, more than 11,000 congregations representing more than 150 denominations have implemented the Stephen Series.

The final session of the workshop explains "How to Care in a Distinctively Christian Way." Participants learn what makes Christian caregiving unique and how they can use resources like prayer, blessings, and Scripture in their caring for others.

The cost of the workshop is \$15 per person or \$50 for a group of four or more from the same congregation.

For more information, or to register to attend the Stephen Ministry Workshop at Grace United Methodist Church, in Wyckoff, NJ, please see our website at <http://www.gumc.org> or contact Stephen Ministries at: (314) 428-2600.

Communications and Office Manager Half Time (20 hrs/week)

Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON) is a ministry of hospitality that welcomes immigrants by providing free, high-quality immigration legal services, engaging in advocacy for immigrants' rights, and offering education to communities of faith and the public. National JFON (NJFON) ensures that the JFON mission is effectively and faithfully carried out by its Board of Directors, Staff, and Regional Affiliates, through excellence and effectiveness in policy, standards, best practices, strategic planning, advocacy, collaborative initiatives, development expertise, monitoring, consulting, and accountability. NJFON is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization affiliated with the United Methodist Church.

NJFON seeks a half-time (20 hours per week) Communications and Office Manager who will oversee the day-to-day maintain communication with local sites and supervise volunteers in the office, as well as carry out administrative operations of the NJFON office.

The position will be based at the newly-relocated NJFON headquarters in Northern Virginia. NJFON offers a competitive compensation package including health benefits, pension, and generous vacation and holiday leave. NJFON is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

To apply, email your resume and a cover letter to Rob Rutland-Brown, Executive Director, at rob@njfon.org. Applications will be accepted until position is filled.

(Paid Advertisement)

New Covenant Church receives Grant for new Health Ministry - "For the Health of It"

New Covenant Church, in Hamilton NJ, was recently selected by the State Department of Health to receive the "Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More" grant to begin a new health ministry in their church. Only four faith based organizations in the State were selected in the competitive grant process. The grant period is from March to August 2013.

New Covenant's project called "For the Health of It!" will be about making transformational changes in the health status of the community they serve, which includes their church congregants, neighbors and those who are served through their Food Pantry. "While our pastor, Danny L. Thomas, works hard developing our spiritual health and fitness, through this new opportunity, we will work hard to improve our physical health!" said Heidi J. Smith, outreach chairperson at New Covenant. The new health ministry will be funded to host weekly Zumba and Pilates classes by professional instructors. Children will have the opportunity to exercise using an Xbox Kinect while their parents are exercising in their classes. Once a month they will have health instruction by a Certified Health Instructor and informed lay leaders. Through this grant, they will also be able to employ bilingual members of the community as co-leaders to help assure that the important health information is heard and understood by the Spanish speaking community who attend the programs.

Fisher House, Inc. a nonprofit operating out of church space at New Covenant, will assist them in delivering these new health initiatives by offering instructions on healthy meal preparation, and healthier meal options. This spring, as part of the grant initiative they will also teach anyone interested about container gardening. Those in the community and especially those who are served by the food pantry will be taught how to grow their own vegetables. They are welcome to take their container garden to their homes and enjoy the fruits of their labor. Fisher House will also grow vegetables for sharing at the meals they serve during the Food Pantry.

New Covenant will be advertising the classes throughout March and accepting registrations in preparation for their April start. To learn more about For the Health of It! or volunteer to help, call New Covenant UMC at 609-393-4725 or visit www.newcovenantumc.net.

APPLICANTS SOUGHT FOR SEESE SCHOLARSHIP

Greater New Jersey pastors are invited to apply for the Harry A. Seese Memorial Scholarship for continuing education. Each year this award is given to a pastor whose plans for continuing education have led to strengthening his/her ministry in the local church.

Guided by Rose Seese of Gibbsboro, his widow, and supported by ongoing gifts, the scholarship honors her late husband, the Rev. Harry A. Seese, who died while serving the Medford Church.

Application procedures and eligibility requirements can be obtained by contacting Ginny Kaiser at the GNJAC Resource Team Office, (732) 359-1043, or (877) 677-2594, ext. 1043.

The Spring Meeting of the Association of Retired Ministers and Spouses (ARMS)

will be held on Tuesday, April 23, 2013 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 consist of Lawrence D. Carlson, President and CEO of United Methodist Homes of New Jersey, sharing, "What's New at Our United Methodist Homes"

Lunch is \$10. Please call Garey Hope (609) 291-5003 by April 16 to make a reservation.

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

In pursuit of this mission and purpose, we will endeavor to be: Accurate * Informative * Interesting * Stimulating * Motivating * And sometimes, Provocative.

United Methodists Welcome New Pope

A UMNS Report By Heather Hahn and Amanda Bachus

United Methodists and other Methodists offered prayers and warm wishes to Pope Francis, the first pope from the Americas, who now will set the tone for the Roman Catholic Church's ecumenical relations with other Christian traditions.

Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church selected Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Argentina as the 266th pontiff on the fifth round of voting on the second day of the papal conclave. The 76-year-old Jesuit will lead a global denomination of about 1.2 billion members. The United Methodist Church, in comparison, has about 13 million baptized and professing members worldwide.

The pope needed at least 77 of the 115 votes to step into the shoes left empty by Pope Benedict XVI's historic resignation last month.

"The first words of Pope Francis saying that the people of God and the Bishop from Rome will walk together in love are hopefully a sign for the ecumenical journey as well," said Germany Area Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, president of The United Methodist Council of Bishops.

"We, the people of The United Methodist Church, are ready to continue the journey with the Roman Catholic Church, praying for one another, staying in a respectful dialogue with one another, knowing of the differences but believing that Christ unites us."

She watched the announcement of the pope's election at the meeting of the National Council of Churches in Germany, in which the Roman Catholic Church also participates. She said the election was a pleasant surprise to those gathered, who saw the election of a non-European as a sign of hope.

"For the first time ever the Roman Catholic Church elected a pope who comes 'from the edge of the world,' as Pope Francis said himself," she noted. "What a sign for the change in the map of Christianity."

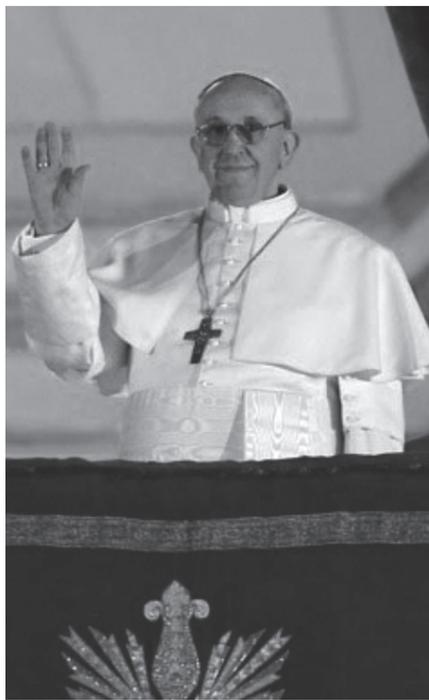
Thomas Kemper, who leads the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries and was for many years a missionary in Brazil, also said he was "glad to see the shifting center of gravity for Christianity represented in the new pope being from Latin America."

"Just having been to Brazil last week," he added, "I see how much joy and pride this election will cause in that part of the world."

Reactions from Argentina

The Rev. Juan Gattinoni, an executive of United Methodist mission relations in Latin America for the Board of Global Ministries, works in Buenos Aires and knows the new pope personally.

Gattinoni noted that as a cardinal, Bergoglio was engaged in the distribution of Bibles and was the first to sign



Pope Francis appears for the first time on the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican March 13.

Photo courtesy of Catholic News Service/Paul Haring.

a proposal, approved by Argentina's National Congress, to designate Sept. 30 as the country's day to celebrate the Bible.

"He always, when any meeting finished, asks that the people pray for him," Gattinoni said. "And, of course, the last words when he departed from Buenos Aires to the Vatican were, 'pray for me.'"

Gattinoni also remarked on Bergoglio's humble lifestyle. He recalled once meeting the cardinal at the same nursing home where Gattinoni's father resided. Bergoglio had come with no media, no bodyguard and not even a car to visit one of his friends, an elderly priest.

"(He) is always close to the people," Gattinoni said. "We can say he is humble. He always used the subways and the buses; he used to give the Mass in open squares with humble people. Some of us hope that having somebody with a sensitive and simple (life) leading at the Vatican is something new and could be helpful."

Bishop Frank de Nully Brown, who leads the Evangelical Methodist Church in Argentina, said the news of the election of an Argentine pope was unexpected.

The Evangelical Methodist Church in Argentina is an affiliated autonomous denomination in the Methodist movement. That means it is a self-governing denomination that has historical ties with The United Methodist Church.

"(The news) takes us by surprise,"

he said through a translator. "I understand that there will not be profound changes in the church since it looks like he will continue the same line as the previous pope."

Hopes for Christian unity

Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, the United Methodist Council of Bishops ecumenical officer, said the election of a new pope matters to United Methodists and others in the Christian faith because Jesus called his disciples to work toward unity.

She noted that today, there are an estimated 43,000 denominations within the Christian faith, but that just adds to the urgency of the call for ministering together.

United Methodists around the world have long joined with Roman Catholics in shared ministry and worship. For more than 40 years, United Methodist and Roman Catholic leaders also have conducted dialogues on topics ranging from public education to Holy Communion.

in recollection of St. Francis of Assisi — clearly gestures that the Roman Catholic Church not only serves the poor, the Roman Catholic Church is the church of the poor," Hauerwas said.

It's also remarkable, he said, because the Franciscan and Jesuit orders have not always gotten along.

Read more about the new Pope

- Catholic News Service
- Religion News Service

While many assume that the name Francis comes from the beloved St. Francis of Assisi, his name may evoke another St. Francis. St. Francis Xavier was one of the 16th century founders of Jesuit order that is known for its scholarship and evangelism. The new pope has not indicated to the public why he chose the name Francis.

Both Swenson and Wenner also hailed the new pope's choice of name.

"The name which Cardinal Bergoglio has chosen is a program," Wenner said. "The church has to live with the poor, as Francis from Assisi did."

United Methodist teachings in Christian unity

From the 2012 Book of Discipline, which outlines the denomination's law and doctrines:

- **Ecumenical Commitment, which asserts** "Christian unity is not an option; it is a gift to be received and expressed."
- **Resolution of Intent: With a View to Unity**, which outlines John Wesley's call for mutual tolerance among Christians and criticizes strong statements against the Roman Catholic Church found in Wesley's 1784 abridgment of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.

Most recently, United Methodist Bishop Timothy Whitaker, now retired, and Roman Catholic Bishop William Skylstad of Spokane, Wash., completed the seventh round of the dialogues in 2012 with a paper on Eucharist and ecological stewardship.

Swenson said relations between members of the Methodist movement and Pope Benedict XVI were good. On one ecumenical trip to Rome, Swenson gave the previous pontiff a copy of "Three Simple Rules: The Wesleyan Way of Living" by United Methodist Bishop Rueben P. Job.

She said she hopes that the relationship will deepen under Pope Francis. She hopes the denominations can continue to work together on issues of global migration and a shared focus of both Catholics and United Methodists: ministry with the poor.

Significance of Jesuit roots

Noted theologian Stanley Hauerwas said it's even more remarkable that the Catholic cardinals elected a Jesuit than that they elected a non-European.

Hauerwas is Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at United Methodist-related Duke Divinity School and Duke Law School in Durham, N.C.

"That he's a Jesuit says so much about his commitment to the poor, and that he's taken the name of Francis —

United Methodist Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar of the Boston Episcopal Area had asked members of the New England Annual (regional) Conference to pray for the papal conclave as it met this week. He told United Methodist News Service late March 13 that he rejoiced in Pope Francis election.

"Personally, having grown up in India, I was deeply impressed by the monumental contribution made by the Jesuits among the poor people there through their simple lives in a multifaith society," he said. "I personally pray that Pope Francis will challenge the church to become advocates of the poor at all levels in a world where the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing at an alarming rate."

Devadhar also was delighted that the spiritual leader began his papal journey by reciting the Lord's Prayer, "the prayer taught by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, a prayer which can be recited by people of all faiths and the only prayer which truly embraces the elements of the Reign of God."

Hahn is a multimedia news reporter for United Methodist News Service. Bachus is Editor, el Intérprete magazine, and director of Spanish resources at United Methodist Communications.

News media contact: Heather Hahn, Nashville, Tenn., (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

The May Issue Deadline is April 5, 2013

Are You Being Digested?

Did you know the communications coordinator published the GNJ Digest, an electronic newsletter, several times each week? Each week there are multiple editions full of Announcements, Events, Celebrations, National News and Conference Calendar Updates. There are also special letters from the Bishop and notifications of deaths among members of the Annual Conference. If you are not currently on our e-mail list and would like to be, please send your request to join our list to communications@gnjumc.org.

Wanted:

Part Time Youth Pastor - St. John's United Methodist Church, Hazlet NJ is seeking a part time youth pastor to run the youth program.

Youth ages are: Jr. High through Sr. High school.

Anticipated works hours would be 10-15 hours per week including a full day each Sunday, and other dates as needed for scheduled youth events (e.g., retreats, work-camp).

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Church Says No I Do's Until All Can Marry

A UMNS Report
By Heather Hahn*

Editor's note: This story has been updated to include a response from the resident bishop of the Western North Carolina Annual (regional) Conference.

Leaders of a United Methodist congregation in Winston-Salem, N.C., have decided not to hold weddings in the church building until the denomination lifts its ban on same-sex marriage.

Green Street Church announced publicly March 17 that its 18-member leadership council also has asked its pastors to refrain from signing marriage licenses until the State of North Carolina recognizes same-sex marriage.

"I do not see it as an act of exclusion for straight couples, but an invitation for all people to be in solidarity with those who are excluded," said the Rev. Kelly P. Carpenter, the church's senior pastor, in a pastoral letter. "Some may think it to be a sacrifice made by straight couples, but I think a better way to see it is the creation of a level playing field in one sacred space."

In its public statement on weddings, the church said its pastors still will offer premarital counseling for "all couples, regardless of orientation." Pastors, at their discretion, also will perform a service of relationship blessing for couples. Such a service would not include vows, exchange of rings, a pronouncement of marriage or covenant-making language.

"We've taken the legalese out of marriage," says Tim Sturgis, a leadership council member, "and brought it back to a holy place where it's two people professing their blessing to each other and making that relationship a blessing to this church regardless of whether they are gay or straight."

Carpenter is quick to point out that Green Street Church, which has an average weekly attendance of 200, is not the first United Methodist congregation to forego weddings in protest of the denomination's position on same-sex unions.

No United Methodist group has an exact tally, but Green Street leadership examined similar policies adopted by United Methodist churches in California, Illinois and New York before making its decision.

A Baptist church in Raleigh, N.C., also has a similar policy. But Green Street Church leaders know of no other United Methodist church in North Carolina that has taken the same action.

Bishop Larry M. Goodpaster is the resident bishop of Western North Carolina Annual (regional) Conference that includes Green Street Church. He is-



Leaders of Green Street Church, a United Methodist congregation in Winston-Salem, N.C., have decided not to hold any weddings in the sanctuary until The United Methodist Church allows same-sex marriages.

Photo courtesy of Green Street Church.

sued a response Tuesday, March 19, to the church's decision.

"They are not the first church in our denomination to make such a statement, and in doing so, they have not in any way violated the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church," Goodpaster's statement said. "They have chosen to practice what is written in the Book of Discipline by seeking 'to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons' (Paragraph 161.F, page 111, The Book of Discipline)."

Germany Area Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, president of the Council of Bishops, agreed with Goodpaster that the congregation's action is in keeping with church law.

"The congregation has made its decision to send a strong sign of its hospitality to all God's people," Wenner told United Methodist News Service. "This example and the various reactions remind us that we, the people in The United Methodist Church, have to continue our journey to seek for unity to the call of making disciples and to practice what we say in the Preamble of the Social Principles: '...We commit ourselves to stand united in declaring our faith that God's grace is available to all, that nothing can separate us from the love of God. In that confidence, we pledge to continue to be in respectful dialogue with those with whom we disagree, to explore the sources of our differences, to honor the sacred worth of all persons, and to tell the truth about our divisions as we con-

tinue to seek the mind of Christ and to do the will of God in all things."

Church teachings and marriage

The congregation took its stance after North Carolina voters overwhelmingly approved a ban against same-sex marriages, partnerships and civil unions in May 2012.

A number of church members had campaigned unsuccessfully against the state constitutional amendment, and gay and lesbian couples approached Carpenter asking if he would officiate at their weddings.

"I said, 'I am in covenant with the United Methodist denomination. I am in covenant with a church with which I disagree, and I am not alone in that,'" Carpenter told United Methodist News Service. "But is there a way that we can stand in a public way for equality?"

The United Methodist Book of Discipline, the denomination's law book, since 1972 has proclaimed the practice of homosexuality "incompatible with Christian teaching." The book prohibits United Methodist churches from hosting and clergy from performing "ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions."

The 2012 General Conference, when it met April 24-May 4 in Tampa, Fla., rejected efforts to change that language, including a proposal to say the church was in disagreement about homosexuality. General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking assembly, will next convene in 2016.

Sturgis, who is gay, said Green Street took its stand after careful and prayerful deliberation. A number of Green Street members expressed concerns the church was taking away an important rite for straight couples.

"My stance is — and I think the leadership council came around to the same view — that we really aren't taking away anything because heterosexual couples still have the same rights they always do," Sturgis said. "But our sanctuary is a sacred place for the entire church family ... and we will not let the sins of inequality happen in that space."

The decision followed two congregation-wide meetings after worship as well as lengthy conversations among council members. The leadership council's vote was unanimous. Carpenter, with the leadership council's support, still plans to officiate at a wedding in the church scheduled before the change in policy.

Carpenter said he talked to retired clergy in the hope that the church's new policy does not violate the Book of Discipline.

But the Rev. Thomas Lambrecht, the vice president and general manager of the unofficial evangelical caucus Good News, said he thinks it is possible Green Street may still run afoul of church law even though he is uncertain whether the point of law has been litigated. Lambrecht has argued cases before the United Methodist Judicial Council, the denomination's top court.

"If the blessings could be construed as celebrating homosexual unions, then that is a chargeable offense," Lambrecht said. "But I don't know if that issue has been litigated."

Marriages and church vitality

Lambrecht said he sees Green Street Church's gesture as ineffectual.

"I think all they are doing is hurting their ministry and outreach to straight couples," he said. "It's not going to change anything."

Carpenter, however, said the church's policy has the potential to make its ministry more vital.

The church, which is now 110 years old, had dwindled to 15 members by the late 1990s when the remnant made the decision to open its doors to all and focused on becoming a multi-ethnic church. Today, the church has seen increases in younger members and children as well as more ethnic diversity, Carpenter says.

"We are getting not just LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning) members coming to the church because they are looking for a congregation that is welcoming," he said. "We are also receiving straight couples that are raising children that want to be involved in a church that is active in saying discrimination is wrong."

Like other pastors, Carpenter says, he has been approached in previous years by couples that want to be married in a church but have no strong connection to the church.

The new policy will return the focus to the couple's relationship and their relationship to the Christian community, he said.

"It's not a perfect approach, but it seems a faithful one given the context of this church," he said, "and I find that is pretty moving."

**Hahn is a multimedia news reporter for United Methodist News Service.*

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OBITUARIES

NORMAN W. WALZ, retired Elder of the Greater NJ Conference, died on Sunday, March 10. A memorial service will be held on Saturday, April 6, 2013 at 2 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, 111 Ryerson Avenue, Newton, NJ 07860. Clergy are invited to robe for the service.

He was ordained 1945 and served churches in New Jersey in Union Village, Mendham, Park Ridge, Wharton, Summit, (Oakes Memorial), Morristown, and Vienna. He was also president and board member of Morris Habitat for Humanity.

In lieu of flowers, gifts of remembrance may be made to Habitat for Humanity International (www.habitat.org). Messages of condolence may be sent to his family in care of son, John Walz, P.O. Box 343, Mount Tabor, NJ 07878.

RUTH E. WHEATLEY SMITH, widow of Rev. Alden T. Smith, a member of the former Northern New Jersey Conference, died on March 7. Relatives and friends are invited to visit with her family on Saturday, April 13, 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Collingswood Manor Chapel, 460 Haddon Ave., Collingswood, NJ 08108. A memorial service will follow at 10:30 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations to Samaritan Hospice, 5 Eves Dr., Suite 300, Marlton, NJ 08053. Messages of condolence may be sent to Mrs. Virginia Egbert and Family, 1118 South Park Ave., Haddon Heights, NJ 08035.



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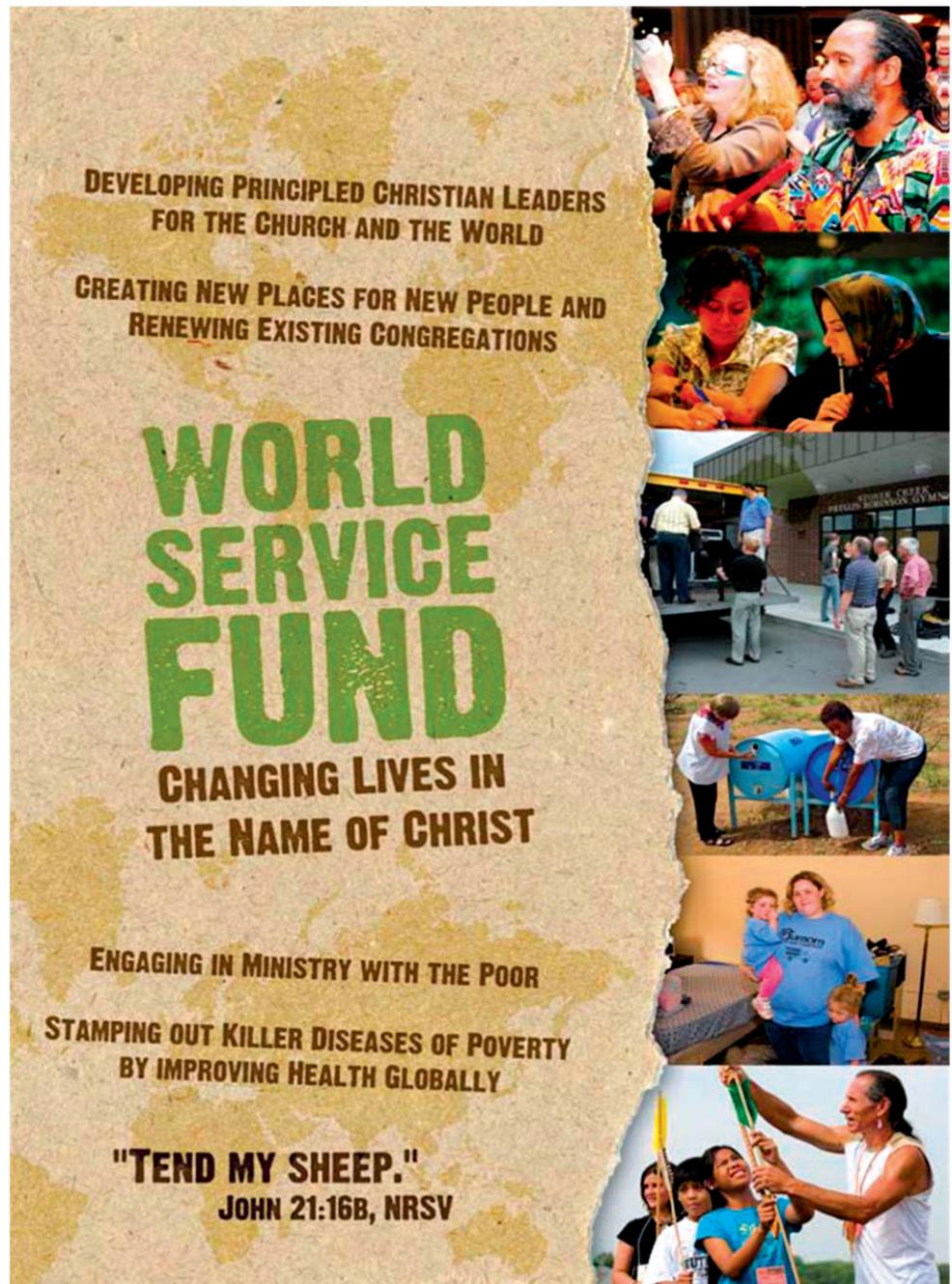
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Rivera's training as a lay missionary is through the Conference Academy for Faith Community Development for the Northern Illinois Annual (regional) Conference. The conference has started 30 new faith communities since 2003. Included in those numbers are nine new Hispanic/Latino communities.

The academy has trained 100 Latinos and Latinas, 45 of whom are lay missionaries of which Pastor Rivera was one. Rivera was grateful for the training he received at the academy: "Learning how to make a church sign sounds pretty basic. But our first sign for La Luz de Cristo had too much information, and people fly by our church driving 50 miles per hour," he laughed. "So when I ordered the next sign, we got a bigger one with less information, and now we have eight or nine new families in the church just because of the new sign. More importantly, we learned how to start cell groups and what do in a cell to make it grow, so that's how we equip other people to do the same thing that I do with the same passion," he said. "But it's not about me... It's about multiplying the congregation and reaching the whole neighborhood."

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