

Rev. John Edgar Named Speaker for Pre-Lenten Gathering

Each year, Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar hosts a Pre-Lenten Gathering as a time of preparation for Lent. The event includes two sessions: a daytime session open to clergy and an evening session open to all laity. The 2012 Pre-Lenten Gathering will be held on Tuesday, February 21, 2012 at Calvary Korean in East Brunswick, New Jersey. Reverend John Edgar, Executive Director of the faith-based community development organization, Community Development for All People (CD4AP), will be the guest speaker at both services.

Clergy are invited to attend the day gathering from 8:30am – 2:30pm. They should register with their district. The cost is \$10 and lunch will be provided.

Laity are invited to attend the evening gathering, which will begin with a light dinner at 6:30pm. The worship and communion service will be from 7:30pm-9pm.

CD4AP is a multifaceted community development corporation with the mission of improving the quality of life with persons living on the Southside of Columbus, Ohio.

The Free Store, a flagship ministry of CD4AP, provides free clothing and household items to more than 25,000 persons each year. CD4AP is a developer of affordable



Rev. John Edgar

housing. In partnership with Nationwide Children's Hospital and the United Way of Central Ohio, CD4AP is working to purchase and renovate all of the vacant, blighted houses in a 35 square block area. Last year, CD4AP was involved in five million dollars worth of affordable housing redevelopment. CD4AP provides a variety of direct services and partners with Mt.

Carmel Hospital to operate a primary care health station at the ministry center.

CD4AP has recently assumed re-

sponsibility for carrying forward the social service programming of the former South Side Settlement House that closed its doors at the end of August, 2011.

Rev. Edgar is the founding pastor of the United Methodist Church for All People that is closely affiliated with CD4AP. This remarkably diverse congregation is comprised primarily of low income persons. An ordained pastor for over 30 years, he has previously served as a district superintendent and dean of the cabinet in the West Ohio Conference.

Rev. Edgar has a Master of Divinity degree, cum laude from Harvard University and a Bachelors degree in sociology, magna cum laude from Miami University.

Taizé 2012 Young Adult Spiritual Pilgrimage July 27 - August 6, 2012

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 27 and return on August 6, 2012.

Going to Taizé is an opportunity to seek communion with God through common prayer, singing, personal reflection and sharing. Everyone is there to discover or rediscover a meaning for their life and to find a new vitality. Being in Taizé is also a preparation for taking on responsibilities back at home with a view to being bearers of peace and trust.

As you arrive at Taizé, you are welcomed by a community of brothers who have made a lifelong commitment to follow Christ in common life and celibacy, in simplicity of life. The GNJAC goal of the pilgrimage is to discover new depths of faith that enable participants to make disciples for Jesus Christ who are committed to a worldwide connectional sharing of the Gospel in word and deed.

Taizé is located in France, a bus ride from Geneva Switzerland. Accommodations there are rustic, with dormitory style life, sleeping in tents. Pilgrims

sleep on their own bedrolls. Food, showers, and other accommodations are very simple. Special diet requests cannot be accommodated.

Pilgrims must carry their own clothing, supplies, air mattresses and sleeping bags. There will be no use of electrical appliances. Everyone will be sleeping in large tents. Daily routines will include worship, Bible study, prayer, silence, reflection, faith sharing, camp chores, and fellowship with 5,000 pilgrims from around the world.

Churches are urged to pay the cost of the pilgrimage experience. It is a unique investment in spiritual development. The funds expended will provide personal, church, and conference benefits for years to come. Adult pilgrims are strongly urged to travel to Taizé, but it should be clear that the focus of this pilgrimage, and this week at Taizé, is Youth & Young Adults. Pilgrims must be approved by pastors and sponsored by churches of the Greater NJ Annual Conference. Only those pilgrims who have pa-

rental consent will be permitted to travel with the group. Every pilgrim will be required to enter into the Taizé Pilgrimage Covenant.

Cost: Pilgrim non-refundable deposit of \$375 is required for registration by Feb. 15, 2012.

A \$1,000 payment is due March 15, 2012 and a final payment of \$825 is due on April 15, 2012.

For more information contact Rev. Erica Munoz, Pilgrimage Director at 732-359-1042 or Emunoz@gnjumc.org.



GNJAC Community Outreach Grant Helps Local Church Feed Community

Community Outreach Grants are given to local churches each year by the Parish and Community Development Team of the Conference Board of Global Ministries. The grants are designed to help fund new local church

programs that seek to make a difference in the community while making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Programs are expected to center around the Four Areas of Focus: Leadership Develop-

ment, Congregational Development, Ministry with the Poor, and Global Health. These grants help churches reach beyond their doors and really make a difference in their communities.

St. Mark's church in Montclair is just one example of a church using the Community Outreach Grant to make a real difference in their community. On Saturday, December 10, 2011, St. Mark's held their second free community dinner of 2011. This dinner was held to celebrate Christmas with their community and spread the word about their free "Behold, We Are Doing A New Thing" Food Pantry, led by co-coordinators Joan Love and Dorna Tucker. The dinner was well attended by the surrounding community. When asked if they felt St. Mark's was making a difference by offering the din-



Youth of St. Mark's Church help serve at the community outreach Christmas dinner.

ner and food pantry, everyone said with overwhelming confidence, "yes!" Many of the women from a local shelter said the ministry at St. Mark's made them feel like "members of the community" and that "people care about them in this world." The dinner was especially heartwarming because for many, it was the only Christmas dinner they were

(Continued on Page 3)



Volunteers at St. Mark's Church who coordinate a Christmas outreach dinner and twice monthly food pantry for their community.

VIEWPOINT

Hector Burgos-Núñez

In less than four months, 988 delegates from across the United Methodist connection will gather for the 2012 General Conference in Tampa, FL. General Conference, the top legislative body of the denomination, is a quadrennial gathering of clergy and lay delegates where the work of the United Methodist Church is organized and specific challenges in the life of the Church and society are addressed through legislation and resolutions considered by the body.

The 2012 General Conference comes with very high expectations. What seems to be the biggest item in this year's General Conference is the proposed changes to the denomination's structure. The changes are aimed at increasing the number of vital congregations through an added emphasis on the Four Areas of Focus embraced by the 2008 General Conference.

The first step to resolving any problem is admitting that it exists. I believe the Call to Action report and the proposed structural changes honestly manifest our acceptance of the challenges ahead of us as a denomination and a willingness to try new things so something new might happen. The General Conference needs to look frankly at the negative trends affecting the United Methodist Church and formulate an aggressive and intentional plan that reforms the Church and allows us to effectively continue fulfilling our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world in the 21st century.

The idea of revisiting the way we are organized as a denomination to promote local church vitality makes good deal of sense. It gives me hope as a United Methodist to see proposals aimed at empowering local congregations to better witness to the love of Christ in their communities and beyond. This renewed vision, in my opinion, is better aligned with the promise and call to action we find in the Bible in Acts 1:8 "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth".

I have always believed that the order presented in the Bible in Acts is not arbitrary or accidental. Our commission to make disciples of Jesus Christ, even though it has to reach all nations, must start in our own Jerusalem. Realigning the vision of ministry to empower local congregations to effectively be in ministry in their local communities can bring a renewed sense of hope and purpose for many congregations that in a way feel forgotten and burdened by our current connectional structure. I believe that as local congregations rediscover their purpose (many really don't know why they exist) vital ministry will take place, and the connectional ministry that distinguishes us will come no more as a burden or obligation, but as a fruit of the work of the Spirit in our local communities of faith.

Having said all that, I must admit that our problem is not only structural, but also spiritual. Our denomination is not only in need of a renewed structure, but also of a spiritual revival. The real changes that are needed to reverse the negative trends haunting us need to happen in the heart. As people of faith we are called to dream God's dream and live it – with all people, in all places, no matter the circumstances or the consequences.

I pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit for all the delegates that will be representing us during the 2012 General Conference, may they be the instruments God uses to spark something new and good in our denomination so we can continue sharing the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with all the nations.

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By now, you have probably discovered the thrice-weekly GNJ Digest, your conference's electronic newsletter 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 become a part of our "digested community" to communications@gnjumc.org.

A Message from the Bishop

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

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



One of the books that deeply touched, nudged, and energized me during my renewal leave was Stephen Cherry's *Barefoot Disciple: Walking the Way of Passionate Humility – The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2011*

Arguing that passionate humility is what we need in creating a healthy and transforming community, the author stresses that this is what we need as Christians to make an impact on our society. With a strong biblical foundation and drawing his insight from the ministry and mission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and others, Cherry offers practical ideas on how to practice this passionate humility as a part of our Christian journey.

Among the ingredients that Cherry lists for practicing passionate humility are examples such as giving up grumbling and understanding the meaning of Christian hospitality. He challenges his readers by saying, "Abundance thinking generates both humility and hope" (p.144). In his augmentation of his ideas, he writes, "True humility always seeks to break down barriers and to communicate across difference and diversity."

True humility always tries to connect the prose and the passion. True humility always strives to engage the ministry of reconciliation in its widest possible imagination" (p.153). Though these are just a few examples, trust me when I say that this book has really captivated and challenged me to reflect deeply on my Christian walk.

As I reflected on this in the context of my renewal leave, the face of a Christian medical doctor and a professor kept coming before me.

This doctor has patients and acquaintances in the region where I spent my renewal leave. Some are Hindu; others are Muslim or Christian. However, everyone I encountered told me that they love and appreciate this doctor because of his knowledge in the field and his humility. His Christian humility makes him treat everyone alike. I was able to speak to some people and go to places during my renewal which would not have been possible if it weren't for the witness of this Christian doctor and professor who truly has passionate Christian humility. Certainly passionate humility exuded by other individual clergy and laity would make a powerful witness for the glory of our Creator God as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

One of the points made by the author helps to clarify the meaning of Jesus' washing the feet of his disciples. "It is not that the feet needed a wash," (p.27) writes Cherry, "but that the disciples needed a new set of attitudes. Discipleship might seem to involve meeting the needs of others but at a more radical level it is about doing the things that cause us to be changed in heart and mind." (p.27)

During the Lenten season, may we make a very special attempt to practice passionate humility that springs from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior?

In light of this book's invitation to practice passionate humility, may I lift up one attitude adjustment that would make a difference in our lives? I suggest we give up grumbling. What a difference we could make if we stopped grumbling at our partners, colleagues, parishioners, colleagues, children, and parents. May we ask for God's help, Christ's compassion, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we strive to practice Christian humility as disciples of Jesus Christ.

May you have a prayerful, blessed, and powerful Lenten season.

In Christ's love,

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar



Serving the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference

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Journeying



Picking Time: On Being Close to Death

Marcia Krause Bilyk

In mid-June when the deer move their fawns out of hiding, the wild black raspberries in rural New Jersey ripen a purple so deep they're called "black-caps" by the locals. I've been keeping an eye on the bushes on our road. Their purple berries signal that it's picking time. I grab an empty Cool Whip container and head out the door.

I wade into a chest-high thicket of Multiflora Rose. Thorny branches draw blood, but I'm so transfixed by the blackcaps I barely notice. I grab a handful, stuff them into my mouth and taste their sweet sun-warmed juice. Tiny seeds crunch as I chew. I stretch for more and soon berries are rhythmically thudding into my makeshift bucket. My thoughts drift.

My friend Brenda's mother died yesterday. Given her age, multiple complications, and underlying heart condition, I wasn't surprised, but Brenda's family hadn't been ready to let go. They'd had their mother medevaced from a local hospital to a regional center. She died two days later.

I learned during my chaplaincy training at a university hospital that death is not a here-one-moment-gone-the-next kind of thing. It's more often a process like birth, the timing subject to the decisions and actions of any one of a number of people.

One evening while on call I got paged to the ER. A cab driver had suffered a heart attack yet managed to drive himself to the hospital's emergency room. I stood off to the side in the ER crash room and watched as a medical team worked their magic. They re-started his heart and moved him to the cardiac intensive care unit.

Before going off duty I stopped by the CICU. The man's body lay in a brightly lit cubicle filled with the sound of a respirator pumping oxygen into his lungs. A strip of adhesive tape had been placed over each of his eyelids.

"What happened to him?" I asked a nurse. "I thought he was doing OK."

"His heart was stopped too long. You can't re-start a brain that's been starved of oxygen. We're waiting for his family so we can disconnect him."

"Why are his eyes taped shut?" I asked.

"So they won't dry out. His family may want to donate his organs."

It'd been thrilling to witness a miracle

of modern science, the re-starting of a heart. Now I was ambivalent. "Where is he, God?" I heard the anger in my voice as I prayed. "With you? Or is his soul trapped in this body that's being kept alive by machine? If he's not able to ask for release, I ask now on his behalf."

In the thicket, the flutter of a monarch butterfly captures my attention. I follow its flight to the berry-laden bushes catty-corner from where I stand.

Would a living will have spared Brenda's mother one more hospital admission, one more set of invasive tests? I once attended a patient conference where a daughter demanded that her elderly, comatose father be given a feeding tube even though his living will stated "no life support." She argued that the document was nonspecific about feeding tubes. So for several weeks the man was fed liquids through a rubber tube inserted into his nose, a ghastly looking procedure involving a funnel. He never regained consciousness.

I've made my wishes clear to my husband. "No feeding tubes. No bone crushing CPR. When it's time, let me go."

Late afternoon sunlight falls on an especially gorgeous berry. It seems by its very being to announce, "I am ready." Reaching for it, I wonder who picks the time we die.

I once visited a veteran who twenty some years prior had put a shotgun into his mouth and pulled the trigger. He was paralyzed from the neck down. Is there a reason, as people are wont to say, that he survived? Was he "not ready?" Was God "not ready" for him? Or did this vet just happen to pick the night an especially gifted medical team was working its magic in the ER?

Lately I catch myself thinking with more frequency "only the good die young." It's irrational and folksy, but all too often reflects reality. What about the ornery, vindictive, seemingly heartless souls who live well beyond everyone's patience and compassion? Sometimes I tell myself God is giving them time to work it out in this lifetime. Time to ripen. I wonder if there's something invisible to the human eye, discernible only to God that indicates when we're ready, when it's picking time.

Bishop's Annual Award: Service in Christian Unity & Interreligious Concerns

Every year, two awards are presented at Annual Conference in recognition of service in the area of Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. One award is presented to a person who has endeavored to reach out in ministry beyond their local congregation in partnership with persons of faith who are not United Methodist. This ministry may be associated with a community ministry such as a food pantry, a coalition for human dignity and/or rights or joint worship. The second award is presented to a congregation who is in ecumenical and/or interfaith ministry.

Each year, this commission seeks nominations for this award from the members of the annual conference. This also provides everyone in the conference with an opportunity to get a more comprehensive understanding of the work of Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns being done in the GNJAC. You are invited to make nominations. The person or congregation should not have already received this award.

Nominations must be received by March 21, 2012. Applications can be downloaded at the Conference website: www.gnjumc.org.

For more information you may contact Rev. Jessica Campbell at pastorsjandj@hotmail.com or call 845-429-3590.

New Online Safe Sanctuaries Training Course

The GNJAC, in partnership with Trak-1 Technologies and Rev. Joy Melton- creator of Safe Sanctuaries, now offers online Safe Sanctuaries trainings. This training is designed for all workers (paid and volunteer) of children, youth and/or vulnerable adults to learn the importance of preventing abuse in the church. This training costs only \$12.99 and returns a certificate of training to each participant. The process is the same as request-

ing background checks...it is that simple!!

This training meets the recommended training requirement of all GNJAC Safe Sanctuary Polices.

To begin your training after December 1, 2011, go to www.gnjumc.org.

The hope and prayer is that this training opportunity will open more possibilities for you and your church as you continue to be a Safe Sanctuary for all of God's children.

GNJAC Community Outreach Grant

(Continued from Page 1)

going to experience. It took many dedicated volunteers, including several youth, to help make the night a success.

St. Mark's is very appreciative of the grant they have received from the GNJAC. It allows the distribution of food on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month to an average of 12 families, delivery of food to shut-ins in the community, and purchasing of food gift cards for families to buy meat and fresh produce. Co-coordinator,

Joan Love, said without the grant they could not have provided the food gift cards, which allow families the opportunity to purchase healthy and fresh foods. It also shows others that there is an interest and investment in the program, which entices other people and businesses to donate to the program.

If you would like more information about the "Behold, We Are Doing A New Thing" Food Pantry, contact St. Mark's UMC at 973-744-2345 or saintmarks51@aol.com.

Scholarship Opportunities Available

The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference has many scholarship opportunities available for students. To download applications and to get more information visit www.gnjumc.org or call the Conference Office at 732-359-1000 or 1-877-677-2594. All scholarship applications should be postmarked by March 31, 2012.

Available scholarships and basic requirements include:

Conference Merit Award

- Membership in United Methodist Church, GNJAC
- Student in a United Methodist college
- Nomination by local church

Rev. Ralph A. Kappler Memorial Scholarship

- Membership in United Methodist Church, GNJAC
- Financial need
- Nomination by local church
- Undergraduate student

Frances Nelson Scholarship

- Membership in United Methodist Church GNJAC
- Goal of full-time Christian Service
- Undergraduate student
- Yearly application required
- Previous recipients given priority up to four years of college

Emily S. Garrison Nursing Scholarship

- Membership in United Methodist Church, GNJAC
- Enrollment in a nursing BS degree program
- Career goal: Nursing

Conference Trust Fund Scholarships

- Membership in United Methodist Church, GNJAC
- Financial need
- Academic merit
- Undergraduate student

Ethel Snyder Book/ Inez R. Irons Scholarship

- Daughter and/or Son of a United Methodist clergy, GNJAC
- Continuing education after high school

Doris and Arthur Mandeville Scholarship

- Membership in United Methodist Church, GNJAC
 - Full-time graduate student
 - Financial need
 - Goal: Ordained ministry or Christian Education
- Call the conference office at 1-877-677-2594 for an application

GNJAC Educational Society

- Seminary, graduate student
 - Goal: Full-time Christian service in GNJAC
- Contact: Jo Malessa, 418 Linden Avenue, Riverton, NJ 08077-1307
856-786-0293, E-mail: ma_malessa@comcast.net

**THE MARCH ISSUE DEADLINE
IS FEBRUARY 5, 2012**



Global Relay

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

Racism still stings, bishop tells King

ATLANTA (UMNS) — As he writes his annual letter to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the holiday to celebrate King's birth, retired Bishop Woodie W. White observes that "many years ago, I likened racism to Johnson grass, that tough, elusive type of grass that seems to defy destruction. When it appears to be eradicated, it shows up elsewhere. ... One thinks it's gone, and then discovers it was only dormant."

Dr. King's most memorable speeches

NEW YORK (UMNS) — "I've been to the mountaintop. ... And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the promised land." This is from one of the presentations by the United Methodist General Commission on Religion and Race of five of the most memorable speeches by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. To see video and listen to the speeches, go to www.gcarr.org

Side by side with Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (UMNS) — Two years after a 7.0 earthquake left 220,000 people dead and 1.3 million homeless, United Methodist volunteers and the United Methodist Committee on Relief — in partnership with the Methodist Church of Haiti — continue to help in the island nation's recovery. On the eve of the quake's anniversary, the United Methodist News Service has put together a slideshow featuring photos by Mike DuBose and the Rev. Chris Heckert, showing the quake's immediate aftermath and United Methodist recovery efforts.

Agency applauds deportation policy change

WASHINGTON (UMNS) — The United Methodist Board of Church and Society sent a statement to the White House this week applauding the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's decision to enable some undocumented immigrant children and spouses to reunite with their U.S.-citizen family members. Considering the "record numbers of deportations by the Obama administration," the agency said in a Jan. 11 statement, "we hope this change in policy will finally make it easier for thousands of American families with mixed immigration status to remain permanently together."

Caring for Creation event slated

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C. (UMNS) — Bill McKibben, environmental author and founder of 350.org, will be a featured presenter at Caring for Creation on March 15-18 at Lake Junaluska. Caring for Creation 2012, a faith-based event on environmentalism, will explore ways individuals and churches can become good stewards of God's Earth. Early registration ends Feb. 15.

Social action agency is 'green' partner

WASHINGTON (UMNS) — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has recognized the United Methodist Board of Church and Society for "exemplary environmental leadership" and awarded the agency membership to the 2012 Green Power Leadership Club. The Green Power Partnership is a voluntary program that encourages organizations to buy green power as a way to reduce the environmental impacts associated with purchased electricity use.

New report connects farmers, the hungry

WASHINGTON (UMNS) — Strengthening the connection between U.S. farmers and the need for more nutritious food is the focus of Bread for the World's 2012 Hunger Report. United Methodists have worked for years with Bread for the World, a Christian advocacy group dedicated to educating the public and urging U.S. decision-makers to end hunger at home and abroad.

Science can help church keep its young folk

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — A nationwide study found three out of 10 young adults with a Christian background feel churches are out of step with the scientific world we live in. Embracing an attitude of reconciliation and partnership with science will be essential if we hope to attract young people and keep them engaged in pursuit of a rich spiritual life, writes Gary B. Sherman, a scientist and United Methodist.

Transforming the lives of African orphans

KIGALI, Rwanda (UMNS) — "Don't talk to me about God," Angelique, a young Rwandan orphan, sobbed quietly. "If there is a God, he doesn't love me." Her life and faith changed dramatically with help from ZOE Ministry. The stories of orphans like Angelique, which have been turned into sermon illustrations paired with Scripture passages, are now part of the collection "A Little Child Shall Lead Them: Scenes of Faith from African Orphans."

Philippines typhoon survivors get help

MANILA, Philippines (UMNS) — The United Methodist Committee on Relief office in the Philippines is continuing to provide relief to survivors of Typhoon Sendong, also known as Typhoon Washi, which struck the southern Philippines, triggering flash floods. In Cagayan De Oro, staff distributed blankets and mats in the wee hours of the morning Dec. 22 as people sought shelter on the streets while a cold rain poured down.

**The March Issue Deadline
is February 5, 2012**

Camden Neighborhood Center Welcomes Three New Board Members

Camden, NJ — The Camden Neighborhood Center (www.ncicamden.org), A National Mission of the United Methodist Church, is an urban outreach mission of the Greater New Jersey Conference and part of the General Board of Global Ministries. The Center has been serving the Camden community for the past 99 years in the Bergen Square section of the city. The Center provides a community kitchen that serves on average 150 meals per day to individuals experiencing food insecurity. The Center also provides educational programming to children, families, and senior citizens by offering day-care, after-school care, summer enrichment for children, teen programming and support, and adult education.



Paul T. Parker

The Neighborhood Center is pleased to announce the appointment of Paul T. Parker to the Board of Directors. With over 25 years of experience in corporate leadership, Mr. Parker is the former Chief People Officer of Deloitte and is currently consulting to Fortune 500 companies on a range of corporate management and strategy issues. His background includes being the past Vice President of Human Resources for Colgate Palmolive North America. Mr. Parker has an MBA from the NYU Leonard N. Stern School of Business and is also Professor of Business at Manhattanville College. He has worked with the Jackie Robinson Foundation, INROADS, and has mentored African-

American college students considering a career in business. Mary Martz, President of the Neighborhood Center's Board of Directors, said, "Paul's experience, business leadership, and community involvement are an invaluable addition to the Board and the future success of the Center."

The Neighborhood Center is also pleased to announce the appointment of Janice Woodcock to the Board of Directors. Ms. Woodcock brings over 30 years of experience in non-profit board governance, architecture and planning. She is the former Executive Director of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission and is currently the President of Woodcock Design. Her background includes being a guest lecturer at Philadelphia University and she has served as a board member of the Delaware Valley Green Building Council, a Board Member of the Philadelphia Art Alliance. She is a former President of the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and has taught Philadelphia public school children about architecture via the Architecture in Education program. Ms. Woodcock has a Masters degree in architecture, with an urban design certificate, from the University of Washington in Seattle; LEED accreditation from the US Green Building Council; a Bachelors degree in Sociology from St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY. Board President Mary Martz said, "Janice's architecture and urban experience is vital to the Neighborhood Center as we embark upon our efforts to revitalize the Center's campus and surrounding community, in addition to her knowledge of strong board governance."



Janice Woodcock

Finally, the Neighborhood Center is also delighted to announce the appointment of Paul Groundwater to the Board of Directors. Mr. Groundwater has served in a number of senior marketing and general management executive roles including serving as the Vice President and Global Brand Leader for Trane Commercial Systems. He is currently the President of Profitable Sales Growth Consulting, LLC. Mr. Groundwater's background includes being the Vice President of Marketing for the Campbell Soup Company and holding progressive marketing roles at Kraft Foods. He also volunteers as the Executive Advisor to the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton Global Consulting Practicum. Mr. Groundwater has an MBA from Cornell University's S.C. Johnson Graduate School of Management in Marketing and a BA from Northwestern University. Ms. Martz, commented, "Paul's business experience is critical to the Neighborhood Center as we plan for the future while remaining good stewards of the resources given by our volunteers and donors."



Gladly Laid Upon the Country's Altar: Methodists and the American Civil War

Curated by: Christopher J. Anderson
A Drew University Library Exhibit

In his book *Stagestruck Filmmaker: D.W. Griffith and the American Theater* (2009) author David Mayer argues, "The American Civil War has never been a stable field with an agreed-upon historical interpretation. Rather, it was – and is – an evolving, contested subject, which is host to vehemence, disruption, and difference, a palimpsest upon which fresh questions about the past are inscribed."¹

Mayer's insight reminds us that the presentation and representation of texts, objects, photographs, labels, and even how one names an exhibit can generate boredom, interest, aggravation, and outrage. Exhibits are meant to draw attention to historical and/or contemporary issues so that viewers can both reflect on the past and ask questions in the present. The contents of an exhibit also echo the educational background, interests and biases of both curator and curatorial team. As a result exhibits are often positioned historically, sociologically, theologically, politically, and even metaphorically in order to give voice to the voiceless and to champion certain ideological positions from history.

On March 4, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln in his Second Inaugural Address confirmed that American citizens and armies both North and South believed that God was on their side of a destructive and devastating national conflict. That conflict, waged with cannons and guns meshed with nationalistic and theological rhetoric, lasted from 1861 to 1865. The name of that conflict has been contested since the earliest moments of the war. Several names have been attributed: The Civil War, The War Between the States and the War of Northern Aggression to name but a few.

For those four years several hundred thousand Methodists from the United States and the Confederate States of America preached, fought, and labored for both sides. During the conflict Methodists served as government officials, soldiers, chaplains, nurses, and church leaders while fighting for states' rights, the restoration of the Union, and the politics of slavery. With adherents in the millions, American Methodists played a crucial role in the struggle for racial and sectional freedoms.

The Drew University Library exhibit *Gladly Laid upon the Country's Altar: Methodists and the American Civil War* examines the history of both American Methodism and Drew University. Drew Theological Seminary (now a part of the university) was founded shortly after the conflict in 1867, and as a result had several direct connections to the Civil War. Drew landowners, trustees, administration, faculty and students – mostly Methodist - participated in the conflict. Ten cases, located in the Drew University Library and the United Methodist Archives and History Center, house several dozen items related to the war. Two cases acknowledge the connections between Drew and the Civil War. Eight cases identify the historic tensions within American Methodism over racial identities that led to denominational fracturing and ultimately to sectional conflict. The exhibit brings attention to ten historic Methodist traditions and includes manuscripts, photographs, printed texts, and material objects from the collections of the Drew University Archives, Special Collections and Methodist Library. Many of the items on display are part of the vast collection of resources from the General Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church.

In an attempt to be inclusive of the varieties of American Methodism over 200 items were discovered and considered. 90 of those items are found within the cases. As a result, many interesting and informative materials did not make the exhibit. The exhibit echoes some of the ideological and theological issues American Methodists struggled with and eventually fought over during the war while highlighting the vast amount of material available for researchers and students.

As mentioned, the American Civil War is a contested subject – much has been written about the conflict and much more will be written. This exhibit contributes to that stream of discussion and raises additional questions for future generations of students and scholars. The free exhibit runs until April 30, 2012, and is located on the campus of Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. Hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

(Footnotes)

¹ Mayer, David. *Stagestruck Filmmaker: D.W. Griffith and the American Theater*. Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 121.

Pre-Retirement and Financial Security Seminars

March 1, 2012 - Pre-Retirement Seminar
March 2, 2012 - Financial Security Seminar

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

March 1, 2012 - Pre-Retirement Seminar. This seminar is scheduled for **9:00am - 3:00pm** 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 2, 2012 - Financial Security Seminar - Scheduled for **9:00am - 2:00pm** 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 the Saint Mark United Methodist Church, at 465 Paxson Avenue, Hamilton Square, NJ 08690. Further questions may be directed to Alexa Taylor, Conference Pension Coordinator at 732-359-1038.

ON-LINE REGISTRATION and payment by credit/debit card is available by going to www.gnjumc.org, click on "Online Event Registration" under "Quick Links" on home page.

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 Ginny Kaiser, (732-359-1043 or 1-877-677-2594 x1043) 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 March 2, 2012.

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Log on to:

www.UMRelay.org for Current Relay Online,
Relay Archives & Relay Reflections.

Gateway South Churches Distribute Their Gifts

Children of Camden received over 2,000 Christmas gifts because of the generosity of United Methodists of the Gateway South District. The gifts were distributed by the churches of the Camden Urban Ministry Initiative (CUMI) and by the Camden Neighborhood Center. CUMI is a cooperative ministry of the United Methodist Churches in Camden,

The gift-sharing was designed as an attempt of United Methodists to demonstrate the love of Christ. Whole endeavor was timed to point out the true meaning of the Christmas celebration. As they visited the Gateway South churches during the Church Conference season, District Superintendent Robert Costello and District Lay Leader William Tilghman challenged the churches of the district to provide at least 1,000 gifts for the inner-city children.

Each gift was wrapped and marked for age and gender appropriateness.

They were delivered to the Parkside and Asbury United Methodist Churches, and to the Neighborhood Center. The Parkside, New Beginnings, Asbury, Bethel, and Ferry Avenue congregations registered potential recipients of the gifts. Volunteers, led by Shirley Steward tagged the gifts and organized the distribution at Parkside.

The big celebration took place on December 11th at Parkside United Methodist Church. Youth from across Camden participated in the festivities. During the celebration D. S. Costello led the children in a birthday celebration, in which they enthusiastically sang "Happy Birthday" to Jesus. The Christmas Musical "Blessed and Highly Favored" was written and directed by Phil Hurtt, Media Director at Parkside. The program featured drama, music and humor. Joy filled the church as gifts were distributed after the Musical worship service.



Gateway South District Superintendent Rev. Robert Costello and District Lay Leader William Tilghman light the candle on the birthday cake celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ as Camden City children joined in singing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus at the Christmas Musical "Blessed and Highly Favored" held at the Parkside United Methodist Church.

Live Nativity an Annual Event at Tuckerton

Tuckerton - On December 10th First Church here hosted its ninth Christmas Live Nativity. Each year the church opens its doors to the community during the Advent season to show radical hospitality and invite people to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas. This family oriented venue has become an important part of the Christmas celebrations in the area and this year welcomed over 1,000 people of all ages. The manger scene featured real cows, sheep, donkeys, and a camel, along with the traditional characters from the Nativity story represented by youth from the church. After witnessing the beauty of the tableau, all in attendance were invited to enjoy home-made cookies and hot chocolate in the church's fellowship hall, courtesy of the local UMW and Joy women groups. "The Live Nativity is a unique opportunity to share the real meaning of Christmas with our community. People in town look forward to it every year, and everyone in the congregation works together to make it a success", said Rev. Grant Buttermore Jr., senior pastor at FUMC. For more information on the ministries FUMC, visit their website online www.fumctuckerton.com.



One project volunteer said, "There has been so much happiness in this program! Those who arrive to bring their donations are so very glad they can share love in the name of Christ. Those who work on the project are receiving more joy that the children who get the gifts. The parents of our children have been expressing their thanks over and over again."

At the Christmas celebration Superintendent Costello delivered his message to the people of the Gateway South District. He said, "Good things are happening in Camden. Each boy

and girl here today is an example of God's promise for the future. The commitment of the adults who share their ministry in Camden is proof that God's people are on the job for Jesus. The generous support of the Gateway South District churches is evidence that we can look ahead to new forms of cooperation in the name of Jesus Christ." He went on to say, "Any time we can challenge United Methodists to donate 1,000 gifts and then distribute 2,000, we are reminded that with God all things are truly possible."

ENDOWMENT



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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.

GNJAC Pastor Named “A Person of the Year” by Princeton Newspaper

The Centenary Church, Lambertville, in January celebrated the third anniversary of a special, recurrent community offering. Every Wednesday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., the church hosts a community lunch, open to all. There is no charge for the meal although a donation jar is there for anyone who wants to contribute. There is also a free community brunch every Sunday from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

“My husband, Michael, and I had been thinking for a while of starting something like this,” recalled the Rev. Judy Gehrig, pastor of Centenary Church, who was recently named “A Person of the Year” by the Packet Market Fine Living newspaper in Princeton NJ. Then, in 2009, when the economy got worse, the couple thought the right time had come. They talked to a lot of people in the community about their vision, not just people in the church, and decided to go ahead. They started very simply. “It was just Michael and I and the 10 volunteers we had there for the day,” said Rev. Gehrig. “We have about 140 people coming now. It’s a very diverse group, which is what we were hoping for. We didn’t want it to be a soup kitchen type of thing. We wanted it to be a community meal. We have folks coming from Pennsylvania, Flemington, Trenton and other places, not just Lambertville,” she said, adding, “We always have fresh fruit and a fresh green salad and two homemade soups. There are tablecloths and flowers on tables and we have music playing.”



Pastor Gehrig (center) and members of Centenary prepare the meal.



Members of the Lambertville area community gather around the tables of Centenary Church.

A happy, charming and articulate woman who laughs often, heartily and very engagingly, Ms. Gehrig’s story is a compelling one. “I’m 72 years old,” she said. “This is my first church. I didn’t start seminary until I was 58.” Originally from Daytona Beach, Fla., she left that state in 1977 and gradually moved up the East Coast, living in northeastern Connecticut, Cape Cod and other places. She did all kinds of work and held all kinds of jobs.

Ms. Gehrig had been thinking of attending seminary for about 20 years before she enrolled in the Andover-Newton Theological School near Boston. “My original aim was to be a counseling pastor, but when I had the opportunity to preach – something I had never imagined myself doing – well ... I found I kind of liked it!” she recalled, laughing. “After seminary, I ended up here in Lambertville, and I have loved it here, loved this town. It’s a unique place with a wonderful old-time, small-town atmosphere. People walk everywhere. They’re warm, kind and welcoming. They stop to chat on each other’s front porches. And I love the diversity of the town, and our church embraces that.”

Asked to comment on why she is so upbeat and laughs so often, she said, “I’m getting to do something that brings me joy to do. And, you know, as I’ve gotten older, my theology has gotten simpler. It comes down to love. Love God and love your neighbor. That covers it quite well. We feel community meals are an expression of that love.”

Keansburg Crafters a Close Knit Ministry

In November, 2004, the First Church of Keansburg on the Northern Shore District opened its doors for an evening of knitting and crocheting chemotherapy caps for the American Cancer Society. Area churches were invited to participate, and 33 women from eight different congregations attended. While the organizers of this evening thought it to be a one-time event, God had other plans! Now seven years later, “Knit One/Prayer Too” is still making items of love and reaching out in the name of Jesus Christ. The ministry has crafted and donated over 6,000 items to 49 states in the U.S., and seven other countries. The group meets quarterly when new projects are introduced and crafting begins. Then the women are free to work at home at their own pace. Some may complete one item for the selected charity, while others may complete 20. Items are then dropped off to the church, where they are tagged and prayed over before delivery. Members are also encouraged to pray for the recipients as they craft their items. Each item is made with care and love, in the hope of bringing warmth and comfort to those who will receive them. Once considered a dying art, the needle arts are becoming very popular among the younger generation. The group hosted a Girl Scout evening, and found their young pupils very eager to learn and become involved in helping others. Knitting ministries have been started in California, Idaho, Nebraska, Missouri, Georgia, as well as 2 others in New Jersey as a result of this one. The group was also invited to present a workshop at



the Annual Day of Learning a few years ago. Items have been made for the American Cancer Society, Pine Ridge Reservation of South Dakota, Tent City (a homeless community in NJ), St. Jude’s Memphis, Childrens Hospitals of Boston, Los Angeles, and St. Louis, survivors of Hurricane Katrina, Project Linus NJ, soldiers in Afghanistan, the Orphan Foundation of America, WWII Veterans, the D.O.V.E. Fund, women’s shelters, Special Olympics, Ronald McDonald House, and many others. The group’s founder and coordinator, Kim Struszkiewicz, loves to speak about the ministry, and has a team of women at the ready should a church or other organization wish to hear the how-to’s of getting started. One need not be a member or attend gatherings to be a part of what the group does. Some of those crafting for the group have never attended a meeting. The

group is listed on Lion Brand’s Charity Connection, and Ravelry, both world wide websites for crafters looking to do charity work. There is a high school student in Staten Island who has been crafting for the group for the last three years. She made the connection through one of the websites. “Although

we have never met her, this young girl is an important part of what we do”, says Struszkiewicz. “For someone so young to be so committed to helping others is truly a blessing.” The group’s members feel that they are the ones who are blessed. Struszkiewicz added, “We are able to come together in a place God has provided for us, enjoy the fellowship of women who are enthusiastic about helping others, meet new friends, talk openly about our faith, and spread the word of God’s great love for His people, by reaching out in His name. Our “one evening” has lasted seven years, and with God’s blessing our work will continue for years to come. Amazing what God can do with a few willing hands and hearts!” *And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.- Psalm 90:17*

For further information, visit www.knitoneprayertoo.blogspot.com.

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.

Irene Gives St. John's a Different Kind of Christmas

HAZLET — It was a different kind of Christmas at St. John's Church here this year as the year 2011 wound to a close. The Northern Shore congregation whose celebrated seasonal displays had won for it the sobriquet of "The Christmas Church," had more on its mind than poinsettias and manger scenes this year.

Reeling from the impact of Hurricane Irene which ravaged the east coast in late August with wind, rain and flooding, leaving behind a disastrous path of destruction, St. John's found itself caught in a swath of ruin that would take upwards of \$300,000 to repair.

But faith, not funds, would sustain the members of St. John's Church through Irene's devastation and destruction. Now, moving into 2012, the congregation can look back on that summer storm as slowly it continues the necessary repairs.

Since Aug. 28, worship services have been conducted in the parish center, not the sanctuary. The aftermath of the hurricane left the building with no carpeting or flooring of any kind in the sanctuary, and the silk screening on the back wall of the chancel behind the altar, torn and in need of replacement. Throughout the sanctuary a number of pews had to be repaired.

"When I got to the church (at about 9 a.m.) that Sunday, the water in the parking lot was up to my knees," the Rev. Lanie Price, St. John's pastor, told a reporter. Water was about four inches deep throughout the entire church building.

The sanctuary, like the rest of the rooms in the building, was flooded. The only salvageable floor covering was the all-purpose carpeting in the gymnasium.

"For some reason, they installed water-proof carpeting in here, (the gymnasium)," Dr. Price said.

The estimated damage to the church, its nursery school classrooms and building is upward of \$300,000, said Bill Bechtoldt, a member of the church.

Efforts to raise funds for the repairs have met with some response, but not nearly enough to underwrite the cost.

Contributions have come from a many in the church and community, along with a token grant from the Annual Conference, but nothing approaching the amount needed to offset the expense.

Pastor Price said that two letters sent to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requesting financial assistance have been answered with letters from the agency denying their request.

"That is bad news, really bad news," said Mr. Bechtoldt. "We were hoping for something, anything," Additional appeals are being directed to FEMA, Pastor Price said.

Since August, all the carpeting in the building and the mold has been removed, and some of the walls have been repaired.

The hurricane hit about a week before school started, delaying the open-



The sanctuary of St. John's Church spent the Christmas season half empty of its furnishings as damage from hurricane Irene were being repaired.

The spirit of the church and its members was sobered but undaunted by Irene's relentless fury, and the church moved forward with its holiday pro-

grams and events. The spirit of the church and its members was sobered but undaunted by Irene's relentless fury, and the church moved forward with its holiday program and events.

stable area where the live nativity, for many years a popular attraction in the Bayshore area, was once again on display. The live nativity continued into the New Year.

Now with Christmas past, the church can again turn its full attention to the restoration project. To complete the work in the 9,000 square-foot sanctuary, Mr. Bechtoldt said the cost could be upward of \$150,000.

"We can borrow the money from the church's endowment fund, but by church law the money has to be replaced," he said. Members of the church have been volunteering their time to do repairs to keep the facility running while keeping down the costs.

And how will the church raise the money still needed to complete the renovations? Price was unsure about the precise means and methods to be employed, but she continues to rely on the faith and faithfulness of her congregation.

That spirit is exemplified in Mr. Bechtoldt and his wife, Gail Bechtoldt, who annually has put their faith to work raising funds for the Bayshore Youth Workcamp, a program that every two years imports 500 youth volunteers into the community to help residents with home repairs. Together the Bechtoldts front an effort that raises the necessary \$20,000 to run the camp that has become an integral part of St. John's ministry.

That same spirit, they feel, will see St. John's through its present ordeal as God's people rally to give their time and resources to restore the church as a center for mission on the Raritan bayshore, and invite others to join them in the endeavor.



The chancel was stripped down to the bare wood as efforts to fix water damage and mold continued.

ing of the nursery school operated by the church. The church conducts a five-day a week program with seven classrooms for children ages 2½ to 5 years.

"We had to get the classrooms done first," Pastor Price said. Funds from the church and the nursery school footed the \$40,000 cost of carpeting for the hallways, she said.

grams and events.

With the Advent and Christmas season approaching, the church turned its attention to its traditional Nativity celebration. Early in December a Christmas marketplace offered seasonal wares, and by week's end barnyard animals had been trucked in to the

Mortgage Burning Celebration in Erma

ERMA — This past fall, the Tabernacle Church, located here on the Cape Atlantic District, studied the "treasure principle." They looked at Jesus' words - "where your treasure is, there your heart shall be also" found in Luke 12:34. In response to God's invitation to set their hearts in mission work, the congregation set a goal to take a one-time offering to try and pay down the \$58,000 Parsonage mortgage.

As Pastor Michael Smith explained, "the people of the church responded in a very positive manner and what might have taken many years to complete was done in one offering which we collected on December 18th, the fourth week of Advent". During the special service, a symbolic "burning of the mortgage" ceremony was carried out in celebration of this great accomplishment. As a result of this church-wide expression of extravagant generosity, the church is now debt free. "This act of faith has freed up funds to continue to do ministry to help those in need in our community and around the world" Mr. Smith added. For more information on Tabernacle Church, visit online at www.tumc-erma.org.



Getting to Know Jurisdictional Conference Delegates

The members of the Jurisdictional Conference Delegation were asked to introduce themselves and share a few thoughts on the upcoming conference.



Rosa Williams – Conference Lay Leader

As a lifelong Methodist, I have been an active participant in the church at the local, district and conference level. My faith journey is a commitment to ongoing learning and attention to devotion, reading the scriptures as well as attending workshops, meetings, conferences that keep me knowledgeable and prepared on the workings of the church; while seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit. Christ is the true guide to the work that must be done at the General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference this year.

This is a very challenging, a critical stage and exciting time for our denomination as we vision the ministry and mission of the church. We must focus on making disciples through vital congregations as we develop structure for this century. The General Conference is the only entity that speaks for the United Methodist Church. It is essential that all delegates have a good understanding of the church politics and polity and are well prepared by studying all issues to be discussed; willing to give time and energy to make a difference. I look forward to serving.



John DiGiamberardino

I am honored to be elected as a clergy delegate to Jurisdictional Conference.

As delegates one of our major responsibilities will be to identify new bishops. We need bishops who are not going to maintain the ministry but lead it. We need bishops who will help the people in the pew be empowered to lead themselves and do ministry for the kingdom. We need bishops who will be able to encourage those who are faithfully preaching and identify and deal with those who are ineffective. We need bishops who will work within the structure the denomination determines but not continue to do things that do

not work. We need bishops who will themselves seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

We will need spiritual discernment as these decisions will have a long term affect on who we are as a church.

I will be attending General Conference in Tampa and be available, if needed, to represent our conference.

An issue facing the General Conference is funding health benefits for retired clergy. Within our conference we have done exceedingly well in maintaining resources available for supplementing retired clergy health care into the future. This is not true across the denomination. Some resolutions will be presented that will ask for us to give up our savings for the future and share it with those who have not done the work we have done for the sake of the connection. While we recognize that we are a connectional church, it is not right for us to take resources needed for retired clergy in our conference to fund other conferences.

I commit myself to read all the material as I worship with my brothers and sisters in Christ from around the world and to vote as God's spirit directs.

VITAL CONGREGATIONS

Dream, premonition, nightmare?

By Douglas Ruffle

Coordinator of Congregational Development, GNJAC



I experienced a disturbing dream last night. I was driving a small bus filled with United Methodists. We were in a city — some city — and suddenly we were driving against traffic. We were going the wrong way on a one way street. As I turned to the side of the road, to avoid being hit and to try to turn the bus around, we chanced upon the decaying remains of what once had been a United Methodist Church. The inside of the building had rotting wooden walls without sheetrock. There was no roof. There was a rock outside of the building with a cross and flame, which was

partially chipped. On the rock was painted "This was the home church of . . . Jones." The first names of the 'Jones' were blotted out.

Was this a dream or a premonition or a nightmare? Perhaps it was all three. The dream gave me pause to reflect, something we are all invited to do in a deeper way than normal during the Lenten season. I have asked myself some pertinent questions: Am I going the wrong way down a one way street in my ministry? Am I burned out? Where there once was a strong edifice giving testimony to faith is there now nothing but rubble?

These are hard questions to ask. Where do we go for help when such thoughts enter our minds?

I found solace the morning after this dream in the scripture lesson chosen for me in the daily devotional I use: "For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7 NRSV).

There are many challenges our current age presents to modern-day United Methodists. We need to ask hard questions about the direction we are going as a people of faith. We need to find refreshment and renewal in our own spiritual lives lest we become burned out and the strong edifice of faith become reduced to rubble. The "Call to Action" that our denomination currently challenges us with affords an opportunity to take seriously these kind of questions and to gain clarity about the mission to which God is calling us as individuals and as communities of faith.

The "Call to Action" invites us to take seriously the ministry of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

The mission of The United Methodist Church is to "Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." (Matt 28:18-20 & Matt 22:36-40) This mission is achieved through vital congregations that equip and empower people to be Disciples of Jesus Christ in their homes and communities around the world. (The "Vital Congregations" invitation.

See <http://www.umvitalcongregations.org>

The words of Paul to Timothy should give us courage for the journey ahead. Indeed, God did not give us a spirit of cowardice. God gives us power and love and self-discipline to find our way through difficult times, even difficult periods of history. It is with this power and love and self-discipline that we can, as individuals and together as communities of faith, forge ahead in the mission and ministry to which God has called us.

The Lenten season, which begins with Ash Wednesday on February 22nd this year, offers a new opportunity to reflect on our journey with Christ and how we are responding to the call to make disciples of Jesus. The guidelines found in www.umvitalcongregations.org provide a good place to begin our reflection together.

May your Lenten Journey be renewing in every way.

Laity of the Northern Shore District are invited to attend

"THE POWER OF ONE"

1st Annual Northern Shore District Laity Retreat
As committed disciples, we will wrestle with the problems of our broken world, realize how we can make an impact and discern who will stand beside us.

Facilitator is the Reverend Virginia Stein Hubbard

March 30, 31, 2012, at Stella Maris Retreat Center, located on the ocean...
 981 Ocean Avenue, Long Branch, NJ 07740
 Fees: Days and 1 overnight with 4 meals: \$110/pp - Days only with meals: \$70/pp

Deadline to register: Friday, March 9

Send completed registration form with check made out to:
 Northern Shore District, 1001 Wickapecko Drive, Ocean, NJ 07712-4733
 ATT: Laity Retreat

*For questions/more information, please contact:
 District Lay Leader Marilyn D. Kinolski 732-367-3339*

THE POWER OF ONE

Retreat begins at 6 PM on Friday, March 30
 and ends 7 PM on Saturday, March 31

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 Application deadline March 31.

Contact: Jo Malessa (856) 786-0293
 or Jeff Dalrymple
 DalrympleJDA@aol.com

Volunteers in Mission Group Reports on Journey to Haiti

Greetings from Haiti: Bondye Beni Nou!*

By Sarah Choi

On November 5, 2011, our team of ten flew from Newark Airport to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. After spending the night at the Methodist Guest House with a rooster serenade, we left the following morning for the town of Mellier with our two interpreters and head cook. We arrived at the Methodist Church of Mellier in time for the 9 AM Sunday service, and though a language barrier existed between our English-speaking team and the Haitian Creole-speaking congregation, we shared a bond in praising the same Lord together. And throughout the week, we helped to construct the new church foundation, interacted with the children in a mini-VBS program, gave general medical check-ups to the students, visited an orphanage in Gressier, and sang Creole and French hymns with the kitchen crew and workers each night.



In an attempt to bring the life in Haiti back home with us, we took countless photographs. But they could not capture the heat or bright sun that we worked under while passing duct-taped buckets filled with stones and dirt. They did not bring the smells of dust-clouded, exhaust-filled, and trash-littered streets of the city or the toilets flushed with a bucket of water only after multiple turns of use. Our pictures could not keep the laughter of the children who reveled in play with soccer balls and jump ropes at the end of each VBS hour. The pictures could not bring back the tall nineteen-year-old's tone of voice as he asked if a doctor would come to see him soon. They did not hold the warmth of the children who ran their fingers through my hair and touched my face and shyly hugged me (or not-so-shyly took my hand). And the pictures could not hold the joy in the workers who sang with us each night under the single light bulb or flashlight in the church building. And yet, it is what cannot be officially documented or recorded that stays with us the most. The pictures we took and the words we attempt to use to explain the trip are mere placeholders for the meaning and deepest impressions embedded into our lives then.

While in Haiti, we saw, heard, and experienced many things; had we stayed longer, we certainly would have seen, heard, and experienced more. However, now, we are back home with lives filled with electricity, running water, plentiful

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Stewardship Stories

By Rich Hendrickson

Coordinator of Stewardship Education and Development, GNJAC



Don't be shy...

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

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



food, clothing, and material goods. What can we do if we are not directly participating in a mission trip or donating to an organization like UMCOR? (Although, if anyone is interested in going to Haiti, contact Kathy Ahmad at kahmad@comcast.net or call her at 732-865-3730.)

Here is a small list of practical actions one can take anywhere, though it is up to the individual to specify one's actions and follow through:

- Pray for the people of Haiti and for those who seek to help them
- Be a better steward of your time and resources (use it in ways that can benefit and edify others and yourself)
- Use less water (ex: turn off water when putting shampoo in hair or soap on skin)
- Waste less food (ex: start with smaller amounts and then go for seconds)
- Unplug from electronic distractions periodically and spend time with those you care for

These things may seem small and insignificant if done by a single person, but if we all do one good thing, then together we really can make the world a better place. :)

*English translation of Haitian Creole Phrase: God bless you all!

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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.

Pre-Lenten Gathering February 21, 2012

The 2012 Pre-Lenten Gathering will be held on Tuesday, February 21, 2012 at Calvary Korean in East Brunswick, New Jersey. Rev. John Edgar, Executive Director of the faith-based community development organization, Community Development for All People (CD4AP), will be the guest speaker at both services. Clergy are invited to attend the day gathering from 8:30am - 2:30pm. Northern Shore Clergy are asked to register with the District office. Cost is \$10.

Raritan Valley District Day of Learning Saturday, February 26th, 8 AM to 1 PM

Bridgewater United Methodist Church, 651 Country Club Road, Bridgewater, New Jersey, 08807 (908) 526-1414. A continental breakfast will be provided.

The 2012 Confirmation Retreat - Details have been announced!

Sponsored by: The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Christian Education Ministry and Ministries with Young People Retreat 1: February 3-4, 2012 Retreat 2: April 20-21, 2012

Come to One or Come to Both!!! Registration Deadline: January 10, 2012. Forms are available at gnjumc.org.

UMCOR Basic Early Response Training

UMCOR Basic Early Response Training March 3rd at Franklin Lakes UMC: The mission of an Early Response Team is to provide a caring presence in the aftermath of a disaster, under very specific guidelines that enable a team to be productive and caring while causing no further harm or being a burden to the affected community. Classes are taught by "authorized" UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) trainers, and team members are given ID badges as evidence of training.

Taize 2012 Young Adult Spiritual Pilgrimage

Taizé 2012 Young Adult Spiritual Pilgrimage July 27 - August 6, 2012 You Are Invited! 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 27 and return on August 6, 2012.

Basic and Advanced Lay Speakers Classes Being Offered

Both courses are being offered on the various districts of the Annual Conference beginning as soon as February 4. Registration forms have been mailed to each church and you may also get more information and registration online at gnjumc.org.

District Days of Learning Announced

Opportunities for the training of Church leaders are being offered in the District Days of Learning now scheduled in the Palisades District on February 4, the Skylands District on February 18, and the Raritan Valley District on February 25. Training in various areas of local church ministry will be available. For more information, go to www.gnjumc.org.

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Group Proposes Alternate Structure

Excerpted from A UMNS Report
By Heather Hahn*

Uneasy with the Call to Action's proposed restructuring, leaders of one special-interest group have submitted an alternative reorganization for The United Methodist Church's top lawmaking body to consider.

The Methodist Federation for Social Action, an unofficial progressive caucus, has submitted legislation for a proposal titled "A New UM Administrative Order." The group is the only one of the denomination's unofficial progressive and evangelical caucuses to submit legislation regarding restructuring to the 2012 General Conference, which will meet April 24-May 4 in Tampa, Fla. Such caucuses are special-interest groups that have no official ties to The United Methodist Church. They will be out in force at General Conference to advocate their points of view.

The Methodist Federation for Social Action says its mission is "to mobilize, lead and sustain a progressive United Methodist movement, energizing people to be agents of God's justice, peace and reconciliation."

The federation drafted its reorganization in response to legislation that would consolidate nine of the church's 13 general agencies into a new United Methodist Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry under a 15-member board. Under the legislation, the 15-member board would be accountable to a 45-member advisory board called the General Council for Strategy and Oversight.

The proposed consolidation is the result of the multiyear Call to Action process, initiated by the Council of Bishops and Connectional Table to "reorder the life of the church" in the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis and after decades of declining U.S. membership.

The Call to Action Interim Operations Team brought forward the proposals, and the Connectional Table, which coordinates the denomination's mission, ministry and resources, drafted the legislation. The Council of Bishops affirmed the changes at its fall meeting last year.

By merging agencies, Call to Action leaders say, their plan will help the denomination improve its alignment and meet "the adaptive challenge" of fostering more vital congregations.

However, federation leaders say the Call to Action plan's governance structure fails to represent the denomination's diversity both in and outside the United States and would damage programs that help the church grow.

"Centralizing decision-making tends to result in less effectiveness, less transparency, less accountability and less flexibility to meet the needs of our stakeholders," said Jill A. Warren, the federation's executive director. "And for us as a church, our stakeholders are our members, those to whom we do outreach and those who need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world."

OBITUARIES

DOROTHY LIGHT, wife of retired Elder Warren D. Light, died on Thursday, December 1, 2011 in Woodbury, NJ. A funeral service was held December 5, 2011 at the Kemble Memorial Church, Woodbury.

She first worked as a secretary in the Library Education Department at Glassboro State College, then as the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools for Moorestown School District and she retired as Secretary in the Superintendent's Office of the Downingtown School District. For over fifty years she was a partner in her husband's ministry throughout South Jersey, Pennsylvania and Illinois. She also taught Sunday School and provided both vocal and instrumental mu-

sic for worship for many years.

Messages of condolence may be sent to the Rev. Warren Light, 214 Tony Circle, Mantua, NJ 08051. Memorial gifts may be made to the Permanent Memorial Fund at Kemble Memorial United Methodist Church.

SAMUEL L. WELCH, Former President of the United Methodist Men for the Greater New Jersey Conference, died on Friday, January 6, 2012.

Messages of condolence may be sent to Mrs. Monica Welch, 14 Tiber Lane, Willingboro, NJ 08046-3709. Memorial gifts, in lieu of flowers, may be made to the Church of the Good Shepherd, 10 Buckingham Drive, Willingboro, NJ 08046.

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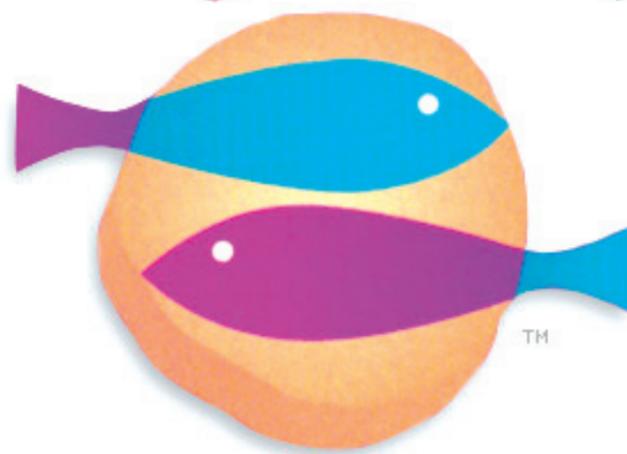
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