

## GNJAC Celebrates the Ministry of Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

Many wonderful moments were shared during the Celebration of Ministry of Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar on August 26 at Calvary Korean Church in East Brunswick, New Jersey. Hundreds of people gathered together in prayer and song to express their love and good wishes for Bishop Suda and Prema. Bishop Ernest Lyght, Bishop Alfred Johnson, and Bishop Felton May joined in the celebration, offering Holy Communion and blessings for the future. There were many special presentations throughout the evening including gifts from Taize, the United Methodist Women, and Drew University. Performances included a liturgical dance and flag routine and songs by Rev. Sung Hoon Ahn, Rev. Chris Heckert and Rev. Bobbie Rambach. During Bishop Devadhar's final sermon as the Episcopal leader of the New Jersey Area, he encouraged the Greater New Jersey Conference to continue making disciples for Jesus Christ and reminded everyone of what has been accomplished as a united body in the last eight years.

"Friends, today we celebrate all our successes: growth in terms of spirituality, participation in making disciples for Jesus for the transformation of the world, continued excellence in our passion for connectionalism, excellence in celebrating the gifts of multiculturalism and diversity as the children of God, a greater level of participation in spiritual and mission pilgrimages, a shift in how



**Bishop Suda and Prema Devadhar at the Celebration of Ministry on August 26, 2012**

we do our Holy Conferencing, the starting of new programs, an increase in our sacrificial giving for ministry and mission, a net gain of new members for the first time in forty-five years, and much more, because each and every one has joined the floor to lift high the cross and to dance focusing on the 'Lord

of the Dance,' our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...."

After the worship service, people gathered for dinner and more celebrations. No one will forget the fun but touching "Hey Suda" rendition of the famous Beatles tune, "Hey Jude," performed by past and present Cabinet members:

"Hey Su—da  
Though you move on  
As we're singing, we hope you hear it  
You always will be an integral part of our all our hearts,  
We're one in Spirit."

A special offering was collected as a gift to Bishop Devadhar to take with him so

he can continue the ministry of Taize in the New England Annual Conference. Between the offering and gifts sent directly to the Conference office, almost \$11,000 has been collected to support this ministry. Thank you!

There were many tears during and after the celebration – some of joy remembering the good times and some of sorrow wishing they could stay – but it was all to honor and say goodbye to dear friends, Bishop Suda and Prema. Many thanks to all of the people who contributed to the day's success, especially for the radical hospitality of the Calvary Korean United Methodist Church. Service and tribute videos, as well as photos are available on the Conference website, [www.gnjumc.org/news/detail/132](http://www.gnjumc.org/news/detail/132).



**District Superintendents from the past eight years singing "Hey Suda" in honor of Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar.**

## GNJAC Youth Get "Souled Out" at Ocean City Youth Weekend 2012

Over 400 Senior High youth and leaders gathered together at St. Peter's Church in Ocean City, NJ for the annual Ocean City Youth Weekend from September 7 – 9. This year's theme was "Souled Out." The youth participated in energizing and soul-filled worship led by the Mark Swayze Band. The weekend's guest speaker and preacher was Olu Brown, Lead Pastor of Impact Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Olu challenged the youth to continue to fight through the heartaches and challenges of being a teenager and instead let God work through those moments.

Saturday morning started bright and

early with acoustic worship led by Mark Swayze followed by an opportunity to meet with the District Superintendents. Each district ate breakfast together and shared important information about what's going on in their district. After breakfast, each group found their way to their assigned mission locations. Throughout the morning, the youth and leaders participated in mission experiences throughout Ocean City and the surrounding areas. Some groups performed random acts of kindness on the boardwalk, cleaned a warehouse for the Atlantic City Rescue Mission, made sandwiches for the needy, and prepared flood buckets. The youth were able to help



**Youth and leaders gather for closing Sunday worship at the Music Pier in Ocean City during OCYW 2012.**

many organizations and people in need in only four hours of work.

After the afternoon free time, and an excitingly close Amazing Race game led by the Cape Atlantic District Youth, everyone met back at St. Peter's for another night of "Souled Out" worship. Mark Swayze led the evening, which ended with a powerful altar call for the youth. One participant observed, "It was a beautiful moment to see so many youth feeling the presence of God."

The weekend concluded with a worship service at the Ocean City Music Pier on Sunday morning. Several youth participated in the worship service by reading, collecting the offering, serving Communion, and singing in the OCYW choir. The Sunday morning message was given by Bishop John Schol. In his message, he explained the difference between being a disciple and being a church member. He en-

couraged the youth to go beyond joining a church and instead go out and make disciples. Bishop Schol also explained the importance of remembering that Communion is received, not taken, because it is a gift from God.

Other highlights of the weekend include raising over \$1100 for the Youth Service Fund through the Change for Change Challenge and the YSF Auction. The Change for Change Challenge was a close call but the Capital District pulled out the victory with an impressive amount of pennies donated to the cause. OCYW continues to be a blessing to the Conference youth and leaders, as well as Ocean City and the organizations helped by the weekend's mission projects.

Many thanks to all of those who helped make the weekend a great success!



**Bishop John Schol joins youth to volunteer at the Atlantic City Rescue Mission during the Saturday mission experiences at OCYW 2012.**

## A Message from the Bishop



*A Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." —John 3:2-3*

The Gospel writers describe much of Jesus' ministry as conversations with people - an evening conversation with Nicodemus, a dinner conversation with Zacchaeus, a private conversation with a woman by the well. These are not just conversations, but crucial conversations. Some conversations are to catch up on the past or pass the time of day. Crucial conversations can start innocently enough but turn into high stake conversations that are revealing, meaningful, and life changing.

Crucial conversations are inhibited when:

- We already know the answers
- We are focused on the wrong topic
- We are not asking the right questions

Crucial conversations in the church are being inhibited today. This in part may be why the church is finding it more difficult to sustain its ministry; we are not having the crucial conversations that lead to revelation, meaning and transformation. A pastor reported to me that Sunday school leaders spent an hour discussing what type of candy to buy for the children at Easter. Another pastor shared with me that the church council spent two meetings discussing the type of church offering envelopes to purchase. Another church spent four meetings discussing what color to paint the sanctuary. Hardly the topics that lead to changed lives.

We are immersed in a time and culture in which when asked your religious preference, the fastest growing response is "none." In some studies, it is as high as 15 percent. Studies also indicate that this response has doubled in the last 10 years.

Questions about Easter candy, offering envelopes and paint color are not connecting with people. These conversations are more important to us who are already a part of the church. Today we need to look at new sets of questions to shape our priorities and ministry. For instance, in the past, membership was a key area of conversation. We asked questions like: how do we reach new members, how do we get more people in the pews, how do we assimilate new members. Membership was about joining. What we are experiencing in today's culture is that people are not joiners. The more appropriate or biblical conversation is about discipleship. These are the conversations Jesus had with Nicodemus, the woman at the well and Zacchaeus. How might the following questions influence our ministries?

- What is the difference between membership and discipleship?
- What is a disciple?
- What does a disciple do?
- How do we make new disciples? How do we mature disciples?
- How is our ministry making new disciples?
- What evidence is there that our disciples are maturing?
- What aspects of discipleship are most appealing to new generations of believers and how can we incorporate this in our ministry?
- What are we expecting of our disciples?

What might happen if the Sunday school teachers discussed these questions? What might occur if a church council spent four of its meetings discussing discipleship questions? What might it look like if the church began to ask non-religious people what they would like to see the church doing? Many non and nominally religious people are spiritual. They believe in God. They are just not experiencing God in the Church.

There are no right answers to these questions. Most ministry is contextual and there are no road maps for how to be the church today. Today is a time for us to experiment, take risks and try new things. We will not always get it right, but God will honor our desire to make disciples and discover our calling today if we are faithful to the crucial conversations.

The Conference is here to work with you and assist you as you seek to discover your congregation's ministry and priorities. Do not hesitate to contact your district superintendent to help shape conversations for your congregation.

While these are challenging times for the church, they are also exciting. Recently, while in Atlantic City, Freddy told me it was the church's belief in him and support in his journey that turned his life from substance abuse and unemployment to clean and sober for three years and a job. As we continue to be faithful and engage in the world with good questions we are going to experience revelation, meaning and changed lives.

Keep the faith!  
John Schol, Bishop

## UM Clergy Age Spikes in New Study

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The proportion of older clergy in the United Methodist Church has increased, while the number of middle aged elders has shrunk dramatically over the past decade according to a recently released study from Wesley Theological Seminary. The number of younger clergy increased modestly especially among local pastors, the study showed.

Wesley's Lewis Center for Church Leadership publishes an annual report on "Clergy Age Trends in the United Methodist Church." This year's report, prepared with the assistance of the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, showed that older clergy between the ages of 55 and 72 constitute the largest portion of clergy in history, with the median age of all elders remaining at an historic high of 55. The study also includes figures for other denominations.

### Highlights of the 2011 Report

- In 2012, the number of older (ages 55-72) United Methodist elders reached a record high 53 percent. In 2000 older elders represented only 30 percent and the percentage was even lower previously. Older elders reached 50 percent for the first time ever in 2010.

- Older elders make up 57 percent of elders in the Northeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church and 56 percent in the Western Jurisdiction. In 14 annual conferences, 60 percent or more of elders are older.

- The median age of United Methodist elders remains at 55, the highest in history, reached first in 2010. The median age was 50 in 2000 and 45 in 1973.

### An Ecumenical Trend

- The percentage of older clergy is rising significantly for many denominations. The Episcopal Church is an exception, as it already had a high percentage as early as 2008.

Clergy Ages 55–72 as Percentage	2008	2012
American Baptist	44%	50%
Christian Church (DOC)	44%	53%
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	44%	54%
Episcopal	59%	59%
Presbyterian Church (USA)	42%	53%
Reformed Church in America	NA	47%
United Methodist	46%	53%

### The Percentage of Middle Age Clergy Continues to Shrink

- The percentage of middle age (35-54) United Methodist elders continues to shrink from 65 percent in 2000 to 41 percent in 2012. The same pattern is seen across the other denominations.

### UMC Young Clergy Numbers Nearly Unchanged While Some Denominations Show Growth

- The percentages of young elders, deacons, and local pastors in the United Methodist Church remained about the same in 2012 as they were in 2011. However, only local pastors saw an increase in their numbers while there were declines in the number of elders and deacons.

- Diverging patterns emerge in comparing the percentage of young clergy across denominations. Significant gains were shown by the American Baptist, Episcopal, and ELCA denominations, while the Presbyterian Church (USA) mirrored the United Methodist pattern of very slight increases since 2008. The Reformed Church in America reported the highest percentage of under-35 clergy among these denominations with nine percent.

The full report is available for a free pdf download at: [http://www.churchleadership.com/research/um\\_clergy\\_age\\_trends\\_12.html?id=ca2012](http://www.churchleadership.com/research/um_clergy_age_trends_12.html?id=ca2012)

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership serves as a resource for clergy and lay leaders, congregations and denominational leaders, offering a holistic understanding of leadership that brings together theology and management, scholarship and practice, research and application.



Serving the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference

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

# EDITORIAL

## The Aging Clergy Conundrum

The article on page 2 of this issue of the Relay highlights the aging trend among clergy in the UMC. Certainly the statistics are cause for concern but some cultural context would seem to be in order. According to the United States Census, the population as a whole is trending in the same direction. Since 2000, the overall age of the population of the United States has increased, with many states now showing a median age of over 40 years. The largest increase, by far, is in the range of 45-64 years where there is a 31.5% increase. The second largest increase was in the 65 and over group at 15.1%. People in the U.S. are simply living longer than they used to and this is going to affect institutions such as the church. There has been talk about the graying of the Church for quite a while so it should come as no surprise that the clergy are skewing older as well as the membership.

That said, there are areas of concern that the Church needs to address so that the gap between the aging of the population and the aging of the clergy doesn't get any wider. A major source of concern is the apparent lessening of interest in what established main line churches have to offer young people. With a large number of people in the age range of 18-35 missing from many of our congregations, it is little wonder that we would be having trouble recruiting clergy in that same age bracket. The ability to recruit younger clergy will be directly affected by our ability to draw younger members to faith in Christ and into our congregations.

Another factor is that younger generations are starting to claim their God given right to create their own ways and traditions and mainline denominations are often slow to be open to new methods of doing church (more than 3/4 of songs in hymn books, including newer versions are at least 20 years old, leaving many young people without voice). The UMC is giving this a genuine effort; the Rethink Church movement is one of the key programs attempting to reach out to young people. However, local churches, and sometimes annual conferences are slow to change. Look, for example, at the slowness of churches to adopt and adapt social media as a way of doing outreach.

Beyond all this, there are some procedural and economic issues that are factors in making the recruitment of younger clergy and especially young, seminary educated, fully ordained clergy more difficult. Studies show that denominations with a connectional structure generally have a higher level of salary for their clergy, however that is somewhat mitigated by their more rigorous demands with respect to seminary or similar education. Many young clergy graduate from seminary with large amounts of debt. While there are opportunities for receiving financial assistance from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry as well as resources within the annual conference, the amounts awarded in scholarships relieves only a fraction of the total cost of education. The loans, while helpful, need to be repaid and add to the post seminary burden of debt. Add to that the increase in the financial constraints most churches are experiencing and the resultant lower salaries, especially in small membership churches. Those young people looking to respond to the call of God find this reality of large debt and small income discouraging.

Another issue that affects the UMC's ability to attract young clergy is the encumbrance and complexity of the ordination process. As with salaries there is a marked difference between connectional and non-connectional denominations when it comes to requirements for ordination or its accepted equivalent. Ordination within denominations of a connectional nature requires considerably more of its candidates for ministry than do non-connectional churches. To some, the process appears to be far too long and difficult, so they opt for another church to serve.

In recent years, there have been changes adopted by the General Conference that have blurred the lines, not only between clergy and laity, but between the various categories of those considered to be clergy. The differences that remain between ordained elders and the rest of the clergy are fewer and fewer. To those who are just beginning ministry there appears to be little incentive for going through the expense of seminary and the daunting process of ordination in order to serve low paying churches.

Additionally, the actions of the 2012 General Conference that weakened the pension program of the clergy, the discontinuance of the Committee on Investigation, and the still to be decided issue about guaranteed appointments has made the UMC a less attractive option for those who are making life decisions. If the Church is to begin reversing the aging trend of the clergy a way must be found to address these concerns.

Another issue that the Church has been slow to respond to is the need to reach out to the new faces in the United States- ethnic groups. An interesting bit of data from the census reveals that Hispanics are the fastest growing minority group in the country, accounting for almost 20% of this nation, yet they comprise less than 1% of the UMC. The large majority of Hispanics are younger than the average age of the general population. One thing leads to another; we cannot worry about getting young people into our seminaries and pulpits if we aren't getting them into our sanctuaries.

Of course, responding to the call of God to pastoral ministry necessarily involves accepting the fact that material wealth is not in the offing. Additionally, the truth is that there are other, harder to overcome obstacles in the way of recruiting young clergy; especially those who are out of the mainstream. Yes, there are standards to maintain and hoops to jump through, however there are limits to what prospective young clergy are going to be willing to accept without looking elsewhere.

**The November Issue Deadline  
is October 9, 2012**

## Practicing 'shalom' for 20 years

A UMNS Report By Linda Bloom



**Mzuzu Shalom Zone cares for more than 100 orphaned and vulnerable children in northern Malawi, hosted by the Mzuzu United Methodist Church. Photos courtesy of Communities of Shalom.**

The days of rioting that followed the April 29, 1992, verdict in a trial against four Los Angeles police officers accused of beating a man named Rodney King was not the kind of disaster to which the Rev. Joe Hyun-Seung Yang normally responded.

But Yang, a United Methodist pastor and experienced American Red Cross volunteer, knew he had to do something. So, he organized a relief center for community residents in the parking lot of Oriental Mission Church, in Koreatown. What eventually became known as the Shalom Community Center still operates today.

His denomination realized it had to respond as well. The Rev. Joseph Sprague and a small group of church leaders at the 1992 United Methodist General Conference, meeting in Louisville, Ky., created the Shalom Initiative, adopted as a denomination-wide program of "shalom zones" designed to address the justice issues and root causes of the anger and destruction triggered by the verdict.

The concept has spread beyond the United States to countries like Malawi, where the shalom zone has a successful poultry project and a goal to assist households headed by children.

Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Haiti and Northern Ireland. A grant from the United Methodist Committee on Relief and the Board of Global Ministries is supporting the international participation.

In 1992, the initial response in Los Angeles focused on immediate needs: housing, food, clothing, even water. Then, over time, church leaders began to think strategically about what it meant to create a shalom zone in a specific community, focusing on needs and assets.

On a denominational level, the secondary goal was to spread this effort across the connection, said Bishop John Schol, who was involved from the start as a staff executive with the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries and now serves as chair of the National Shalom Committee.

Healing was needed for neighborhoods, like those in Los Angeles, broken by poverty and neglect. "What we knew was that what happened in Los Angeles was a symptom of what really was happening in communities across the United States," he explained.

Because Communities of Shalom is not a prescribed program but a strategy for doing ministry that "builds on



**Duncan and Pulaski Heights United Methodist churches co-sponsor a shalom ministry in Little Rock, Ark., including this rehabilitation community development project in an economically depressed area of the city.**

What grew into Communities of Shalom now provides an "assets-based approach to community services," said the Rev. Michael Christensen, director. "We don't choose the issues, the needs or the context," he explained. "What is the same for all is this particular approach to ministry."

It remains an initiative of The United Methodist Church, but as a strategy, not an institutionalized church program. "From the very beginning, it's always been intended as a neighborhood-focused initiative," he explained. "We mobilized congregations, but the focus is on the community."

### October summit in L.A.

Communities of Shalom will return to its roots in Los Angeles for the Oct. 3-6 Shalom Summit 2012, a time of sharing, networking and training.

The summit marking the 20th anniversary is both local — highlighting ongoing work in the Los Angeles area — and global, with international shalom trainers participating from Uganda,

the community and what it's facing," the concept has been adapted by communities in large and small cities and rural and suburban areas, both inside and outside the United States, Schol said.

All follow the core values of spiritual growth, multicultural harmony, economic prosperity and health, healing and wholeness.

A shalom zone, Christensen pointed out, is defined as a manageable geographic area — not the world or even a city, but small areas of demonstration "where we can embody shalom, even if it's one square block."

They start with a faith presence within the zone. A local United Methodist congregation might serve as host, inviting others to the table, but the question of how to raise the quality of life for all who live in the community is a multifaceted question, he noted.

### Training and expansion

Training, a key component of the

*Continued on page 8*



# Global Relay

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

## Congo bishop to Congress: Help end killing

WASHINGTON (UMNS) — A United Methodist bishop from the Democratic Republic of Congo has made a heartfelt plea to the U.S. Congress to end the rapes and killings inflicted on his fellow Congolese. Bishop Ntambo Nkulu Ntanda of the denomination's North Katanga Area was one of three witnesses who spoke during a Sept. 19 hearing of the Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights Subcommittee of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee.

## Ministry boosts small-church vitality

HAYESVILLE, N. C. (UMNS) — United Methodists often say that rural congregations form the backbone of their denomination. For more than 50 years, the Hinton Rural Life Center in Hayesville, N.C., has been strengthening that backbone. With the denominationwide emphasis on vital congregations, the Hinton Center now plays a key role in cultivating vital, small, country churches across the United States.

## Green UM colleges make 'cool schools' list

POULTNEY, Vt. (UMNS) — Composting at Green Mountain College goes full cycle when food waste from dorms and the dining hall fertilizes vegetables grown on the campus farm and then prepared for student meals. Green Mountain College is one of seven United Methodist-related institutions that made the sixth annual "Cool Schools" list of the United States' greenest universities.

## Woman shackled giving birth wins case

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — The metropolitan government of Nashville and Davidson County was ordered to pay \$1.1 million for three years of attorney fees and other expenses for Juana Villegas, who in 2008 was shackled to a hospital bed hours before giving birth. The Tennessean reports that U.S. District Judge William Haynes Jr. also certified Villegas' application for a special visa. The city may appeal the award. The Tennessee Annual (regional) Conference's Justice for our Neighbors has stood by Villegas since her arrest.

## New housing for Haiti earthquake survivors

MELLIER, Haiti (UMNS) — Enolia Pierre jingled freshly cut house keys in her hand, popping them into the air every now and again, and catching them in her open palm. As she did so, a smile of satisfaction spread across her face: she — and 12 other family members — finally had a place to call home after the 2010 earthquake, reports Linda Unger of the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

## Isaac volunteer disaster teams needed

BATON ROUGE, La. (UMNS) — The Louisiana Annual (regional) Conference needs mission teams ready to go to work in areas hard-hit by Hurricane Isaac, especially St. John the Baptist and Livingston parishes. "For response team members, the personal contact with survivors who have lost homes, jobs and loved ones provides us with the opportunity to share God's love in tangible ways," said the Rev. Don Cottrill, provost and director of connectional ministries for the conference.

## Mission team learns from Zimbabwe hosts

CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP, Pa. (UMNS) — When members of Western Pennsylvania's Zimbabwe Immersion Team met at the Nyadire United Methodist Mission after living with families in different areas for nearly five weeks, none of the stories they shared seemed the same. They soon realized, however, there were things common to all their experiences — love, kindness and relationships — and learning to worship God at a new level.

## Women's commission conducts top job search

CHICAGO (UMNS) — The *United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women* is searching for a new top executive. The application deadline is Sept. 30. M. Garlinda Burton, the current executive, is being honored at the commission's meeting this week in Nashville, Tenn. She is retiring from the job at the end of the year.

## Resources for Hispanic Heritage Month

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — The United States marks Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 to celebrate the contributions of Americans who trace their roots to Spain, to Mexico and to the Spanish-speaking countries of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. The United Methodist Board of Discipleship offers preaching and worship resources for congregations interested in joining in the celebration.

## Don't Miss This Exciting Educational Experience!

### The Protestant Heritage Tour April 29-May 8, 2013

We begin our tour in Wesley's England and end in Calvin's Switzerland. Stops along the way include: Bristol & Bath, London, Brussels, Worms & Heidelberg, Lucerne, Geneva and more!

We'll stay in four-star accommodations, travel in a private motor coach, and be accompanied by a professional tour director, + local tour guides.

Your hosts for the trip are the Rev. Drs. Gina and Rich Hendrickson. If you're interested or need more information come to St. Andrews UMC: Cherry Hill on Oct. 11, 2012 at 7:00 PM or contact Gina or Rich at 856-429-1508 or rich.h@comcast.net.

## Methodist University Concert at Wall

SPRING LAKE HEIGHTS — The One Voice International Gospel Choir of Methodist University, Fayetteville, N.C. will present a concert of sacred music at the Wall Church here, October 6 at 6:00 p.m. The public is invited.

Chartered in 1956 under the auspices of the North Carolina Conference, Methodist University serves a diverse student body of 2,400, offering degrees in over 80 fields of study including recently added courses in church leadership and radio communications. The University offers four master's degree programs.

The Wall Church is located in Spring Lake Heights. Additional information is available from the church office at (732) 449-8287.



THE METHODIST UNIVERSITY CHOIR, from Fayetteville, N.C. will be in concert at the Wall Church, October 6.

## Letters to the Editor

To the Editor, United Methodist Relay:

One Sunday in the early nineteen-eighties I attended worship at Hyde Park Community UMC, a 3,500 member congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio. I'd chosen to visit HPCUMC because I'd heard they had a young adult ministry. I was thirty years old and was working as an account executive at an ad agency. I hoped I wouldn't be noticed or descended upon by well-meaning members. I'd been raised in a theologically conservative denomination, and after three years of rigorous middle-school catechism,

I'd grown afraid of God. I felt vulnerable re-entering a church.

I sat beside an elderly, white-haired man who welcomed me with a smile and a nod of his head. Over the course of a year, I worked up the courage to attend coffee hour after worship, a small group Bible study, a new member class and — eventually — a Walk to Emmaus.

If the pastor had stated during our new member class that our mission was to "make disciples for Jesus Christ" I would have re-considered becoming a member. I wasn't interested in doing something that I didn't, in fact *couldn't* understand at the time.

I'm now a United Methodist pastor with 25 years of service. I've come to appreciate that God welcomes and meets us where we are, and that each of us grows in grace at a pace known only to God.

To those who know Jesus and Christian scripture, the United Methodist mission statement "to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" may sound inspiring, a call to action. To someone outside the church, however, those very same words may not only seem incomprehensible but also intimidating. I worry that we may be scaring off people who — like me thirty years ago — have a quiet hunger for God.

Sincerely,

Rev. Marcia Krause Bilyk

## Kansas City Service Director To Address Northern Shore UMW

NORTHERN SHORE — The annual dinner of Northern Shore United Methodist Women will be held October 6 at St. Andrew's Church, Toms River. Speaker for the event will be Nancy Kincaid, director of volunteers for Della Lamb Community Services in Kansas City, Mo. The annual event will begin with registration and appetizers at 5 p.m., followed by dinner at 6 and concluding with the program.

Della Lamb Community Services, a Methodist mission founded in 1897, continues to provide child care for poor, working mothers, early education for low-income families, and a broad range of services.

An ingathering is food staples for Monmouth/Ocean Food Bank will be received. Checks covering the \$16 cost of the dinner are being received by Ellen Kale, district treasurer.

## Young Adults Are Invited to the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual GNJMYP Oktoberfest

Young adults (ages 18-30) from around the GNJAC will gather at Glassboro UMC, 60 State St., Glassboro, NJ 08028, on Friday, October 5<sup>th</sup> from 6-10pm. Jim Walker, founding Pastor of Hot Metal Bridge Church in Pittsburgh will be talking about "Loving the people in your community."

The event is FREE and will include dinner, great praise music, and a wonderful time of sharing with each other. For more information, go to [www.gnjmyp.org](http://www.gnjmyp.org) or email Larry Oksten at [pastorbluejeans@me.com](mailto:pastorbluejeans@me.com).

## Life-saving stories shared 'Imagine No Malaria Days on the Hill'

by Rob Naylor on October 11, 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C. (UMNS) — More than 50 Imagine No Malaria advocates were in the U.S. capital last week to ask members of Congress to help them save lives. The event, "Imagine No Malaria Days on the Hill," was hosted by the United Methodist General Board of Church & Society (GBCS), as part of the denomination's Imagine No Malaria advocacy outreach.

With federal budget cuts looming,

rates, reducing the death toll from an estimated 1 million lives per year to 800,000 lives. In spite of that progress, malaria remains a leading killer of children and pregnant women throughout Africa.

Also speaking at the training were Dr. Christoph Benn, director of external relations with The Global Fund, and retired U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Timothy Ziemer, director of the President's Malaria Initiative.



**Pamela Carter and Danielle Snider of the Western North Carolina Conference meet with Rep. Heath Shuler, D-N.C., during "Imagine No Malaria Days on the Hill."** (UMNS photos by Skyler Nimmons)

U.S. funding for malaria programs in Africa is at stake, said the advocates. They urged government leaders to protect existing levels of funding to fight a disease that affects millions of people each year.

As many as 3.8 million people in Africa would no longer have access to malaria treatment.

John Hill, GBCS director of Environmental and Economic Justice, explained the ramifications of malaria funding cuts in simple terms. "The current 9% budget cut under consideration in the House of Representatives means as many as 3.8 million people in Africa would no longer have access to malaria treatment," he said.

To gain support for protecting current levels of malaria funding, advocates came from key legislative districts throughout the country.

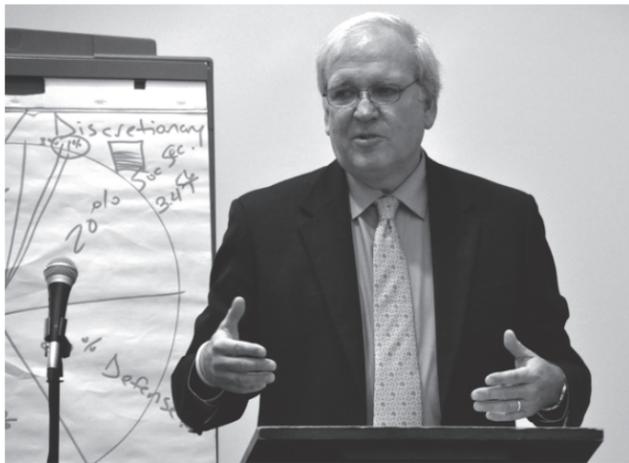
### Days on the Hill

Fifty-nine people, representing nine United Methodist annual conferences, were involved in the "Days on the Hill." Participants included five students from United Methodist-related Allegheny College and two high school students from northern Virginia. Six native Africans were present; five now live in the United States.

During the Oct. 4-6 event, participants were updated on Imagine No Malaria programs in Africa and briefed on the budget issue before conducting personal visits with members of Congress.

Mike McCurry, former White House press secretary and current Imagine No Malaria executive committee member, coached the advocates on how to deliver the message to elected officials. He emphasized that officials must be reminded that U.S. funds to fight malaria is money well-spent because work is making progress against this disease.

Just last year, the World Health Organization updated malaria mortality



**Mike McCurry, a former White House press secretary, provides training on how to make an effective visit with legislators.**

Imagine No Malaria advocates brought those stories to elected officials during Oct. 5 visits to the offices of U.S. senators and representatives.

"Hearing the personal stories is striking. It reminds us that this fight isn't about statistics or politics," said Donna Hough, an advocate from Marleton, N.J. "It's about people. And that makes you want to fight for funding."

### 'Keep working at it'

The advocacy teams visited the offices of 10 House members and 10 Senate members. They were able to meet with Rep. Tim Griffin, R-Ark., Rep.



**During "Imagine No Malaria Days on the Hill" advocacy event, the Rev. Francis Mutach Kapend (right) of the Democratic Republic of Congo provides an update on progress against malaria in his home country.**

Jeff Fortenberry, R-Neb., Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., Rep. Tom Marino, R-Pa., Rep. Mike Kelly, R-Pa., Rep. Heath Shuler, D-N.C., Sen. John Boozman, R-Ark., and Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J.

Lautenberg encouraged his constituents to help spread the word about the importance of international aid to assist in fighting diseases like malaria. "People don't realize that malaria isn't just a thing of the past," he said. "Please keep working at it."

Danielle Snider, from Canton, N.C., said she was pleased to visit Shuler as an advocate for global health. "I am a United Methodist through and through," she said. "My husband's a pastor; my father's a pastor. There are a lot of

people in my family who are pastors. I've been in the church all my life, but I have never been as proud to be a United Methodist as I am today."

Imagine No Malaria Days on the Hill was supported by United Methodist Communications, the United Methodist Committee on Relief and Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe.

**Editor's note:** Rob Naylor is the communications coordinator for Imagine No Malaria. The Rev. Clayton Childers, director of Annual Conference Relations at the General Board of Church & Society, contributed to this report.

To take action in support of malaria funding, visit Imagine No Malaria.

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*Helen Keller*

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## Paterson Mural Honors and Reminds

The corner of North First and Arch streets presents a scene that evokes James Baldwin's "Go Tell It on the Mountain."

"Behind them was the darkness, nothing but the darkness," Baldwin wrote, "in and all around them destruction, and before them nothing but the fire — a bastard people, far from God, singing and crying in the wilderness!"

Atop the high steps of St. Philips Ministry, Rev. Stafford Miller ministers to the block through the sounds of Gospel music emanating from the outdoor church speakers. The signs of poverty are evident at every turn, from the man emaciated from feeding his addiction to the child whose slow smile and hard eyes are just as much a legacy as his beautiful brown skin. Street violence is part of the rhythm of life in this community.

Along the wall of an abandoned building looms an enormous 100 foot mural, a testament to another tragic death in the neighborhood, this one an 18-year-old gunned down a little more than a year ago.

"It is part of the community, like the people," Mr. Miller said of the mural; a project he spearheaded. "It's part of our journey, part of our hope, and part of our past, present and future. Dreams are here. Sorrow is here. Faith is here."

The mural consists of panels depicting a burial scene contrasted with a classroom scene and interspersed with motivational quotes. It stands in the place where a young boy was gunned down a year ago. A statue of the Virgin Mary and a small wall of painted cinder block mark the spot where Nyjavar "Nagee" Jackson breathed his last breath.



Mr. Miller obtained the funding for the mural through a Peace with Justice Grant from the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. "The outcome is something that I'm proud of," he said. "It's something in this community that gives hope." He points to the absence of graffiti. A woman comes by to remove the weeds. "You can see that people respect it," Mr. Miller said.

In June of this year, headlines in the Huffington Post read: "Chicago Homicides Outnumber U.S. Troop Killings in Afghanistan."

Like many urban areas throughout the country, Paterson has its own killing fields. Last year, more than 100 people were wounded in street shootings. The city has averaged roughly 20 homicides a year during the past decade.

Rev. Miller, the co-founder of "Operation Cease Fire" of Paterson offers a spiritual view of the city's violence. "In suffering and death God shows his

presence of mercy, compassion and love. God motivates us to respond to the suffering of others with compassion, caring and action," he said.

The mural, in addition to many other outreach programs, is part of what Rev. Miller calls, "intentional, lasting and transformative action." He continues, "There are 350 churches in Paterson. They should be challenged to come awake and recognize the mandates that we have - not just of piety but of social holiness."

## Local Pastors Get Leadership Tips from Lovett Weems



Lovett Weems, center, with Donna Alberts, past NFAMLP president (left), and Mike Mahaffey, 2012 NFAMLP president.

By Susan Green

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — For pastors left stinging from comparisons to previous church leaders or feeling frustration at how slowly things change at their assigned church, Dr. Lovett Weems has some words of wisdom: "Leadership is not about the leader," he told a group gathered Wednesday for a seminar sponsored by the National Fellowship of Associate Members and Local Pastors (NFAMLP). "Leadership is helping God's people take the next faithful step."

Weems, director of the Wesley Theological Seminary's Lewis Center for Church Leadership and a noted author, led two days of seminars on "Guiding Your Ministry to Be More Fruitful" at the NFAMLP's annual meeting.

About 25 pastors and associate members from Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Arizona, Texas, West Virginia, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Louisiana, as well as Florida, attended his first workshop Wednesday.

The Rev. Rena Yocom, the General Board of Education and Ministry's assistant general secretary for Formation and Theological Education said GBHEM's Division of Ordained Ministry sets the guidelines for licensing schools as well as the requirements for Course of Study and Advanced Course of Study.

"The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry has a close relationship with local pastors and associate members from the time they enter licensing school and continuing through the Course of Study program. We also work with the Fellowships in the annual conferences," Yocom said.

Weems told the group that the "next faithful step" for one congregation might be different from the next step for another.

He told the group about a Mississippi church he led in 1976, when he invited a mixed-race couple to attend worship with their 5-year-old son. He said he was already preaching one Sunday when he saw the family enter the packed church at the back and start looking for seats.

Weems said he hadn't been sure of the welcome his church members would offer the couple. But at the end of the service, they greeted the newcomers warmly.

"You find your fulfillment not in fruitfulness that's biggest or greatest, but in what's appropriate for where you are," he said.

Weems also discussed declines in church attendance across the U.S. since the 1990s. He said getting people back to church will require a renewed focus on fruitful ministry rather than settling for faithful ministry. That means evaluating every effort for fruitful results.

"Success is not a biblical concept, but fruitfulness is," Weems said. "We have separated ourselves ... from the Wesleyan tradition of fruitfulness."

The NFAMLP was formed after the 1968 merger of The Methodist Church and Evangelical United Brethren Church that created The United Methodist Church. Its purpose is to serve a growing number of licensed pastors who lead congregations but are not ordained ministers, said the organization's president, Mike Mahaffey.

He said about 25 percent of the UMC's 40,000 preachers are local pastors or associate members. Many choose to pursue church leadership after having successful first careers, Mahaffey said.

Joanne Lockard-Hawkins, who serves three churches near Columbia, S.C., said she had heard Weems speak before, but she always enjoys the "practical applications" of his coaching.

"It's not lofty theology," she said. "It is being pastors. That's what I think we are called to be."

She said she also likes to attend the annual meeting to enjoy the camaraderie. "These are my friends," she said. "I'm on Facebook with them. It's a way to stay connected."

Weems said during a break that the seminar is his first for the National Fellowship.

"I just have tremendous admiration for what they do," he said, predicting that annual conferences will rely more and more on associate members and local pastors because of shrinking membership rolls and the poor economic climate.

"More and more congregations are finding it difficult to find the funding for a full-time pastor," he said.

"A lot of local pastors are local pastors not because they couldn't do something else but because this is their calling."

Green is editor of the Florida Conference Connection, the Web site of the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church.

## Hamilton Memorial Church Plants Seeds of Hope

One fateful morning earlier this year, Rev. Jevon Caldwell-Gross and other members of the Hamilton Memorial Church in Atlantic City, along with people from the community, looked with new eyes on an unkempt lot adjacent to the church. What initially appeared to be an eyesore would soon become fertile ground for vital ministry. Led by the Holy Spirit, the church decided to build a community garden and grow fresh fruits and vegetables on the corner of one of the busiest intersections in the city.

"As some may attest, big ideas are often easy to conceive but it's the follow-through that can be frustrating, but with every unanswered question, God sent willing partners to contribute", said Mr. Caldwell-Gross. Local area businesses- Kelly's Landscaping, Klein Construction, Constance "Cookie" Til, Youth Build and Tony Bolognies Restaurant, worked selflessly in an effort to see the vision to completion. In addition, many volunteers from the church and community offered their invaluable time and experience.



After a few weeks of strategic planning and intense labor, the church started transforming what was nothing into something. "Individuals who walked past our church on their way to work or coming home from school now stopped to inquire about the transformation they were witnessing. It was as though were reintroduc-

ing ourselves to the community" Mr. Caldwell-Gross added.

A major portion of the vision set for this project was not just the completion of a garden, but to create a space for different members of the community to work together towards a common goal. This was especially important as the church endeavored to restore an environment of peace to the same corner that a dead body was found only two years prior. The pastor added, "It was a way of fostering community partnerships, increasing community involvement, and creating community transformation." As the summer quickly comes to an end, many of those small seeds planted are bearing a great harvest. As tomatoes, okra, egg plant, string beans, basil, cilantro, squash, parsley and peppers grow in the shadow of their brand new gazebo- God has shown the people of Atlantic City what is possible when the Church plants mustard seeds with faith. Mr. Caldwell-Gross concluded, "For our church and our community it is more than just fruits and vegetables, but seeds of hope. Hope that change is possible. Hope in each other. Hope in ourselves. Hope that God can transform something that looks useless into something that's bearing good fruit" To learn more about Hamilton Memorial visit the church's website at [www.hamiltonmemorialumc.org](http://www.hamiltonmemorialumc.org)



## The Light of Bethlehem Arrives in New Jersey

For more than a thousand years, lamps have burned continuously in the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Israel, said to be the birthplace of Jesus Christ. Thanks to the effort of Minister Susan Bai, an intern for St. Philip's Ministry, that same flame, known as the "Peace Light" from Bethlehem, has arrived at Paterson, New Jersey for the first time.

Each year, a child from Upper Austria visits the grotto and lights a lantern from one of the lamps. The flame is transferred to two blast-proof miners' lamps and flown back to Austria, where it's distributed to representatives throughout Europe to bring back to their communities before being flown to New York City for distribution throughout North America.

The flame of the "Peace Light", reaches 23 European countries, as well as Canada and the U.S."

In addition to the respect naturally commanded by fire, the thousand-year-old flame of the Peace Light inspires its own unique reverence.

"For me personally, having the "Peace Light" burning in our community is a visual reminder of God's presence in our world a presence that naturally brings peace. However, as wonderful as it is to 'possess' this flame, the act of sharing it with others and seeing the strength and hope for community peace that this light symbolizes has made the Peace Light even more meaningful to me" says Rev. Stafford Miller, Pastor of St. Philip's Ministry, "because violence, despair, loss of dreams and vision is not the last word. The Gospel of John records Jesus telling a crowd, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

Each person who accepts the flame recites the Peace Light challenge: "We gladly receive this light as a sign of our willingness to be channels of peace, by our words and actions." The challenge is lived out symbolically as well as concretely as the light is carried into the community during Prayer and Peace marches.



## Multi Cultural Celebration Is For Everyone

The Multi Ethnic Coordinating Committee of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference is inviting everyone to the annual multi cultural celebration on November 17, 2012 Saturday (from 4PM to 7PM) at the St. John's United Methodist Church, 2000 Florence Avenue, Hazlet, New Jersey. The purpose of this annual celebration is to celebrate our diverse cultural heritage and gather together for worship, fellowship and cultural festivity. Why an annual multi cultural celebration?

For the past three years, the yearly multi cultural celebration has been well attended by all of you representing many nations, many languages and an array of talents from local groups and congregations. Last year was a unique celebration as everyone gathered for worship participated in with diverse representations from unique cultures, language, dance and music.

This year's celebration will be different in a sense that will bring more

meaning for everyone as it will bring us together to once again experience diversity. The planning team is trying to include all, not just in sharing talents, gifts and graces, but sharing in God's table together. We would like to celebrate communion together in a unique and diverse way, coming together as children of God. The planning team is looking for verse readers from different languages and a sign language interpreter. We also encourage bringing a symbol or unique representation from your culture, nation or festivity to adorn your table. Please be prepared to say something about this symbol during the fellowship hour. The festivity will not be complete without native food from all continents, nations and cultures. Anyone can bring a tray dish of any of these kinds: meat, chicken or fish, vegetable, or side dish (rice or pasta) that can feed at least 50 people. Dessert and drinks will be provided.

To add color to the festivity, we also

encourage everyone to wear their native dress and/or national outfit.

It is our goal to have inclusive participation from all local churches in the conference. We hope and pray that our gathering together will enhance our awareness of the rich diversity we have at our conference, not only of the many

countries & nations we represent, but also of the many gifts and graces we have as United Methodists, here at the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference.

- Judy Colorado, Team Leader, *The Multi Ethnic Coordinating Committee*

### Association of Retired Ministers and Spouses (ARMS)

#### Fall Meetings/Lunches

October 9, 2012 ~ 10:00 a.m.

Green Village UMC, Green Village, NJ

October 23, 2012 ~ 11:00 a.m.

St. Peters UMC, Ocean City, NJ

Following a Memorial Service for clergy and spouses that have died this past year, members of our General Conference delegation will share their experiences, insights, and observations.

Lunch is \$10.

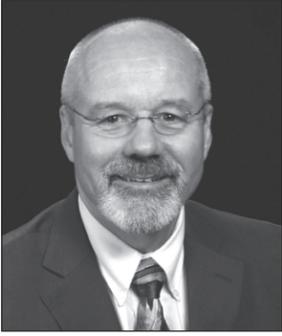
Call Garey Hope (609) 291-5003 to make a reservation.

## VITAL CONGREGATIONS

### My Experience with Connection

By Douglas Ruffle

Coordinator of Congregational Development, GNJAC



As United Methodists we may not appreciate the fullness of connectionalism until we are blessed by it. As a young pastor I served in a small town in the midst of a vast rural area in the *pampas* of Argentina. Torrential rains poured for ten straight days. The normal channels to redirect water became clogged. Rivers and channels overflowed. Members of the church joined the community to place sandbags in strategic locations so that the coming floods would not overrun the town. For three days our little town was an island—all roads and trains were unable to access it. Finally, the sandbags held, the waters subsided and the flooding dissipated.

The rains lasted ten days, the devastation lasted months. Farm workers could not work the fields for they were underwater. Day laborers were without work. People were going hungry. Three days later a caravan of cars rolled into our town and unloaded clothing, mattresses, and non perishable food items. They had come from six different Methodist churches from the city of Buenos Aires, which was 125 miles away.

In our little town, we formed an ecumenical team to help distribute the food and clothing to those affected by the floods. The only source of emergency help came from other Methodists. Methodist connectionalism allowed for rapid response. More than the actual food and clothing, we experienced the solidarity and love of these fellow believers as we began to deal with the devastation of the flooding. The Methodist church in this town became the hub of help and we had plenty to give because of the strength of connectionalism.

Our 'connection' is a gift. It became ever so clear to me the preciousness of that gift the year of the flooding. I give thanks to God for my Methodist friends for their timely response and solidarity.

Part of that connectionalism is to keep a question in the forefront of our minds when facing a challenge: "How can we approach our neighboring United Methodist Churches to give them the opportunity to work with us to face this challenge?"

#### The Connectional Table - The United Methodist Church Announcement of Executive Position Opening

**Position title:** Executive Secretary

**Reports to:** Chairperson of the Connectional Table

**Context of work:** The Connectional Table is supported by limited administrative staff. The work of the Table is primarily done by its members and the constituencies they represent.

**Summary of work:** The qualified candidate for the Executive Secretary position will provide leadership and support to the work of the Connectional Table of The United Methodist Church. S/he will coordinate the work of the Table in collaboration with the chairperson. This person should have a college degree, significant denominational experience in administrative and servant leadership, and demonstrate a high capacity for networking within a global context.

##### Examples of Assigned Tasks:

1. Facilitate the work of the Connectional Table to help ensure its accountability to The United Methodist Church through the General Conference.
2. As directed by the Connectional Table, communicate information to or request information from annual conferences, jurisdictions, central conferences, general agencies, the Council of Bishops the press and other entities as appropriate.
3. Provide leadership and direction to full-time and part-time support staff.
4. Compile and distribute, with the support of the general agencies, the information necessary for the Connectional Table to review and evaluate the missional effectiveness of general agencies and other connectional structures.
5. Jointly with the General Council on Finance and Administration (and in consultation with the Council of Bishops) assist in the preparation of the quadrennial program and budget requests.
6. Prepare for submission to the editor of the Daily Christian Advocate and the General Conference petitions secretary recommendations from the Connectional Table.
7. Provide administrative direction and support for the work of the Connectional Table by:
  - a. Preparing agendas for all meetings of the Connectional Table, its task groups, etc. in consultation with the chairs of those groups.
  - b. Preparing in consultation with the finance committee the proposed quadrennial budget and yearly spending plan for the Connectional Table.
  - c. Overseeing arrangements for all meetings of the Connectional Table.
  - d. Providing for the recording of meetings of the Connectional Table, including the coordination of the printing and distribution of minutes in consultation with its officers.
  - e. Providing on-site support for the Connectional Table during General Conference.
  - f. Performing related tasks as assigned by the chairperson of the Connectional Table.

Some travel expected.

**Salary:** Dependent on skills and experience.

**Location:** Office location negotiable.

Send cover letter and resume electronically by Monday, October 15, 2012 to Mary Figueredo at the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits at [mfigueredo@gbophb.org](mailto:mfigueredo@gbophb.org).

## Practicing 'shalom' for 20 years

Continued from page 3



More than 100 Christians and Muslims completed shalom training in 2011 in Jinja, Uganda, and now are working together to produce Shalom Coffee from the Source of the Nile.

Communities of Shalom Initiative, provides the skills required to weave the six threads of shalom that offer strategies "that seem to capture people's imaginations," Christensen said.

The Rev. Dennis Singini of Malawi and Dr. Baamu Moses of Uganda were among those participating in a June Shalom Training Certification course in Ocean Grove, N.J.

The Malawi Shalom Zone in Mzuzu, northern Malawi, had a fitful start two years ago, said Singini, who serves as the zone's chairman. "Some of the people thought we were trying to pull them from their denominations to become United Methodists," he explained.

But with representation from 10 different church traditions and a successful poultry project that just resulted in the sale of 150 chicks, that fear has evaporated. "When you see people catching the vision ... you see there is power, there is something to push us to accomplish something greater than what we are accomplishing now," said Singini, a former program coordinator with Citihope International.

The Malawi Shalom Zone also is establishing a scholarship program for children unable to afford school fees and tuition. "Our community is full of child-headed families," he noted, pointing to the need for assistance. "This is a big problem, because what type of generation is this going to be?"

Citing Martin Luther King Jr., Singini said that he, too, has a dream: to expand Communities of Shalom in Malawi.

In Uganda, Moses oversees three shalom zones that include participation by Baptists, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Lutherans as well as United Methodists.

The work started after Christensen offered training in Uganda in early 2010. The training led to the realization that "we, the people, within the community, need to identify our problems, need to identify our weaknesses and strengths and move on," Moses said.

One of the problems being addressed is HIV/AIDS. Other projects include education for young girls and microenterprise work for widows, such as making jewelry. Providing clean water, particularly in rural areas, is a future goal.

Moses wants Communities of Shalom to "transform" the areas where it operates. "This is a golden opportunity for The United Methodist Church," he said.

#### Observing the 20th

That continuing opportunity was recognized during the 2012 General Conference in Tampa, Fla., which marked

the 20th anniversary of the denomination's response to the King verdict.

Soon after, on June 17, Rodney King died in an accidental drowning at the age of 47 and Communities of Shalom has mourned the death of a man who, despite having to deal with his own problems, "called attention to the need to work together," Christensen said.

"Without Rodney King, Communities of Shalom would not exist," he said. "He showed that communities were frazzled and conflicted and in need of wholeness and peace."

Yang, part of the summit planning committee, has wholeheartedly embraced that message and one of his guiding principles in shalom ministry is "respect each other, for we are connected."

In 1997, he formed the Korean-American Religious Council for Peace with other religious leaders. "I believed and learned that conversation and understanding other religions were the first steps to Shalom between religions," Yang writes in a book he hopes to have available at the summit.

The council is sponsoring a summit workshop, "Multifaith Dialogue in Koreatown: Buddhist-Catholic-Protestant Shalom," and Yang's church has provided \$9,000 in scholarships for summit participants as a gesture of thanks for undergirding the work of the Shalom Community Center. "We have been supported by a lot of people, even some children broke into their piggy banks and sent (money) to us," Yang said.

Schol views the summit as an opportunity to offer thanksgiving to God for the work already accomplished; celebrate church and community leaders and consider "where God is leading us" in the future.

"It's very important that we are in Los Angeles," he said. "The people in Los Angeles were the pioneers."

Part of the initiative's future, the bishop added, will be shaped by its connection to United Methodist-related Drew University in New Jersey, the primary institution that now oversees Communities of Shalom.

The university's development department can help them think about how to cultivate donors, the faculty can assist with research and students can take on internships in shalom communities. "Being associated with Drew really strengthens the initiative," Schol said.

United Methodists can support this continuing effort through financial gifts to the Communities of Shalom Advance No. 742566.

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

# Did Jesus Have A Wife?

By Heather Hahn

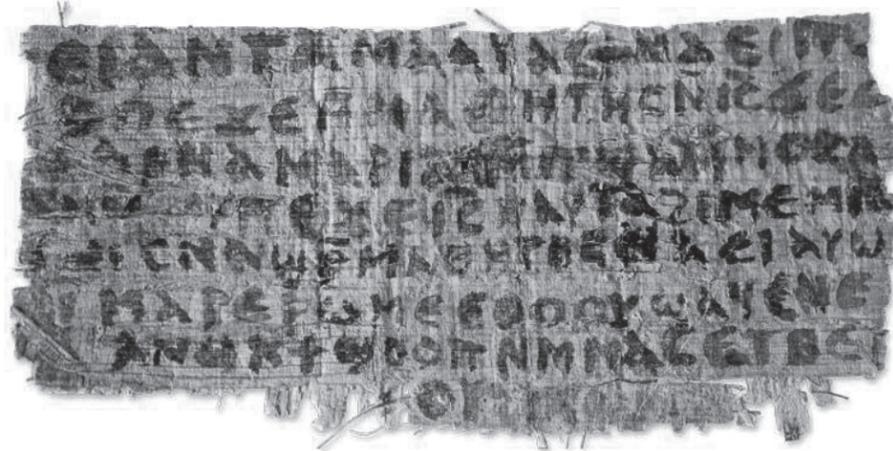
If Jesus had been married, don't you think Paul or the biblical Gospel writers would have mentioned it?

That's the question many Christians have raised after the announcement by Harvard Divinity School professor Karen L. King of a fourth-century papyrus fragment in the Egyptian language Coptic that includes the phrase: "Jesus said to them, my wife."

Some scholars already have raised concerns that the fragment — which is of unknown provenance — could be a forgery meant to look like something 1,700 years old.

But even if it is authentic, King and United Methodist scholars of early Christianity are quick to emphasize that the discovery offers no evidence about the historical Jesus. It does not prove Jesus was married.

For one thing, there's a greater distance between any fourth-century document from Jesus' day than between a document from ours and George Washington's. King speculates that the fragment she labels the "Gos-



**Papyrus fragment**

Photo courtesy of the Harvard Divinity School/Karen L. King.

nonical texts leave his marital status open to question.

As Chancey put it, the fragment is the first found that makes "specific mention of a Mrs. Jesus."

A.D. 50. The Gospel of John, the last of the four biblical gospels to be written, was probably composed around A.D. 90–100 (more than a half century after Jesus' ministry).

But, thanks to the preservation of the desert, scholars continue to find more accounts of Jesus' life that may originate in the latter part of the second century. These often reflect the philosophies and interests of various early Christian movements, such as Gnosticism, whose adherents claimed a special knowledge of Jesus or *gnosis* in Greek. King's papyrus fragment may be part of one of these traditions.

Based on its similarities to other second-century gospels, King speculates the fragment may allude not to the historical Jesus as much as second-century disputes.

Long before Christians started debating same-sex marriage, early church leaders were debating whether

reference to Jesus's wife may have been meant as a counterbalance to the trend toward monasticism.

"The papyrus is fragmentary, but here you have Jesus seemingly referring to his own wife and making a strong stand for the acceptability of marriage and the idea that you don't necessarily have to be celibate," Chancey said. "You also have a reference to a woman as a disciple, which is a title of great respect."

Joel B. Green, an ordained United Methodist elder and associate dean of the Center for Advanced Theological Studies at the evangelical Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., raises another possible interpretation of the fragment.

"Jesus' reference to 'my wife' could be a metaphorical reference to the church. This would be a departure from texts that refer to the church as the bride (not the wife) of Christ, but this possibility ought to be considered," said Green, who was New Testament editor of the Common English Bible.

"This highlights the problem we have with interpreting this fragment," he said. "It provides us with no complete sentences, no paragraphs, no context at all. This means that anything we say about its meaning and significance is largely guesswork — educated guesswork, maybe, but guesswork nonetheless."

## Would it matter if Jesus were married?

However, Green and other United Methodist scholars agree that if it ever were proved that Jesus had been married, it would not make much difference to United Methodist conception of Jesus as divine and human.

Continued on page 10

## Something about Mary

The fragment mentions a Mary, though it's unclear whether the name refers to Jesus' mother or the later reference to his wife.

If it refers to the wife, King offers a familiar candidate — Mary Magdalene.

The Gospels of Mark and Luke identify her as a woman Jesus healed of seven demons. Luke lists Mary Magdalene with a group of women who support Jesus' ministry "out of their means." Nowhere in the New Testament is she identified as a reformed harlot.

The Bible shows Mary Magdalene as an important disciple of Jesus — the one witness to the Crucifixion and Resurrection in all four canonical Gospels. In the Gospel of John, she is the first person to share the news of the empty tomb.

Mary Magdalene is not named in Paul's letters or even in the Acts of the Apostles, the sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Ann Graham Brock, affiliate professor of New Testament at Iliff School of Theology, has shown that the greater the emphasis on Peter's role in a text, the more diminished Mary Magdalene's role tends to be.

However, more than a century after Jesus' time, she remained a popular role model of discipleship in extra-canonical texts such as the Gospel of Philip and Gospel of Mary. Mary Magdalene was likely the "foremost of Jesus' women disciples," Brock said.

With good reason, the Roman Catholic Church later designated her "Apostle to the Apostles."

pel of Jesus' Wife" might be a translation of an earlier Greek text from the second half of the second century, but even that possibility puts it significantly later than Paul's letters and the biblical Gospels.

"Rather, the importance of the 'Gospel of Jesus's Wife' lies in supplying a new voice within the diverse chorus of early Christian traditions about Jesus that documents that some Christians depicted Jesus as married," says a draft of King's research paper to be published in the January 2013 issue of the Harvard Theological Review.

Still, this small piece of papyrus, no bigger than a cell phone, already has reignited an old debate about Jesus' marital status — one that long predates "The Da Vinci Code's" climb on the U.S. best-seller lists.

Many religion scholars, including United Methodists and those at United Methodist-related universities and seminaries, see the find as a teaching opportunity.

"I think we should take it very seriously as an example of debates going on in early Christianity," said Mark A. Chancey, a United Methodist lay person and professor of religious studies at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He recently co-authored a book on the archaeology of early Judaism and Christianity, "Alexander to Constantine: Archaeology of the Land of the Bible."

"It gives us perspective on the debates we're having in our own day about who is suited in leadership roles in the church and who is regarded as worthy of having special insight. The particulars are different, but in their own way, these are still very live issues in our own church," he continued. "What we are seeing increasingly is that early Christianity was more diverse and less static than we often imagine."

## Scripture and the historical Jesus

The New Testament makes no mention of whether Jesus was married. Likewise, even previously discovered Gnostic gospels and other extra-ca-

A number of scholars of the New Testament and early Christianity, including Chancey, find that silence telling.

"I think it is possible but unlikely that Jesus was married," said Mark Goodacre, associate professor of religion at Duke University in Durham, N.C. Goodacre has posted multiple entries on the find at his New Testament blog.

"We do hear about wives of key figures in the New Testament, including Peter and Jesus' brothers, but we never hear about Jesus' wife. Moreover, there were several Christian apostle couples who travelled together, like Andronicus and Junia, and Prisca and Aquila. So it is not like the early Christian texts are silent about husbands and wives overall."

Ben Witherington III, New Testament professor at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky., notes that Jesus as itinerant preacher likely did not have time for conventional family life.

"He was more than a little busy bringing in God's Kingdom, healing the sick, etc.," said Witherington, who is an ordained United Methodist elder and has a Ph.D. "Even when he goes home, say in Mark 6, there is no evidence he has his own house or family there. It's only his brothers, sisters and mother who are referred to as his family."

Ann Graham Brock, affiliate professor of New Testament at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, is not so sure. Brock studied under King and knows Coptic. She also is the author of "Mary Magdalene, The First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority."

"You would think that if Jesus had been married that the gospels would have been mentioned it, but on the other hand, you cannot always make an argument from silence," she said. "Just because it is not mentioned doesn't mean he couldn't have been."

## The original marriage debate

Most scholars estimate that the earliest New Testament book was Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians around



**Christ appears to Mary Magdalene in this 1834 oil painting by Ivanov Alexander Andreevich located in The Russian Museum in St. Petersburg.**

marriage itself was a good idea. Paul addressed this concern in Corinthians 7:28, noting "If you marry, you do not sin."

By the middle of the second century, extreme renunciation started growing more popular, and some Christians saw a life of celibacy as a higher spiritual calling. Gnostics themselves were often among the champions of asceticism.

Clement of Alexandria reported that some of his Christian contemporaries "say outright that marriage is fornication and teach that it was introduced by the devil." These Christians, Clement wrote, cited Jesus "who neither married or had any possession in this world" as a role model.

Clement took a more moderate view, approving of sexual intercourse in marriage but only for the purpose of procreation and only without passion.

King and others hypothesize that the

## Translation:

1. "...not [to] me. My mother gave me li[fe]..."
2. The disciples said to Jesus, "
3. deny. Mary is worthy of it\*
4. ...." Jesus said to them, "My wife..."
5. ... she can be my disciple...
6. Let the wicked people swell up...
7. As for me, I dwell with her in order to...
8. an image ...

\*Or alternatively: Mary is n(ot) worthy of it.

## On the reverse side:

1. ... my moth[er]
2. three
3. ...
4. forth which ...
5. (illegible ink traces)
6. (illegible ink traces)

Source: Karen L. King, Harvard Divinity School

## World Student Christian Federation Student Christian Movement, USA

### Position Opening: Conference Organizer

The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) and the Student Christian Movement- USA (SCM-USA) seek a dynamic, energetic organizer for a US national ecumenical leadership training program for progressive Christian students in April 2013.

The WSCF and SCM seek to build a national movement of progressive Christian students who engage in the work of peace, justice and global action, following Jesus' call to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release of the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18) The WSCF, through the SCM-USA, seeks to build local networks of engaged students on campuses and communities and provide opportunities for leadership training, Biblical and theological reflection, ecumenical engagement, mutual support and global action. The SCM is a member of the WSCF which includes over one million members in 90 countries around the world.

The April 2012 conference will be the first annual leadership training event and serve as a keystone for movement building and networking efforts. The conference organizer will:

- Staff Leadership Training Program's PrepCom
- Connect with current SCM groups and individuals in planning the event
- Finalize and preparing conference location
- Develop conference program
- Recruit participants
- Prepare conference materials
- Design and implement web-based publicity and communication, including work on a database and website.

The conference organizer will be supervised by the WSCF North America Regional Secretary, Luciano Kovacs, located at 475 Riverside Drive, New York City, and supported by SCM members and alumni. Salary is \$20/hour for an average of 10-12 hours a week. No benefits. Position begins immediately for a 10 month contract.

The successful candidate will have the vision, passion and skills to help nurture the emergence of an ecumenical student Christian movement in the US; be committed to peace, social, economic and gender justice; and desire to work as part of an international community.

Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Please submit cover letter, cv and contacts for three references. For more information, contact Luciano Kovacs, wscfna@gmail.com.

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## Stewardship Stories

By Rich Hendrickson  
Coordinator of Stewardship Education  
and Development, GNJAC



### Intentional Stewardship

For many of our churches in the annual conference the fall signals the beginning of the annual stewardship campaign season. The "bottom line" of almost all stewardship campaigns is to invite folks to make a commitment to support the ministries of the church by giving one's time, talent, and treasure to God's work in the world. I like to use the words of 2 Corinthians 9:7 when I invite people to prayerfully consider their giving: "Make up your own mind about what you will give, for that will protect you against arm-twisting and sob stories" (The Message).

But what if you do feel pressured? What if you feel like you have to do this because, if you don't, you'll feel guilty if you don't? What if you give, not because you want to but only because you believe giving is expected? What if no matter how much you're invited to respond you can't get out from under the guilt or pressure you feel.

Try this! No matter how you may feel, give anyway! If it feels like you're giving out of obligation, do it anyway. If it feels like you're giving simply out of guilt, do it anyway. Even if you don't want to give, do it as an act of obedience and trust in God. And, in time, there will be a breakthrough. And, if there's not, you can always stop. But offer God the chance to grow you into the grace of giving...by giving!

Here's the plan: start where you are. If right now you're not giving anything to the church, determine that you will give something — even if it's just a few dollars a week. And then set some goals so that, over the next few years, you can grow from where you are to where you want to be. Think of giving as a way of walking the *PATH* of Discipleship: Pursue your relationship with God by praying about becoming a generous person. Answer the call to your true vocation by seeing giving as a way of serving. Trust in God. And nurture a *Heart* for others by giving as a means of showing the compassion of Christ.

## Did Jesus Have A Wife?

*Continued from page 9*

"We believe that Jesus shared completely in our humanity, and this belief wouldn't be changed at all were we to have proof that he was married," Green said.

Jim L. Papandrea, a Catholic layperson and assistant professor of church history at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., said such a revelation might have some impact on Catholic theology.

"I think it would make a difference, in the sense that so much of the monastic life is based on the assumption that people who are called to voluntary celibacy are following in Jesus' footsteps," said Papandrea, author of "Reading the Early Church Fathers," from Paulist Press.

"If it could be proven that Jesus was married, that would call into question a part of the basis for religious orders, and perhaps for a celibate priesthood.

However, I would be quick to add that the assumption that Jesus was unmarried is not the only justification for these things, so it's not as though the rug would be pulled out from under them, so to speak. But it would raise some discussion."

The Rev. Ryan Rush, pastor of First United Methodist Church in rural Carlisle, Ark., admits he is a bit disappointed that the fragment's discovery offers no such proof. If true, it might offer a chance to reflect more about the human side of Jesus and how Christians regard marriage, he said.

"The very fact that Jesus shares in our humanity 100 percent except without sin is pretty revolutionary."

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

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## The November Issue Deadline is October 9, 2012

W. Michael Campbell, AIA

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## OBITUARIES

**MARY MARGARET BERNHARDT BORSOS**, wife of retired Elder, Reverend Alex Borsos, Jr. died on September 10. A memorial service was held at on September 22 at the Medford United Methodist Church.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to Samaritan Hospice, 5 Eves Dr., Marlton, NJ 08053 or Medford UMC Family Life Center, 2 Hartford Road, Medford, NJ 08055. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Rev. Alex Borsos, Jr., 4 Willoughby Lane, South Hampton, NJ 08088.

**CHARLES M. BURTON, SR.**, retired local pastor of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, died on August 16. A Memorial Service will be held at the Sicklerville United Methodist Church on August 21.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to Vitas Hospice, 18 East Laurel Road, Stratford, NJ 08084. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Rev. Burton's widow, Dawn Burton, 192 Heights Avenue, West Berlin, NJ 08091.

**CORA JOHNSON**, beloved mother of Bishop Alfred Johnson died on September 6. Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Bishop and Sherrie Johnson, c/o GNJUMC Conference Office, 1001 Wickapecko Dr., Ocean, NJ 07712.

**EDNA MCKINLEY HOUTAIN**, wife of deceased Elder, Reverend Julian Swain Houtain, died on August 26. A memorial service will be held at 11:30 am on September 8.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to Pearson Memorial United Methodist Church Food Pantry, 71 Pearson Drive, Hamilton, NJ 08610.

**ELLA MAE MILLER CANNON**, wife of retired Elder, Reverend Charles Cannon, died on August 27. A memorial service was held at St. John United Methodist Church, Atlantic, VA. on September 1.

Messages of condolence may be sent to Rev. Charles Cannon 34298 Horntown Road, Horntown, VA 23395.

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- UMCOR is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to alleviating human suffering around the globe. UMCOR's work reaches people in more than 80 countries, including the United States. We provide humanitarian relief when war, conflict, or natural disaster disrupt life to such an extent that communities are unable to recover on their own.
- UMCOR is a ministry of The United Methodist Church, and our goal is to assist the most vulnerable persons affected by crisis or chronic need without regard to their race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. We believe all people have God-given worth and dignity.
- While UMCOR cooperates with other aid organizations to extend our reach, our most important partners are the people we serve. We are confident that successful solutions to emergency or chronic conditions begin with the affected population. UMCOR provides these survivors not only temporary relief but long-term education, training, and support.
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