



Tent-A-Thon raises money for Habitat houses

By Cynthia Lovely

A marathon brings to mind rugged athletes with straining muscles running the race to win the prize. Bike-a-thon depicts a similar picture of fit physiques in constant motion covering the required miles on spinning tires.

A Tent-A-Thon..?

Consider: No movement or forward motion involved unless it is the frenzied struggle to set up your own tent correctly without personal injury.

Pat Arnott of McKownville United Methodist Church in New York probably doesn't have that problem. She has been involved with the Habitat for Humanity Tent-A-Thon for many years.

"The Tent-A-Thon began 16 years ago at McKownville United Methodist Church and has since grown into a community event," she said. "This year was a little different. It was the first year that we had a

Habitat *continued page 16*



The Rev. Dawn Hand, Associate Pastor of Discipleship at Matthews United Methodist Church in North Carolina, was one of three workshop leaders for Rethink Church Training offered by United Methodist Communications. Sponsored by the upstate New York conferences, the training, held at Trinity United Methodist Church in Whitesboro, N.Y., taught participants strategies to welcome, connect and invite people to the church. Over 145 people, most from the upper New York area, attended the training, and 30 people attended the Friday Training-the-Trainers event. The new trainers will help lead district-level trainings in the coming years. See story page 10.

Local pastor recognized with Spirit of Wesley

By Rebecca Clark

Pastor Carol Ames is the most recent recipient of Wesley Theological Seminary Course of Study's Spirit Award, a prize given to a student in the Course of Study who best exemplifies the spirit of Wesley—both the seminary, and the man for whom it is named, Methodist movement founder John Wesley.

"It's an incredible honor," Carol says. "But Spirit is a fun thing."

She says it like Spirit is a person, or a character, and that's because he is.

Spirit, it turns out, is a horse head on a stick. He wears a Wesley Theological Seminary Course of Study T-shirt and a bridle with "WWJD" shoelaces as the reins. Carol says that Spirit needs to be defended, because other students will kidnap him and hold him for ransom to raise money for the scholarship fund.

Even so, Carol believes that Spirit should be free to go visiting. "We had a classmate this summer who was bummed because he doesn't have an appointment right now," she explained, "so I had Spirit stay with him for a while to keep him company and cheer him up."

Carol is the pastor of two churches in the Adirondacks, in Newcomb and Long Lake, N.Y. She has completed three of the five years of the Course of Study, which will fulfill her education requirements as a licensed local pastor. She reports that she is excited about "everything" in her ministry in such a "beautiful, peaceful, and serene setting."

"There's such a sense of community here," Carol says. "People really look out for each other."

The eighth winner of the Spirit Award since his "birth" in 2002, Carol says she is the first student enrolled in the two-week summer program to have received the award. She is not, however, the first Troy Conference pastor to be thus honored. Candace Ricker, pastor of Groton United Methodist Church and New Hope United Methodist Church in Waits River, Vt., received Spirit in both 2005 and 2006.

Candace has completed all but the final two weeks of the Course of Study program, and she remembers bringing

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Local Pastor Carol Ames holds on to the Wesley Theological Seminary's Spirit Award—a toy horse head on a stick complete with a Course of Study T-shirt and a bridle with "WWJD" shoe laces as reins. Ames received the award for "exemplifying the spirit of Wesley—both the seminary and John Wesley, Methodism's founder."

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I wonder as I wander ...

Praying while observing surfing

One of the blessings of being able to experience a silent retreat is the privilege of allowing everything to become part of one's praying. Prayer is being with God to the core of our being, not just the words we say or think. Late in August I had such a privilege for eight days along the Atlantic coast north of Boston.

Hurricane Bill was approaching offshore on the second day of the retreat, churning up the water in high waves at the entrance to the cove on which the retreat house is located. A group of surfers had made their way to this setting, clad in their dark wet suits and carrying their surfboards. It was not raining at that time, but the wind was strong and the waves crashed against the rocky shoreline with frothy whitecaps.



Bishop Hassinger

I sat for a time on a chair on the grassy area above the shoreline, observing the action of the surfers. Although I do not know the science or art of surfing, it was apparent that the surfers were risk-takers who were out on a day when the Coast Guard had recommended that no boats be out and no swimmers in the ocean, a day when they warned about possibility of dangerous riptides.

I observed a rhythm in their actions—paddling out to where the biggest waves began, choosing a wave and riding it in. They seemed to alternate between letting a wave move them up and down and forward, and being pushed down or jumping off as the wave neared the rocky area hidden by the tide. Sometimes they lay down on the boards as the wave carried them in. Others stood up on the board when they had chosen a wave to ride. Those who stood sometimes seemed to lean back into the waves coming at their backs and ride the top of the wave as it came in. At one point, one surfer seemed to face the waves coming in, determining whether this was one to be ridden or one to float over top. The riding of the waves always ended with the surfer in the water, finding the board, lying on it, and paddling hard with their arms back out to where the big waves began—at the edge of the cove. That return trip looked to be tiring. But some of the surfers did it time and time again.

So where's the prayer in observing that? As I watched, with a desire to be alert to what God might be showing me, I thought of a book that I had recently read—*The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why*, by Phyllis Tickle. It is a short book that describes the tremendous changes in the Christian Church across the centuries in an approximately every-500-year cycle. The last great transformation was the "Great Reformation." With examples from the past century and into the current one, Tickle describes the huge waves of change which we are experiencing, related to science and culture and international shifts. The struggles we deal with at the local church, annual conference and general church



Photo by Bev Lloyd Roberts



Photo by Eilan

levels are part of a huge ocean of change of which we are part. When we are so immersed in the ocean, it's hard to understand where those currents and undertows are coming from. Tickle describes some of the waves that have been part of this new transformation, which she calls "The Great Emergence." She suggests where these waves are moving the church in the future. And I sensed that she is inviting us to see where God is in the midst of this stormy time of change.

There were several things that came to mind as I prayed while watching the surfing and considering the storminess we experience in the church, and the waves of change in this time of conference reconfigurations:

Face into the waves as they are coming, so that you know what you're riding! Although I've never been on a surfboard in my life—and don't intend to!—sometimes life in the church and leading in the church feels like a stormy day, where the waves are white and frothy and crashing in. The waves of change and of difficult situations seem to come so frequently and sometimes furiously that the church or the leader must discern, which are the ones most important to "ride in," and which ones are not ripe, or would divert the attention from what is most essential or important. Learning to read and understand those waves, and not just to react to them, is important. Riding of the waves of change requires prayerful discernment, not just alone, but together with others.

The surfer depends on the board to carry him/her in, and to be the foundation for moving out into the next incoming waves. For us, that foundation is our trust in God. A prayer that I wrote in my journal that day was this: "Christ, be my board, the one to whom I cling in the surfing of these uncharted waters. Help me to cling to you, when that's appropriate and necessary, and to stand tall in the assurance of your foundation when that is required. Give me courage to rest on you and in you when paddling out to meet the next waves. I trust you to provide the energy and strength for the journey."

Be attentive to the waves coming in as you are paddling out again! But don't get thrown off the board by them. Some of the surfers seemed to be better than others, perhaps a bit more relaxed, in crossing over the waves coming in as they were on their boards and paddling out. One surfer got thrown off the board and into the water in the process of that outward-bound journey. Others seemed to navigate the incoming waves with relative ease. That reminded me of how easy it is to become anxious about the reactivity that often comes as we deal with change.

Do you ever feel as though you are surfing high waves in your congregation, in the annual conference? In this year of transition, with many waves of change at many levels, we are not alone in our "surfing the waves."

God is ever with us. We might even find the surfing enjoyable when we ask, "God, where are you in the midst of this?" We might discover that looking for God's presence in the midst of the change might help us to survive rather than to get thrown into the rocks.

Bishop Matthews to visit Albany area clergy, laity

Bishop Marcus Matthews of the New York West Episcopal area will meet with clergy and laity in Troy and Wyoming Conferences this October.

The bishop, who will become the resident bishop of the Upper New York Episcopal Area next year on July 1, will meet with Troy Conference clergy and laity from New York beginning Sunday, Oct. 18 through 20, and Wyoming Conference Oct. 20 to 22. Lay members can attend either of the district lay sessions, and clergy either of the clergy sessions.

The bishop's schedule is:

Adirondack District Laity Meeting, Sunday, Oct. 18 at 7 p.m., Christ United Methodist Church, 54 Bay Street, Glens Falls.

Adirondack District Clergy Meeting, Monday, Oct. 19, 9:30 a.m., Saratoga Springs United Methodist Church, 175 Fifth Avenue, Saratoga Springs.

Albany/Embury District Laity Meeting, Monday, Oct. 19 at 7 p.m., Christ United Methodist Church, 35 State Street, Troy.

Albany/Embury District Clergy Meeting, Tuesday, Oct. 20, 9:30 a.m., McKownville United Methodist Church, 1565 Western Avenue, Albany.

Bishop Matthews will also visit Elm Park United Methodist Park in Oneonta and the Afton United Methodist Church in the Oneonta District, and Owego United Methodist Church and Vestal Center United Methodist Church in the Binghamton District, Tuesday, Oct. 20, through Thursday, Oct. 22.



Bishop Marcus Matthews

Thinking like Christians about health care

By Bishop William Willimon

Brother Rowe Wren recently wrote to say, "I would like your thoughts on ... the present health-care bill." In my travels around the [North Alabama] conference, I have heard much discussion on this pressing issue before our nation.

I personally find the bill being debated and proposed to be fearfully complicated. But it is an attempt to solve a complicated and expensive problem. Yet we must not be deterred by the complexity.

Above all, we are enjoined to think about this issue and any others like Christians. (If you are interested in a thoughtful response to health care by some of the leaders of our church, then log into health care at the General Board of Church and Society web site, www.umc-gbcs.org.)

I'm not sure that I have special light to spread on this subject other than my own attempts to think about this issue in a Christian way. Here, for what they are worth, are some of my responses:

■ I hear that most Americans are "happy with their health insurance." I sure am. Our denomination provides our elders with the most generous of health-care programs. North Alabama Conference heavily subsidizes the health insurance of our retired elders. I am deeply grateful for such support.

We can't leave it at that, however. The most underserved in our society when it comes to health care are poor children. Alabama leads the nation in the number of children who are untouched by medical care, making us also a leader in childhood malnutrition and illness.

As the church, Jesus has given us responsibility for the "least of these." Saying that "I am happy with my health care" is not saying enough. Our concern should not be to protect our entitlements but rather our Jesus-assigned concern is "Am I happy with my neighbor's health care?"

■ Scripture tells us that we are "not to bear false witness." It is tough enough to have a national debate over an issue of this complexity without deliberate misinformation being put out on the airways to muddy the conversation and spread unwarranted fear.

■ I am so disappointed by our state's members of Congress. Most of them have contributed nothing to this debate. They show a callous disregard for the welfare of their poorest constituents. Let's urge our elected officials to get in the debate and craft good legislation.

I'm glad that our elected representatives have health care; thousands of their constituents don't.

We have the most expensive health-care system in the world that leaves out millions because, while it is not government run, it is dominated by the insurance companies. I'm glad that our elected representatives have health care; thousands of their constituents don't.

I fully trust the American Medical Association (AMA) and our doctors to worry about health care. They say we need dramatic reform. Methodists should care about those who can't get health care as much as the AMA is concerned.

I visit church after church where the congregation is having to pull together and provide funds—thank goodness!—for people in their congregation or community who have suffered catastrophic financial loss due to huge medical bills. Some of our health-care professionals volunteer every year to work in medical missions where Christians are trying to help those left out of our health-care system.

Why? We think about these issues with scripture, with Luke 10 where, in one of Jesus' favorite stories, the Samaritan says, "Take care of the wounded man and when I return I will repay you whatever it costs."

It would be great for every pastor and church to explore how your congregation can prayerfully, thoughtfully respond to this issue. Surely we can do better than the likes of TV's Glen Beck and Joe Scarborough.

Of course, they have no desire to think about this issue with Jesus, and it shows. But we do!

Read Luke 10:25-35! Then, "go and do likewise."

Editor's note: This article is the "Weekly Message from Bishop Willimon," Aug. 24. Bishop Willimon is resident bishop of the North Alabama Conference. ©2005-2009



Troy Annual Conference Council on Youth Ministries

Youth Autumn Celebration 2009

For youth in grades 8 through 12

Nov. 6 and 7

Christ United Methodist Church

Glens Falls, N.Y.



Featuring
Jim Trick

To register: Call Rachel Ruller (518) 785-7383 (evenings) by Nov. 3.

Registration questions the Conference Youth Coordinators Sue Petrosino (518) 356-5851 suzieym@aol.com or Ashley Dubois (802) 233-5824 ashley0705@hotmail.com

Cost: \$25

Download the flyer and complete the health and covenant form, available on-line at www.troyac.org



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Team works to help make church safe for the vulnerable

By Sandra Brands

Sanctuary.
In *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Quasimodo saves the condemned gypsy Esmeralda from hanging by carrying her into the cathedral and demanding sanctuary. The story illustrates a tradition, long held, that the church was not only a holy or sacred place, but a place of refuge, a place to seek asylum from harm, a place of protection.

Unfortunately, just as with any other human institution, that expectation is not always met. But in recent years, The United Methodist Church, along with other denominations, has taken steps to make the church as safe as possible for people, particularly the vulnerable.

"All we need to do is to read the pledge congregations take at baptism and we see [adopting Safe Sanctuaries policy and procedures is] the responsibility of church by the pledge we make to the children: We vow to keep our church a holy place in which all children may come to know God and experience the love of Jesus Christ," said Arlene Schmidt, a member of Malta Ridge Church, N.Y.

Schmidt, who was a New York State Licenses child care provider for 10 years, joined the Safe Sanctuaries Team because she wanted to make sure children were provided a "safe and trusting place to come learn about the love of Jesus Christ and be part of a larger family that will love them and accept them as a unique person and to help them grow into their fullest potential."

Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures not only protect a congregation's vulnerable members, but protects the volunteers and staff who work in situations that could lead to allegations of misconduct, said team member Shirley Readdean, a member of First United Methodist Church in Schenectady, N.Y.

"Safe Sanctuaries is really for everyone because we're all vulnerable at times," she said. "We're the church and we have moral and ministerial responsibilities to the people coming to feed their spirituality," adding that people need to feel assured that policies and procedures have been adopted that ensure their safety while they are pursuing their relationship with the Holy Spirit, with God.

"It's very important to see this as a ministry, that it's vital to the church," she said.

Members of Troy Annual Conference agreed, because they adopted the team's resolution, Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church, at Conference Session in June. The resolution requires all local churches and ministries that relate to children, youth and vulnerable adults in creating a Safe Sanctuaries Committee and to develop an abuse prevention policy. Local churches are to present their completed Safe Sanctuaries abuse prevention policies and plan for implementation to the District Superintendent by Dec. 31, 2009.

Organized in late 2007, the Conference Safe Sanctuaries Team provides

resources and training for clergy and laity who work with the vulnerable. This fall, training courses are scheduled to be held in four places (see side bar). The team has also offered information about securing background checks for all church and ministry workers, checks which are required every three years. Background check information is available on the Troy Conference web site at www.troyac.org, or can be obtained by contacting the District Superintendent's Office.

Readdean said she is excited that the Conference Safe Sanctuaries Team has been able to accomplish as much as it has in such a short time.

"There have been attempts to do this in Troy Conference, but we could never seem to get a conference committee together that would keep pushing Safe Sanctuaries forward," she said. "I'm thrilled that we're finally now getting to the point that a resolution has been passed, that we have an active committee and that we're providing training and resources."

Readdean, who first attended Safe Sanctuaries Training back in the 1990s and has led trainings at several local churches in the conference over the years, said the issue is important because she has experienced and heard stories from others about abuse within the church.

"We need to protect each other," she said. "There's a sense that 'we're the church, that abuse won't happen, but it does happen. Not that often, but it does, and it does, it's very painful for all involved, and it's painful for the congregation. If people become aware of it, the whole church shares the pain and it can be very destructive to the community of faith."

Even if the incident doesn't become public, she said, the person who has been abused carries that within them for a life time, and it does tremendous psychological.

Abuse, she added, isn't limited to just one group of people. "It's not just a woman's issue; it's everyone's issue. We all have the potential to be abused because abuse is not about sex, it's about power."

Team member L. David Suits, a member of Pine Grove United Methodist Church in New York, said that because "there has been a feeling that [abuse] doesn't happen in the church people weren't taking the need as seriously as they should."

That kind of naïveté can make churches targets of abuse people, he said. "The purpose of the Safe Sanctuaries resolution was to draw local churches attention to the fact that there may, indeed, be abusive persons, even in a local church. A policy raises awareness of the need to be alert and set up means to take precautions that help protect," he said.

Most congregations understand the theory behind adopting Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures. It's harder, however, to look at the people



in a shared faith community, without thinking, "Oh, I know them; I can trust them."

Schmidt said, that's one reason it's important to help the congregation understand the "why" behind the process of developing and adopting Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures.

"Introducing Safe Sanctuaries to the congregation in a slow manner helps all to get use to the idea of background checks, the training and why we need to protect all within the house of the Lord," she said.

The 2009 Safe Sanctuaries Resolution included a sample policy that churches can use to start the process. However, Schmidt said, "developing a policy is unique to each church and can take awhile to develop so the language is correct for each situation."

One of the first steps to take towards becoming a Safe Sanctuary, Readdean said, is to form a committee to work on the development of the policy and oversee the carrying out of the policy. "What the committee does is determine the needs of that particular church."

"For example, if the Sunday school has only one room, they won't need to worry about putting windows in doors because there are a number of people working together in that one room and they are within sight of each other," she said. "Each local church will need to adjust the sample policy to their needs."

In addition to the plan and procedures, a Safe Sanctuaries policy needs

to include guidelines on how the policies and procedures will be carried out, Readdean said. And all churches will need to do background checks done on volunteer and paid staff

The cost of those background checks has been one of the biggest concerns around the passage of the resolution, Suits said. "We [the Safe Sanctuaries Team] have located a program that allows us to do background checks nationwide at a low per-person cost," he said, adding that these background checks are primarily for volunteers and paid lay staff since the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry does the background checks on all active clergy, including local pastors and active retired clergy."

The information will be available at the upcoming training sessions, and is available on the conference web site.

Suits said the team is available for individual church consultations. To arrange for a one-to-one consultation, contact David Suits at ldsuits@aol.com or (518) 869-9436

The Conference Safe Sanctuaries Team is committed to helping local churches and conference ministries in being proactive about providing a safe environment for all who come to the church.

"If you have these policies in place and you have been going through training, you are following best practices and it shows you are doing everything you can to prevent [abuse]," said Readdean.

Training events offered in four locations

The Conference Safe Sanctuaries Task Force is sponsoring a series of training events to help local churches in developing and/or updating their Safe Sanctuaries Policies per the resolution passed at the 2009 session of Annual Conference. Training will be held Saturday, Oct. 24 at Queensbury United Methodist Church, N.Y.; Saturday, Oct. 31 at Amsterdam United Methodist Church, N.Y.; Saturday, Nov. 7 at Whiteface Community United Methodist Church, N.Y.; and Saturday, Nov. 14 at Shelburne United Methodist Church, Vt. Each training session will begin at 9 a.m. and close at 3 p.m. Training will cover the five areas of abuse, legalities, definitions and a look at the future.

Lunch and coffee breaks will be included in the registration fees for each event. Registrations are to be made with Donna Titus, Task Force Member, at dtitus5083@aol.com, or at (518) 875-6074. Deadline for registration is one week prior to the event you choose to attend. Upon receiving your registration you will receive an acknowledgement with the registration fee for the location chosen indicated.



Does the H1N1 virus matter to your church?

By William Elwell

Imagine you are the pastor of a church in Somewhere, USA. You wake up Saturday morning and your body aches. You think you may have a fever and your nose is beginning to run. The phone rings, and it's one of your favorite parishioners. Sick with the flu for a week, she wonders why you haven't stopped by.

It suddenly strikes you that maybe you have the flu, too. What if you can't preach? What if other leaders are sick? Should church be open? How will you tell members of the congregation if it is going to be closed?

You feel your stress level rising as fear fills your mind with a million questions and you feel even worse.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is clear that it does not know what H1N1 Flu will mean this flu season, but it is urging people to be prepared. State health departments, school districts, colleges and nursing homes are among the places that are preparing for the possibility of a pandemic flu outbreak.

Should churches have a plan, too?

One of the best ways to reduce stress in times of crisis is to give people information and help them prepare. This empowers a person to respond rather than feeling like a victim of circumstance. This is certainly Biblical. Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke Chapter 10 so his disciples would know how to respond when they saw a neighbor in trouble.

It is time to talk about what could happen and put a flu plan in place.

- Address different scenarios that may occur.

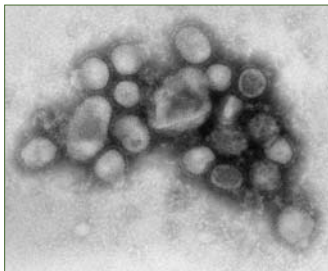
- Include a plan to teach people to practice good hygiene and self-care in order to prevent the spread of germs. Remind people to wash hands frequently.

- Encourage and care for our congregations and communities with the possibility of mass immunizations becoming a reality. Talk to local health care providers to see how you can help.

- Remind people that it's important to stay home, even from church, until they are symptom-free for 24 hours.

- How will you address the needs of people in the congregation and community when visitation is not a healthy choice?

- How will these concerns support or change your cleaning, disinfecting, and food handling policies in the sanctuary, kitchen, nursery and education rooms of the church.



In order for any preparedness plan to work it needs to be written down, easily accessible, and communicated to people before it is used. The church is called to be alert and pray.

As you have these conversations, don't feel you are on your own. Brainstorm with area churches, area community organizations, and local health-care officials. Check out the CDC website at www.cdc.gov, the Vermont state health department at www.healthvermont.gov or the New York health department at www.health.state.ny.us. These websites have great information and downloadable hygiene posters.

As the Disaster Response Coordinator for Troy conference in Vermont, I receive e-mail updates from the CDC, which I will pass on when relevant or timely.

Please call me if I can help. I can be reached at the Bristol Federated Church (802) 453-2321 or by email at rescueme97@yahoo.com.

Bill Elwell is the Pastor of Bristol Federated and Monkton Friends Church and is the Troy Conference Disaster Response Coordinator for Vermont

South Central Jurisdiction will realign in 2012

By Linda Bloom, UMNS

Responding to a directive from the denomination's top legislative body, United Methodists in the South Central region of the United States will make do with one less bishop in 2012.

Through a Sept. 18 webcast, the 6,400 local churches in the South Central Jurisdiction — representing about 1.83 million members — learned that the Nebraska, Kansas East and Kansas West annual (regional) conferences will be combined into one episcopal area at that time.

Dallas Area Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe, president of the jurisdiction's college of bishops, reminded viewers that the 2008 General Conference had directed that body to reduce its numbers from 11 to 10 bishops. "Your college of bishops has taken this task very seriously, with great deliberation and discernment," he said.

A similar directive was given to the church's four other U.S. jurisdictions as part of recommendations from a denomination-wide task force on episcopacy.

NEJ changes in the works

In July 2008, the Northeast Jurisdiction approved a proposal from four Upstate New York conferences—North Central New York, Troy, Western New York and Wyoming—to unite the Vermont churches of Troy Conference part of the New England Conference, the Pennsylvania churches of Wyoming Conference with the Central Pennsylvania Conference to form a new conference, and the New York churches of into one conference and one Episcopal area.

The process began informally during the 2008 South Central Jurisdictional Conference, Bledsoe said, and included input from laity and clergy across the jurisdiction, the study of statistics and demographics, lengthy discussions of various alternatives and prayers for guidance.

"This decision creates an opportunity for new, creative ways to serve Jesus Christ, and to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world for generations to come in these two states," Bledsoe said.

An early announcement of plans to deploy one bishop to a new Nebraska-Kansas Area will allow the three conferences most directly affected "to plan for

their future together," he pointed out.

Nebraska and Kansas had been part of one episcopal area of the Methodist Church prior to 1952, when each state was designated as a separate episcopal area.

Covers eight states

The South Central Jurisdiction currently includes 15 annual conferences in eight states: Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. The jurisdiction also includes the south border of the Navajo Indian Nation in northeastern Arizona.

At least three South Central bishops will reach the mandatory retirement age of 68 by 2012: Nebraska Bishop Ann Sherer-Simpson, Arkansas Area Bishop Charles N. Crutchfield and Louisiana Area Bishop William W. Hutchinson.

Details of the realignment will be hammered out by a joint Nebraska-Kansas task force.

In the webcast, Sherer-Simpson said United Methodists in Nebraska are open to change.

"I pray that the pioneering spirit will continue to move among us as we engage in this opportunity to work with the Kansas conferences to develop a new episcopal area," Sherer-Simpson said.

New possibilities

Kansas Area Bishop Scott Jones said he was "convinced that there are real possibilities for new approaches that the leaders of Nebraska, Kansas East and Kansas West need to consider together."

The willingness of the other jurisdictional bishops to donate \$10,000 each to help meet transition expenses "will enable us to obtain the best consulting help we can find to guide the process," he noted.

"Over the last five years in Kansas, there have been significant efforts made at strengthening our mission and ministry in four areas: revitalizing existing congregations, starting new churches, ethnic minority ministry and student ministry," Jones said.

"I think all of these efforts, including the Kansas conferences' Bridges to the Future capital campaign, will provide Kansas with a strong foundation for this new future."

Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders will be presented by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, January 11-15, 2010 at Brighton Reformed Church, Rochester, NY. The institute is designed to equip church leaders with the skills necessary to deal effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict. It also includes a component on congregational intervention and consultation, placed within the context of family systems theory. For registration information, call Phyllis Palsma, Regional Synod of Albany, Reformed Church in America, at 518-605-1945.



Bishop Martinez to serve as interim head of General Board of Global Ministries



Bishop Joel N. Martinez

Bishop Joel N. Martinez will serve as interim general secretary of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries while a search is conducted for a new chief executive of the mission agency. Photo by: United Methodist News Service

Bishop Joel Martinez to serve as Interim Mission Executive

Bishop Joel N. Martinez will serve as interim general secretary of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries while a search is conducted for a new chief executive of the mission agency.

The retired bishop was president of Global Ministries' board of directors for two four-year terms, concluding in October 2008. He is stepping into a position left vacant by the resignation for health reasons of the Rev. Edward W. Paup, who held the position for one year.

Bishop Martinez' appointment, effective immediately, was announced by Bishop Bruce Ough of West Ohio, current president of the board, with the approval of the agency's executive and personnel committees.

"We are fortunate that Bishop Martinez is available to provide leadership in this time of unfortunate transition," Bishop Ough said. "He is well versed in the goals and culture of the General Board of Global Ministries. He has

a deep commitment to mission and is familiar with the operations of the agency."

In accepting the position of interim general secretary, Bishop Martinez said:

The General Board of Global Ministries has a unique legacy of witness to the fullness of the saving and renewing gospel of Jesus Christ. The call to join with a gifted team of staff, missionaries, and mission partners in mission service is a humbling experience for me. I am committed to the collaborative work of Global Ministries with the Council of Bishops, the other general agencies, and the annual conferences and congregations of the United Methodist connection, as we join in the common mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. As I undertake the responsibilities of interim general secretary of Global Ministries, I covet the prayers of the church for our board of directors, staff, missionaries, mission partners, and myself as we serve all of God's children throughout the world.

Bishop Martinez was the leader of the San Antonio Episcopal Area when he retired from the active episcopacy a year ago. He is a native of Seguin, Texas, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Texas at El Paso in 1961 and a Master of Divinity from Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, in 1965. He was ordained elder and became a member of the Rio Grande Annual Conference in 1965.

Prior to his election to the episcopacy in 1992, Rev. Martinez was pastor, district superintendent, and a staff member of the General Board of Global Ministries from 1975 to 1981. Bishop Martinez is noted for his work in justice ministries. He and his wife, Raquel, are the coauthors of *Fiesta Cristiana*, a multilingual collection of liturgical resources.

Bishop Ough said that a search process for a successor to Rev. Paup is already in progress, and he indicated that the personnel committee expects to have a new general secretary in place early in 2010.



Volunteers-in-Mission

Upcoming VIM Events

Certification Training for Early Responders, Nov. 6, at Shenendehowa United Methodist Church in Clifton Park, N.Y. Certification permits those trained to assist in the early response stages of a disaster. There may be a nominal charge to cover the cost of materials and lunch. Contact Jay Dunkleberger at jdunkleb@nycap.rr.com or (518) 371-7071.

VIM Rally, Nov. 7. The VIM Rally celebrates the wonderful work the Conference Volunteers-in-Mission teams have done over the years and will be held at Shenendehowa United Methodist Church, Clifton Park, N.Y., from 9:30 a.m. until late afternoon. Introductory training on Safe Sanctuaries and on Diversity as they apply to VIM teams will also be offered. Come and learn about being part of a VIM team, talk to those who have done it, and learn about future opportunities to join a team.

Future Troy Conference Teams

Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Oct. 10 through 18: Jack Hill will lead a large team to continue working on recovery from the severe flooding. The estimated cost is \$250-\$300, including land transportation, meals, and lodging. No experience is needed. On the job training is provided. Contact Jack Hill at vfhill@yahoo.com or (518) 753-4779 to reserve a place on his team.

Nicaragua, early February 2010: Jan and Pete Huston will be leading a VIM team on a two week mission trip to Nicaragua to work with the Nicaraguan people to provide health care, health education and help with construction work. The cost will be approximately \$2,000, and the size of the group is limited to 11 to 15. For more information, contact Jan and Pete Huston at hustonjp@sprynet.com or (518) 399-0919.

Beaumont, Tx., Oct. 18 through 24 and 25 through 31: Tony Lamb, Charlie Magill and Ken Stone will provide leadership for two week-long trips to Beaumont, Tx., to work on damage left behind by Hurricane Ike. The first week coincides with Teacher Convention Week, and is suitable for youth. Participants can come for one or two weeks. The cost is \$500 and includes airfare. For more information, contact Lamb at (802) 878-1251. There are Local Projects that need teams for one to several day periods. Emmaus Church in Albany is one of these that has had extensive help, and more is being scheduled. Contact Pete Huston if you are able to help here at hustonjp@sprynet.com or 518-399-0919.

There are also opportunities to join VIM teams from the New England, North Central New York, Western New York and Wyoming Conferences. For information about these, leading a VIM Team or taking part in a short-term VIM project, contact Jay or Cathie Dunkleberger at jdunkleb@nycap.rr.com or (518) 472-7071.

Keep up-to-date on conference transitions



Visit

UpperNewYork.org

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NEUnitedMethodistChurch.org

for news & information

Mozambique mission partners meet in Germany

By Holly Nye

You're going *where* for a mission meeting?"

It wasn't easy explaining to folks why I was off to Germany—for a long weekend.

Along with Brenda Arley of Glens Falls, I was honored to attend the late summer meeting of mission partners of the Mozambique Area of the United Methodist Church. This was an opportunity for people from the Annual Conferences who work in partnership with Mozambique to hear first-hand of the needs, hopes and priorities of the people of Mozambique.

History of mutual ministry

The relationship between Troy Conference and Mozambique goes back nearly 20 years, and encompasses 13 Volunteers-in-Mission teams (11 from Troy, two from Mozambique), as well as ongoing partnerships for leadership development. In 1990, when the country had not yet emerged from a 15-year civil war, Bishop C. Dale White and Bonnie Totten Adkins led a study team to Mozambique. The first two Volunteer in Mission teams from Troy went in 1993, followed by two more in 1995. In 1996, an invitation was extended for a team from Mozambique to visit Troy Conference. Bishop Joao Somane Machado led this historic team in the summer of 1998; another team came to Troy in 2003.

These occasions for fellowship, work and worship together were the groundwork for a deeper ongoing relationship. Building on the foundation of that relationship, many people in Troy Conference have supported ministries in Mozambique—from medical facilities to churches to mine-removal equipment—and the education of clergy in Mozambique in numerous ways.



Above, left, the Mozambique Mission Partners gather outside the Deaconess Guest House in Wuppertal, Germany. Pictured above are Brenda Arley of Glens Falls, N.Y., and Morais Quissico, who serves in the Africa Office of the General Board of Global Ministries in New York City.

In testimony to the power of these relationships, I received a heartfelt greeting from Pastor Vittoria Armando upon arrival at the meeting. "Troy Conference!" she said. "If it weren't for Troy Conference, I wouldn't be here today, and I wouldn't be standing here speaking English with you."

Vittoria and her husband, Pastor Salvador Bacar have furthered their education with support from Troy Conference partners in a Clergy Couple Education initiative.

Meeting outside U.S. for first time

This year's mission partners' meeting was held outside the United States for the first time. The location lightened the travel burden (and the effects of jet lag!) for the people from Mozambique greatly. It also shifted the perspective a bit, taking the American church out of the "center" of the picture. A participant remarked that the North American church has had a history of seeing mission from the standpoint of "internalized dominance." From a different vantage point, we could reflect on what it meant to be partners in a global sense, with the resources we bring from our very different contexts. These words from *The Soul of Money* by Lynne Twist capture the spirit of partnership well: "There are no haves and have-nots. We are all haves and our assets are diverse. In the alchemy of collaboration, we become equal partners; we create wholeness and sufficiency for everyone."

Our hosts for the gathering were German United Methodists, including Bishop Rosemarie Wenner and two staff members of the very active mission agency in Germany. "Weltmission" (world mission) was the word emblazoned on banners, papers, folders, even the pens we were given to use.

Thomas Kemper, the head of the German church's mission office, provided a keynote reflection on "partnership in mission." Using handmade dolls resembling biblical figures, he encouraged moving toward a stance of working side-by-side, fleshed out in the New Testament concept of *Koinonia*: "They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and to the fellowship (*Koinonia*), to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Acts 2:42.

Breaking bread in fellowship

The sense of breaking bread in fellowship permeated the meeting, as the small group gathered from three continents prayed, learned, ate and dreamed together. Input from the Mozambican leaders guided the work of two task groups, organized around the denomination's four areas of focus.

One group combined work on economic development and health; the other focused on churches "new places for new people and revitalizing churches," in the language of the Focus Areas) and leadership development. Undergirding this work was the conviction that, with the Spirit's guidance, the church will increasingly be a vital part



Sharing a moment of fun, representatives from Europe, Mozambique, South America and the United States met in Germany to discuss priorities for mission partnerships. From left, Vittoria Armando, an Executive Secretary of the Women's Society in Mozambique; Alfiado Zunguze, Executive Director of JustaPaz Center for Conflict Transformation; Jacob Jenhuro, Council of Ministries Director of the North of the Save Annual Conference; Filemão Vilanculo, Education Director in the North of the Save Annual Conference; and Morais Quissico, who serves in the Africa Office of the General Board of Global Ministries in New York City.

of the life and growth of the people of Mozambique.

Six people from the two annual conferences of Mozambique were present and guiding the meeting's priorities, including: Bishop Joaquina Nhanala, the first woman United Methodist Bishop in Africa; Vittoria Armando, an Executive Secretary of the Women's Society in Mozambique; Jacob Jenhuro, Council of Ministries Director of the North of the Save Annual Conference; Alfiado Zunguze, Executive Director of JustaPaz Center for Conflict Transformation; Filemão Vilanculo, Education Director in the North of the Save Annual Conference; and Morais Quissico, who serves in the Africa Office of the General Board of Global Ministries in New York City.

Also in attendance were United Methodists from Sweden, a small conference where about 4,000 people worship in about 50 churches—smaller than one of our districts—in a land area the size of California. The Swedish Conference has a strong emphasis on mission relationships in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe.

Bishop Joao Carlos Lopes of Brazil represented his country, whose partnership with Mozambique is growing. Because the two countries share the Portuguese language, they work on sharing curriculum and resources, among other connections.

Four U.S. conferences were represented: Troy, New York, Virginia, and Missouri. These are conferences of different sizes, with a range of kinds of support for mission—financial, staffing, volunteer fundraising, Volunteers-in-Mission.

Staff from the General Board of Global Ministries brought their expertise in global health, language translation, and mission resources for the African continent.

Despite the wide differences among the levels of giving and numbers of participants among the "northern hemisphere" conferences, the shared impact of all was repeatedly emphasized. No effort is too small, was the

underlying affirmation—all efforts of love and faith are part of the larger story of transformation and hope.

Affirmation and appreciation

During this extraordinary gathering, two realizations struck me. First, I noticed again and again the spirit of gratitude, graciousness and appreciation. At any time of transition in the agenda, as decisions were made or discussions completed, someone from Mozambique would take a moment to express appreciation for something or someone. There were thanksgivings for the work accomplished, but more important, there were continual affirmations for the words, thoughts, and contributions of those at the table. This struck me as an enlightening contrast to the process and spirit of some other church meetings.

Finally, what amazed me, when I took a moment to look around the room, was the reality that this small group of people, fewer than two dozen, was working in joyful faith that our efforts would make a difference in the lives of the people of Mozambique, and of the global church. It was a faith based in the affirmation that God's love is at work in our world, and God's healing is evident in the connections among us—connections reaching around the globe.

Nye is the Conference Minister for Troy Annual Conference.



Using handmade dolls resembling biblical figures, Thomas Kemper, the head of the German church's mission office encouraged moving toward a stance of working side-by-side, fleshed out in the New Testament concept of *Koinonia*

Creating media worship through participatory design

Taking technology in worship beyond the quick fix

By Holly Cargill-Cramer

Effective use of technology in worship is more than projecting pretty pictures and bulletin text. Rather it requires a complete rethinking of the mainline Protestant worship service and the role of laity in its planning. That's the extremely condensed conclusion reached through years of experience and research by Albany District Superintendent the Rev. Dr. Jim Fenimore.

In May Fenimore earned a doctorate in Science and Technology Studies from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y. His dissertation drew upon in-person research conduct at a dozen or so Protestant churches across the country that use technology in their worship—from Midwest megachurches to inner city storefronts—and upon his work with the congregation of Christ Church Troy to incorporate audiovisual technology into the development of experiential worship.

Fenimore hypothesized that many mainline Protestant churches, seeing the success of growing Evangelical churches that used technology, have felt pressured to add audiovisual equipment

traced members to mainline Protestant churches.

As he explains it, the message or Christian education component of Evangelical worship is metaphor based: "life to Bible—life stories and how the bible relates to them;" while mainline Protestant worship is lectionary based: "Bible to life—Bible stories and how life relates to them."

Life-to-Bible worship lends itself more effectively to the use of audiovisual technology.

Fenimore proposes in his dissertation, and has experienced for himself, the effectiveness of what he calls "a socio-technological fix that moves laity from consumers to co-producers...and which will produce visually interesting, theologically-appropriate media."

As pastor at Christ Church, Fenimore helped the congregation begin exploring incorporation of technology in its worship with a series of "experimental" services, followed up by listening sessions with congregants. The sessions were intended to discover what barriers might exist in moving toward media worship as the norm. He was somewhat surprised by the outcome.



Citizen experts

Fenimore created a new process for planning services that incorporated a planning team of congregants that assisted in identifying appropriate imagery and preparing computer audiovisual presentations. They worked together on five services that were presented to the entire congregation, following which the congregation entered into a time of discernment, deciding where God was leading them in this process.

While the process of experiment and discernment took the better part of a year, the congregation of Christ Church eventually committed to the finances and renovations that would be needed to move toward a completely new type of worship service.

Much time and effort were put into designing an audiovisual system that would complement the architecture of the sanctuary. But even more effort and time were put into technological and theological education to prepare the congregation and the worship design team members for a whole new way to worship that revolved around theological reflection.

Soul Café

Many in the church had experienced this through Soul Café and through a routine for children's time called "The Mystery Bag." Following the movie clips at Soul Café, the pastor and congregants would reflect on how the life experiences represented in the clip related to scripture. The Mystery Bag, taken home by a child each week and returned with a secret object inside, encouraged the same type of spiritual reflection during worship services on the parts of both the pastor and the congregants.

The entire congregation was invited to participate in the "Living the Question" Bible study series, and twelve volunteers were trained in the use of the technology installed in the sanctuary.

But the biggest change was in the way worship was designed.

Each service was designed by a diverse group of six to eight people. While the group included clergy, the traditional hierarchy in the decision process was laid aside and all decisions were the consensus of the group. Following each service, the group would gather to evaluate and learn from their experience.

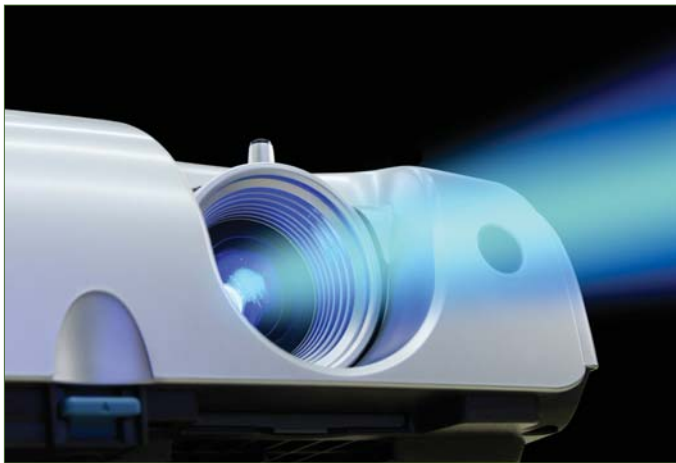
While the pastor would provide seed ideas, the design team was charged with fleshing out for each service a "visual metaphor," a theme and a scripture. The visual metaphor is a single image that represented a story; the theme was the central focus of the service. Once these elements were in place, the group would identify appropriate music, graphics, etc.

Fenimore said, "The end result of this planning process was a worship service designed by some of the people for whom it is intended. It incorporated knowledge of the community and represented their theological and ideological world-views. It reduced the pastor-people hierarchy and provides a structure for mutual and shared learning."

Over the next three years, worship attendance at Christ Church increased by over 15 percent. While each church must find its own path in the process, Fenimore believes that it is critical that "laity must be co-producers, rather than just consumers."

While mainline Protestant churches have turned to the installation of audiovisual technology in an attempt to attract young people and maintain cultural relevance, Fenimore concludes, "Relevancy is not simply the incorporation of technologies. Relevancy comes from developing a design process that allows the non-experts, 'the citizen experts,' the laity to be empowered to create the media that defines who they are and what they value.

"This is the socio-technological fix."



to their sanctuaries, but have failed to put it to its best use. As the practice of oft-called "media worship" in Evangelical churches grew, new businesses formed to develop and prepackage computer graphics, sound and text for their use. Fenimore's research indicated that most of the mainline Protestant churches using technology are either projecting only a few photos, hymn lyrics and bulletin text during services, or purchase and use these prepackaged worship materials.

Text v. metaphor

According to Fenimore, the norm has been for churches to attempt to fit technology into their existing worship format. That format is largely liturgical. The result, said Fenimore, is "text rich versus visually rich, or mass produced by Evangelical companies and theologically incongruent."

And it has not, says Fenimore, at-

A small group hungered for more of the same; another small group was opposed to any change; and the majority was neutral.

The answer seemed to be two different services with different styles, and with his colleague, his spouse and a small group of volunteers, a new service called Soul Café was launched on Sunday evenings incorporating audiovisual technology. The text for the services at Soul Café was drawn from a movie clip each week and the music was provided by local musicians. For six years, Soul Café provided a means for the congregation to safely learn the technology and grow accustomed to its use, but the church maintained its separate traditional worship service.

Then, following a study leave in 2004, Fenimore shared with his congregation what he had learned and was encouraged to begin of applying it at Christ Church.

Passion for children's radio leads to Internet ministry

By Sandra Brands

To say that the Rev. Robin Blair is passionate about her radio ministry is to suggest that the Grand Canyon is gully.

Blair, a deacon in the North Central New York Conference, says, "God wakes me up in the middle of the night to talk to me about what I'm supposed to be doing with this [ministry]."

"This whole thing is Holy Spirit driven," she said, which, she added is a good thing because she's pretty much doing the ministry alone. "It's like pushing a boulder up the hill, and if it were just me, that boulder wouldn't move."

It's called Common Good Radio, and it's an on-line radio broadcast focused on music, faith formation and parental involvement. The name was inspired by 1 Corinthians 12:6-8, "Now to each one the manifestation of the spirit is given for the common good."

"It tells us that we are all gifted, spiritual and purposeful to the common good which God has created from the beginning," Blair said. "We need to choose this path in faith. Common Good Radio is a witness and vehicle for families with children to choose in support of and to bring shape to hope for the common good."

"Common Good Radio is a safe place for children and their parents to participate in faith outside of church in a gentle, loving, faithful, non-predatory way," Blair said.

Life on-line

Face it, she said, most children are on-line, many for hours and hours at a time during a week. "They spend more time interacting with media than they do in school," she said. "It's a huge component of children's lives."

But Blair doesn't think that's necessarily a bad thing.

"Media is a fabulous tool of communication, but it depends on what we try to communicate," she said. "We can use media to transmit messages of our faith, which the institutional church is moving into with grace."

In addition to offering music, the scripture, prayer and witness, Common Good Radio offers children and parents different ways to participate. Like social media networks, the Internet broadcast station offers opportunities for children and their parents to comment, share stories and create their own media.

Children are invited to, and do, send in mp3 files they've created.

"It's not only clergy or adults offering prayers and blessings and reading scripture," Blair said. "It is the children's voices saying what they think. They've created radio and they've given it to me and it witnesses to the fruit of the spirit."

Blair speaks of one of her listeners, Megan, a 5-year-old girl, who shared her understanding of honesty. "She said it was very important to be honest because if you don't tell the truth, then

you can't go to the birthday party. That tells me that Megan does understand honesty."

There are other similar stories and shared witnesses from the children, who are identified only by their first name.

For Blair and Common Good Radio, children are never targets in a consumer market. The webcasts are free of commercial messages, and the understanding is that children are precious.

Media literacy

Inviting children and their parents to be part of making radio is an invitation to both to become media literate.

"The best way to learn about media and its messages is by creating it," she said. "When the children create media, they've had to think about it, had to create a construct and they've sent it to me. Then they get to listen to it."

Media literacy is recognizing and understanding the messages being delivered beyond the obvious message. For example, corporations pay huge sums of money to create messages that urge someone to buy a product on one level while implying on another that the purchase of the product will either make a user more attractive or wealthier or superior to others because they use that product.

There are no such hidden messages offered by Common Good Radio, Blair said, no commercials to create false expectations or foster consumerism. Instead, through her blog and through seminars offered, Blair encourages parents to listen critically and dissect messages being heard and the underlying implied messages, and to be media literate through the lens of faith.

"I encourage parents to listen for a song about honesty and, when that song comes up, let it be a springboard for conversation with your kids," she said. "It's an opportunity to talk about those things we want for our kids—compassion, beauty, a good solid foundation in faith."

Music of faith

Music is one way the Holy Spirit does what the Holy Spirit does, Blair said.

"Children relate to the transcendental nature of music—they get caught in the spirit of it," she said. "It's not just an industry where people make lots of money – it reaches people on a soul level. Music is part of the intentionality of living a life of faith. Listening to music is a way of praying twice."

"When the lyric and melody are offered up in God's glory, then children have a chance at faith formation on this soul level through participation in art," she said. "They sing, they dance, they absorb, they hear."

"That's why I like [having the radio show] on the computer because the kids are already there," she said. "If they're doing something on-line, they can have Common Good Radio on in



Using the Internet for a radio program for children, Common Good Radio, the Rev. Robin Blair offers children and their parents an option to commercial radio based in faith-formation and music.

the background and it provides a loving faithful background for them. How cool is that?"

Blair, who was a DJ for Radio Ahhs in the late 1980s, a Minneapolis-based radio station and the first that catered exclusively to children, says that while she can't offer specific demographics or statistics on how many people have logged onto the site, she can say that the broadcast is listened to in over 60 countries. "And mind you, I have a marketing budget of zero. If that is not the Holy Spirit, I don't know what is. Somehow people from around the world are logging in and listening to Common Good Radio."

"I have listeners in Bolivia and Singapore, Malaysia, Egypt, Jordan, China, Japan, India—every couple of days I check that stuff. I'm stunned and thrilled and delighted, and it has got to be the work of the Holy Spirit," she said.

Parenting podcasts

A component of Common Good Radio are a series of "Faithful Parenting Podcasts," which were originally created for the Odyssey Network, a coalition of Jewish, Christian and Muslim faith groups dedicated to media production and distribution.

"Odyssey Network is the largest producer of faith-based media," Blair said. "They create television, features, documentaries and new media. I have worked with them and contributed to

their on-line resource materials."

The network had asked Blair to create a series of podcasts of faithful parenting tips, which she spent months collecting from a wide variety of experts from different disciplines and faith traditions.

What she discovered, she said, is that regardless of "your faith tradition everyone wants pretty much the same thing for their kids—they want their kids to be healthy, to have compassion, a foundation in faith and a zest for life. That seems to be remarkably shared across cultural context and faith traditions."

"I can listen to the Imam talk to me about faith parenting, and find something really rich and beautiful for me to live by, even as a Christian woman," she said.

Common Good Radio is an extension ministry of the North Central New York Annual Conference and has been supported by several grants over four years from ministry teams within the conference. Support has also come from Grand Island Trinity United Methodist Church and the Western New York Annual Conference, as well as from donations from individuals.

The Internet radio station offers an RSS, Really Simple Syndication, feeds, and Blair invites local churches to link to it from their home pages. For more information about Common Good Radio or to read Blair's blogs, visit the web site at www.commongoodradio.org.



Mohawk District Superintendent the Rev. Sung Ho Lee, left, and the Rev. Marilyn Baissa, pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church, welcome Rethink Church participants to the training, held on Sept. 12 in Whitesboro, N.Y. District Superintendent Lee told the gathering that the large turnout was an example of what was possible when the Upstate New York United Methodist churches unite as one conference.

Rethink Church event draws large crowd

Approximately 150 people turned out for Rethink Church Training held at Trinity United Methodist Church in Whitesboro, N.Y., on Sept. 12.

Participants split into three different tracks—"Welcome," "Connect" and "Identify"—to focus on different pieces of the welcoming ministry.

"Welcome" focused on how congregations can make newcomers feel welcome and become more aware of how newcomers might see the church's facility and experience its members.

"Connect" focused on how church members can connect with newcomers personally and how to use Igniting Ministry's "Rethink Church" resources to provide additional connection points.

"Identify" focused on helping a congregation discover what it's known for and what its strengths are, how to design strategies for showcasing those strengths and how to put those strategies to work.

The national training event was led by United Methodist Communications trainers. Danette Howell, from southern Texas and Rev. Dawn Hand, from Charlotte, N.C. Don Perry, the Wyoming Conference Director

of Communications led "Welcome," one of the three tracks offered.

Rethink Church focuses on 18- to 34-year-olds and is the next phase of the denominations public awareness and advertising campaign. The campaign asks church members to "rethink" church as something more than a building, something that exists as a 365-days-a-year lifestyle. Key to this concept is that churches need to provide more than one door into church. There are thousands of doors through which a person can become engaged — many of them non-traditional.

A new web site, www.10thousanddoors.org, showcases a number of ways the United Methodist Church is rethinking church and connecting people with opportunities to make the world a better place.

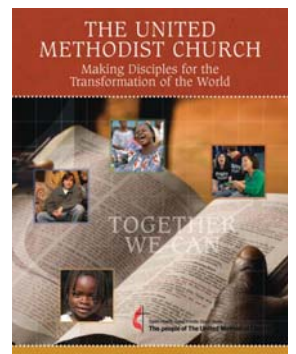
Nearly 30 people came one day earlier to be trained as Rethink Church trainers. As trainers, they will be available to help lead district and local church trainings. District trainings for churches in the Upstate New York area are being planned for next spring.

User-friendly handbook details church's mission, beliefs and structure

The 2009-2012 edition of *The United Methodist Handbook*, a free comprehensive guide to the church and the ways it lives out its global mission, prominently features the "Four Areas of Focus."

The focus areas are key ministries affirmed and adopted by the 2008 General Conference, which include: developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world; creating new places for new people and renewing existing congregations; engaging in ministry with the poor; and stamping out the killer diseases of poverty by improving health globally.

The handbook describes current needs within each area, and outlines the denomination's strategies for meeting those challenges.



"This handbook is an invaluable resource for church leaders, members, and those who are new to the church," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, chief executive of United Methodist Communications. "It captures the essence of what it means to be a United Methodist, showing who we are, where we've been, and where we're going."

New for 2009-12 are detailed maps of central and jurisdictional annual conferences that show how the connectional church serves around the world. Content also includes the mission and beliefs of United Methodists, the church's basic organization, and its history. Giving and online learning opportunities are highlighted, too.

"This handbook will assist you and your congregation to become more deeply acquainted with how The United Methodist Church lives out its mission every day," wrote Bishop Gregory Palmer, President of the Council of Bishops. "You will find resources that will coach forward your vision and capacity to do God's work in God's wonderful world."

Copies of the handbook are available free at www.umcsgiving.org, or by calling (888) 346-3862.

United Methodist Church encourages reverse Trick-Or-Treating

Ten to twenty thousand groups of children will hand chocolate back to adults during their regular neighborhood trick-or-treating rounds this Halloween. The children will distribute Fair Trade certified chocolate attached to a card explaining the labor and environmental problems in the cocoa industry globally and how Fair Trade provides a solution.

Reverse Trick-or-Treating was launched three years ago to raise awareness of the pervasive problem of child labor, forced labor and trafficking in the cocoa fields, to empower consumers to press the chocolate industry for more fair cocoa sourcing policies, to shift the industry toward sourcing Fair Trade certified cocoa, and to inform consumers about Fair Trade companies that are leading the way to industry reform. Fair Trade standards prohibit

the use of abusive child labor, contain extensive environmental sustainability protections, and enable farmers to escape poverty.

United Methodist Committee on Relief (United Methodist ChurchOR) once again encourages United Methodists to help reduce forced child labor by purchasing fair trade chocolate this Halloween.

This year's event comes on the heels of two important developments in the cocoa industry. Interpol announced in August that it identified and rescued fifty-four children from slavery in cocoa fields in Cote d'Ivoire. The children were as young as 11 years old, endured hazardous working conditions, labored 12 hours a day, and were not paid for their work. This demonstrates that the chocolate industry has still not gone far enough to end child slavery and

trafficking in the cocoa fields, even though the top chocolate companies committed to end these practices as part of the Harkin-Engel Protocol signed in 2001. Over sixty national nonprofit organizations and chocolate companies have united to call on the cocoa industry to embrace stronger cocoa sourcing standards in a statement entitled the "Commitment to Ethical Cocoa Sourcing" which can be viewed at www.reversetrickortreating.org.

Enjoy a fair trade Halloween by purchasing Equal Exchange chocolate minis and reverse trick-or-treat bags through the United Methodist ChurchOR Coffee Project. These sturdy off-white tote bags cost only \$3 and can be used for every day grocery shopping. Visit Equal Exchange's Interfaith Store at <http://interfaiththequalexchange.com> to place your order. By doing so, you



help leverage fairly-traded products that help promote better lives for farmers in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the United States.

United Methodists are encouraged to support fair trade. For every pound of fair trade product sold through the United Methodist ChurchOR Coffee Project, a portion goes to support small-scale farmers through the **Sustainable Agriculture & Development Program, United Methodist ChurchOR Advance #982188**. Write the Advance number and name on the memo line of

Communications Corner

By Rebecca Clark

Rethink Communications: It's no longer about broadcasting

I like to talk back to my books.

Anyone who has borrowed a non-fiction book from me after I've read it can attest to the fact that I underline, asterisk, and write comments in the margins of nearly every page of text I read. The more I agree—or disagree—with a passage, the more likely I am to cover that passage with notes. You should see my Bibles.

I just don't like the authors to be having a one-sided conversation with me. Maybe it's my extroversion, or perhaps it's a generational thing, or maybe I'm all alone in this. But I think that communication, even in written form, is meant to be more than one way. I believe that what is written is, or should be, an invitation to respond.

The United Methodist Church's current advertising campaign invites us to "Rethink

Church," and I suggest that we also need to rethink communication. Like all aspects of our life together, communications are not one-way affairs; what we communicate should always invite and allow for response.

Back in the day, way, way, back when we communicated by telling stories around fire circles, we knew that one story's end was an invitation to comment, rebut, or begin a new story. As we learned to write, our communication became a little more static, but still letters and scrolls flew around like ancient-day e-mails, in conversation with one another.

I blame the printing press, and then the radio, and then the television, for stripping communication of its conversation, for making it possible for one person to share his or her ideas to a broad audience without allowing that audience a chance to respond. To me, that's no longer communication. It's distribution of information or opinion. It's broadcast.

Thank goodness for the Internet.

The first wave of Internet technology was another form of broadcast media: static information, put up as a web page by one person, accessible to many. But now that static information has given way to what is called Web 2.0:

- information and opinion posted for all to see, with invitation and room for comments, rebuttals, and telling our own stories,
- blogs and social network pages allow users to respond to one another's thoughts and to share their own ideas,
- multi-user sites like the public encyclopedia Wiki-



by Rebecca Clark

pedia allow everyday average users to write, edit, and share the content of the web page itself.

For many, this is an empowering thing, entrusting the end user to be responsible for her or his own thoughts. It is also a collaborative thing, building relationships, however entry-level, between the people who dialog and work together generating content and sharing their own ideas.

I believe churches should be well versed in this open-source communication. We should, in fact, understand it very well. We are accustomed to speaking in the language of invitation, of proclamation and response. People who plan worship know that a great proclamation of the word (be it a sermon, a skit, a song...) invites and elicits a response, and that this is a miniature reflection of the divine Word that calls us all to respond with our very lives.

And so, I invite you to rethink the way your church communicates: in newsletters, in advertisements, in bulletins and worship services and web sites and Facebook pages and tweets.

How can you invite and encourage people to respond to what you have communicated?

How can you help them feel engaged in the conversation, connected to what is going on, and perhaps ready to explore relationships as they engage in conversation?

Where in your worship service is the response to the Word?

Where in your newsletter is the place for people to tell their stories?

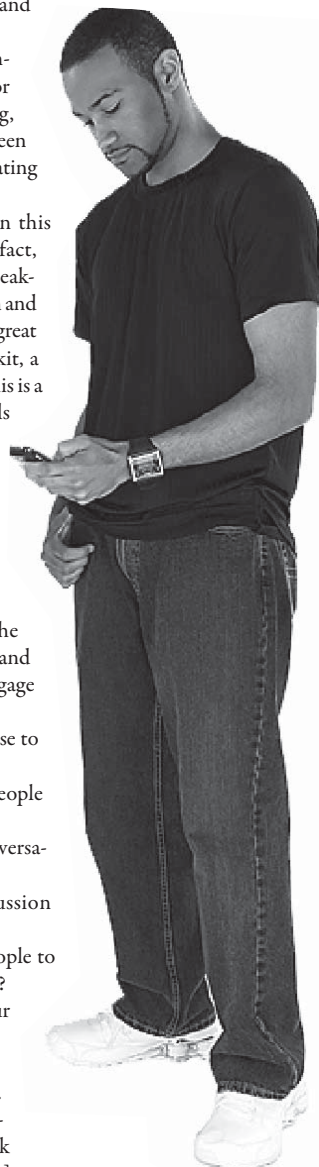
Where on your web site is the forum for conversation?

Which questions on your facebook discussion thread generate the most response?

Where might you offer greater space for people to write in the margins of what you communicate?

Do you have thoughts about how to make our church communications (at the local, Conference, and denominational levels) more response-able? I'd love to hear from you at my blog www.pastorbecca.com or on Troy Conference's Facebook page under the discussion thread: [facebook is misbehaving; I'll try to get this to you shortly].

Rev. Becca Clark is the co-convenor of the Troy Annual Conference Communications Team.



Find-a-Church opens doors for visitors

It's easy to find...but maybe you haven't noticed it yet. Or maybe you've seen it already, but still haven't propped it open. Either way, you're missing out on a new door, a new opportunity to introduce your church family to the world around you.

So where is it? Just visit www.find-a-church.org enter your zip code, select your church name ... and you're there. It's right at your fingertips—and the fingertips of those who live and work around you.

Find-A-Church helps you connect with busy people in your community

on their terms, on their time, and in their own comfort zone—right where they are. Jesus worked in a similar way during his ministry.

Already heard about Find-A-Church? You may not know that it's newly enhanced, and now helps you:

- Personally welcome visitors to your congregation
- Display and personalize your church's ministries and activities
- Introduce members
- Add details about your worship schedule
- Link to your church's web site for

a closer look

Almost 300,000 people a month already go there to learn more about local churches just like yours. And even more visitors are on the way.

Find-a-Church (FAC) is a key component of the Rethink Church initiative—the next evolution of The United Methodist Church's Open Hearts national advertising and welcoming campaign. People will be coming. The question is: Are you ready?

The ad campaign sends visitors to your church profile. When they get there, they'll discover many "doors"

they can walk through to search for a church that matches their own interests and preferences. But if your information isn't updated on Find-a-Church, they won't learn much about you, or the "doors" that can lead them into your church. And they could be missing out on the opportunity of a lifetime.

Update Your Listing Today and help newcomers find you. Your church may be exactly what they are looking for when they "click" on your door! We'll help you update. Simply complete this online short form, www.rethinkchurch.org/churchupdate and submit.

Annual Lay Speaker reports need to be filed

As 2009 winds down the time has come for United Methodist Church/Charge Conferences to take place. It is also time for *all* participants in the Lay Speaking Ministries program - *Local and Certified* - to fill out and submit their annual report form. Think back over the past year and fill in the Lay Speaker Annual Report Form, available on line at www.troyac.org or by contacting me at (518) 563-1242, Vmelin@aol.com, or 3415 State Route 9, Peru, NY 12972. Once completed, return the form as directed.

You need to send your report in every year, whether or not you have taken a course or whether or not you feel that you have done very little, in order to remain on the active list. I have also noticed that I get class lists with names on it and I never receive a report. Again, we cannot list you in the Conference Journal or keep you as an active participant in the Lay Speaking Ministries program if you do not file your annual report.

If you are a *Certified* Lay Speaker, your 2010 card will be sent upon receipt of your completed report showing that you are up to date in your requirements for renewal as a Certified Lay Speaker. This card entitles you to a discount on many of the materials available from Cokesbury.

To be listed in the 2010 *Journal* you must have completed an Advanced Course within the three-year period ending with December 2007. The 2008 *Discipline* states that "recognition as a lay speaker shall be renewed annually by the district or conference committee on Lay Speaking Ministries after the certified lay speaker has:

- 1.) Requested in writing the renewal of certification.
- 2.) Submitted an annual report for to the Church/Charge Conference and Committee Lay Speaking Ministries giving evidence of satisfactory performance of service.
- 3.) Been recommended for renewal by the pastor and church/charge conference.
- 4.) Completed at least once in every three years either a renewal course for Advanced Lay Speakers or a refresher course for Local Lay Speakers. Additional alternative courses, listed below, can be used but need to be accompanied by a statement that you took and participated in the course and how it will be used in your ministry, a copy of the signed Request and Recommendation Form and a copy of the certification received. (See ¶267 and 268 of the 2008 *Book of Discipline* if you need further clarification. Note that ¶251.f (page 165) of the 2008 *Discipline* states that "the lay leader is urged to become a certified lay speaker.

Have your forms signed at your Charge Conference by you, the Secretary of the Charge Conference, your District Superintendent or presiding elder and then be certain that two copies have two copies been made and returned as directed - one to the Conference Director and one to your District Director.

As we move toward the creation of our new annual conference, it becomes more important that we remain accountable in this ministry. One way we can do this is to file our annual reports. Please don't 'get lost in the cracks' as we work together during this time of change.

Upcoming Lay Speaking Courses

Lay Speaking Ministries offers people a variety of opportunities to serve God and neighbor. In this case the name does not say it all! Lay Speaking Ministries include teaching, leading, guiding, reaching out to others and other ways to demonstrate and proclaim the love of God in Jesus Christ.

The Basic Lay Speaking Course is the foundation for other texts in the Learning and Leading series for Lay Speakers. In this new basic course, individuals are encouraged to recognize and employ personal spiritual gifts for the Church servant leadership, developing future leaders, remaining rooted in consistent spiritual practices and being part of a group that holds members accountable in discipleship.

The new Basic Course is encourages individuals to recognize and employ personal spiritual gifts for the Church servant leadership, developing future leaders, remaining rooted in consistent spiritual practices and being part of a group that holds members accountable in discipleship.

Lay Speaking Courses are being of-

ferred in the following districts:

Adirondack District

To register for any Adirondack District lay speaking course, send a completed and signed Request and Recommendation Form, available on-line at www.troyac.org, with a check for the noted amount made out to "Troy Annual Conference" to Maxine Willis (Adirondack Director of Lay Speakers), 312 County Route 10, Whitehall, N.Y. 12877. For more information, contact Willis at (518) 499-1565 or maxcarol2002@yahoo.com.

Basic Lay Speaking Course, 7 to 9 p.m. Mondays Oct. 5, 12, 19, 26 and Nov. 2; Plattsburgh United Methodist Church, 127 Beekman St., Plattsburgh, N.Y. Co-led by Kathi McCleery and Lois Brown. Cost: \$15.

New Basic Lay Speaking Course,



7 to 9 p.m. Mondays Oct 5, 12, 19, 26 and Nov 2; Plattsburgh United Methodist Church, 127 Beekman St, Plattsburgh, N.Y. Co-led by Kathi McCleery and Lois Brown. Cost: \$15

Basic Lay Speaking Refresher Class

9:30 a.m. registration, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. class, Saturday, Oct 24; Whitehall United Methodist Church, 56 Greenmount Cemetery Lane, Whitehall, N.Y. Facilitator: Rev Debbie Estey leader To register: Please contact Maxine Willis 312 Co Rte 10, Whitehall, N.Y, 12887. 518-499-1565 or e-mail maxcarol2002@yahoo.com

Basic Lay Speaking Course: 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesdays, Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27 and Nov. 3 and 7. Closing worship and potluck, 5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 7; Hartford United Methodist Church, 47 Country Route 23, Hartford, N.Y. Facilitator, Rev. John Greenough. Cost: \$15 for registration and materials.

Advanced Lay Speakers Course: Lay Speakers Tell Stories, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Saturdays, Sept. 26 and Oct. 10, Hudson Falls United Methodist Church, 227 Main St., Hudson Falls, N.Y. Facilitator: Dawn Robbins. Cost: \$27 for books and registration; call the church office at (518) 747-6832.

Advanced Lay Speakers Course: Lay Speakers Discover Spiritual Gifts, 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesdays, Oct. 7, 14, 21, 28 and Nov. 4; Hartford United Methodist Church, 47 Country Route 23, Hartford, N.Y. Closing worship and potluck, Saturday, Nov. 7, 5 p.m. Facilitator: Rev. John Greenough. Cost: \$27 for registration and materials.

Advanced Lay Speakers Course: Lay Speakers Interpret to Others our Methodist Heritage, 7 to 9 p.m. Mondays, Oct 12, 19, 26 and Nov. 2, 9; Whitehall United Methodist Church 56 Greenmount Cemetery Lane, Whitehall, N.Y. Facilitated by Maxine Willis. Cost for book and registration: \$25.

Lay Speaking Ministries

By Vivian Melin

I always enjoy reading your report forms and seeing the wide variety of ministries in which you are involved. You are very dedicated participants in this program I see you using your caring, leading and communicating ministries within your families, churches, districts, conference and communities. I look forward to hearing about your ministries in 2000 and receiving your suggestions concerning the Lay Speaking Ministries Program as we move forward.

May God bless you on your journey and in your witness as a part of Troy Conference Lay Speaking Ministries and as a part of our new conference.



Alternative avenues for recertification

There are many courses available from the Board of Discipleship for re-certifications as an Advanced Lay Speaker. The Conference Committee of Lay Speaking Ministries recommends selection from this list of courses. Sometimes there are circumstances which prevent us from being able to take one of these courses. If this is the case, the following programs, outside of United Methodist Advanced Courses, are currently acceptable for **recertification** as an Advanced (Certified) Lay Speaker and as a **refresher** course as a Local (Basic) Lay Speaker. Any of the alternative courses can be used **one** time and not as back-to-back means of re-certification. The Troy Conference Committee on Lay Speaking Ministries requests that a course from the Board of Discipleship be used between two alternate avenues of re-certification.

- *Disciple Bible Study*. Please note which series you participate in (May be used once)
- *Companions in Christ*. Please note which series you participate in (May be used once)
- *Witness*. Discipleship Resources
- Troy Conference Spiritual Director Training (upon completion)
- Order of St. Stephen
- Summer Learning Fellowship (with certification and 10 hours of study)
- *Faith Quest*
- *Christian Believer*

Melin is the Troy Conference Director of Lay Speaker Ministries.

Mystery in a nutshell

"The mystery in a nutshell is just this: *Christ is in you, so therefore you can look forward to sharing in God's glory.*" Colossians 1:26 The Message

In August, I had the privilege of participating in a spiritual leader's conference for United Methodists. Rather than give you a "what I did this summer" report, I'd like to share some gleanings with you from Bishops Reuben Job, Bruce Ough, and Hee-Soo Jung, and Dr. Amy Oden of Wesley Theological Seminary.



This, in a nutshell, is a sweetened condensed version of some of the wisdom as I heard it. You may read the words in a matter of seconds, but I ask that you take time to savor them.

Within each of us is a God-shaped emptiness that only God can fill and so our hearts are restless until they find rest in God. (St. Augustine and Pascal) With what do we fill this space? What needs to be emptied out?

"God, can we go over it one more time—what was it we talked about so long ago?" (quote from a poem by a tired pastor in West Ohio) How easy it is for clergy and lay folks to have lives full of everything except the original calling. It's time for emptying so that we can re-discover the mystery within us.

We cannot be spiritual leaders without the Spirit's help.

We cannot lead where we are not willing to go.

Bishop Job offered three exhortations:

1. Remember who you are: God's beloved child. You are God's beloved just as you are. We need to live it and claim it for ourselves.

2. Become a regular at the table; this is where we are fed and formed. "Do justice to your own soul. Give it time and sustenance to grow." (John Wesley) Remember though, that Peter nearly missed the table (John 13). "No, you shall never wash my feet," he protested. Then Jesus warned him, "Unless I wash you, you have no part of me."

3. Go where the wounds are. Go to the places where storms have left brokenness and wounds. Go there and God will feed and heal.

God is putting the salve on all parts of human life. Salving—the ointment of grace.

Become the holy chalice of divine presence for another and you will find yourself beautifully fed and wonderfully formed.

When we are in a mutual relationship (not charity or social work but mutual relationship) with those on the margin, we are being formed.

Classes from page 17

Advanced Lay Speakers Course: From Your Heart to Theirs, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays, Oct. 24 and Nov. 7 (bring a bag lunch); Wilton-Trinity United Methodist Church, 155 Ballard Rd, Gansevoort, N.Y. Led by Philippa Lauben. Cost for book and registration: \$21.

Green Mountain District

For questions and/or registration for any Green Mountain Lay Speaking ministries course, contact Marie MacDougall, Green Mountain Lay Speaking Ministries Director, 19 Eastern Ave., Apt. 1, Barre, Vt. 05641 or (802) 461-4452 or email macdome@juno.com.

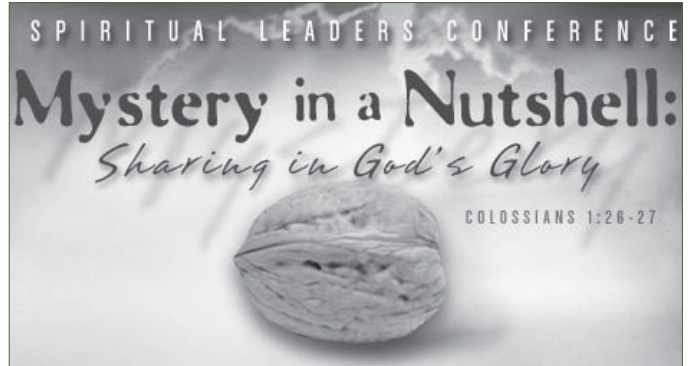
New Basic Lay Speaking Course, 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesdays, Oct. 13, 20, 27 and Nov. 3 and 10; Highgate Center United Methodist Church, 8 Hyde Road, Grand Isle, Vt. Cost: \$15. Facilitator: Paul Taylor. Complete and send the lay speaking application and recommendation, with a check for \$15 to Marie MacDougall.

Basic Lay Speaking Course, Two Saturdays, beginning at 9 a.m. Saturdays, Nov. 14 and 21 (bring a bag lunch); Hedding United Methodist Church, 40 Washington St., Barre, Vt., Led by Pastor Ralph Howe.

Advanced Lay Speakers Course: Lay Pastoral Care Giving, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Mondays, Oct. 19, 26 and Nov. 2, 9, 16; Trinity United Methodist Church, 137 Main St., Montpelier, Vt. Facilitated by John and Judy Murphy. This course is new release. It will help you learn to care for others in the community—whether the community of faith or the extended community. This course will offer insights into the life span and into the dynamics of contemporary life to help church leaders reach out with God's love and care to others.

Advanced Lay Speaking Course: "Lay Pastoral Care Giving", Monday evenings, Oct. 19 and 26 and Nov. 2, 9 and 16; Trinity United Methodist Church, 137 Main St., Montpelier, Vt. Co-led by David and Judy Murphy. David is a retired pastor with 39 years experience in ministry. Judy is a retired Health Educator and college professor. Cost: \$33 (\$15, registration; Book, \$18. For more information contact David Murphy at d.murphy47@comcast.net or contact Marie MacDougall, (802) 461-4452.

Request and Recommendation Forms are available on-line at www.troyac.org.



Spiritual Formation

By Evie Doyon

...I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding. Jeremiah 3:15

We (spiritual leaders) are these shepherds that God has promised the church. Are we willing to be dug out and emptied so that we have this heart?

Spiritual leaders need to claim the Beloved status and live into it, but reasoned self-interest keeps us in the place of resistance.

What shows fruit of the Spirit? What keeps tugging? What is being pruned? Where does it ache? Where do we sense God's presence/absence/withdrawal? Answers to these questions reveal where God is at work digging around in us.

Can we claim the mystery that "Christ is in you"? Will we live into the vision of the Kingdom of God as visionaries who see God in the God-shaped space in each person? Can we work with God to bring the healing ointment of God's grace to the wounded places? I do so pray.

"This mystery has been kept in the dark for a long time but now it's out in the open....: Christ is in you!"

May we share in God's glory,

Doyon is the Faith Formation Coordinator for Troy Conference.

THIS OCTOBER 24TH, JOIN THOUSANDS AROUND THE WORLD TO CALL FOR STRONG

CLIMATE ACTION

WE WILL HIKE, CLIMB, MARCH, DIVE UNDERWATER, KAYAK, DANCE OR STAND WITH BANNERS STATING OUR COMMON CALL TO ACTION:

350!

An International Day of Climate Action

oct. 24 2009

Join the movement!

FIND OR START AN ACTION IN YOUR COMMUNITY AT: **350.org**

News Notes

News about Troy Conference churches and people



Face painting was one of the activities the Schuylerville United Methodist Church in New York offered during their sixth annual Open House in September.

In September, **Schuylerville United Methodist Church** held their sixth Open House Event for N.Y., the Community. Workers began arrive at 8 a.m. for the 11 a.m. start time, preparing to welcome visitors to the church and show them radical hospitality. A display in the sanctuary showcased the congregation's ministries and mission, which include prayer shawls, youth, men and women's groups, and monthly Fourth Day Emmaus Gatherings. Information and photos of the church's history, confirmation material and photos and information about the church's Chancel Choir, Bell Choir and Cantata performances were set up in the vestibule near a welcoming table. A Power Point presentation showed visitors youth activities, and downstairs on a wide-screen TV, more stories and photos from Youth Fellowship retreats were broadcast. Outside, games, a "bouncy-bounce," craft table and food were set up. "It was a day of reaching out into the community and having the community flow inward toward us," said **Pastor Bonnie Bates**. "As we Rethink Church may we continue to find new

and inventive ways to be Christ to the world..."

With an average of 328,753 steps per team member, the **Troy Conference GoZone** team, **Frenetic Feat**, walked into the top spot in the **HealthFlex GoZone Challenge** team competition.

Participants signed up for the challenge and received a pedometer, which tracked the number of steps taken daily between July 15 and Aug. 12. Conference walkers were **Steve Butler, Brigid Farrell, Jim Fenimore, Henry Fruch, Sharon Miller, Richard Stahl, Larry Lake, Sarah Lake, Steven Smith, Heather Smith, Debbie Earthrowl, Holly Nye, Kenneth Williams, Steven Clunn, Shirley Oskamp** and **William Neil**.

The **New York Annual Conference** took the second spot.

In the individual competition, there was a 17-way tie for first place, with each member logging 870,000 steps. In all, **HealthFlex** announced, participants logged 709,581,760 steps during the challenge.



Queensbury United Methodist Church's "garden angel" Lori Shaver works in the church vegetable garden harvesting produce for the Open Door Food Pantry.



Since it began, the Queensbury United Methodist Church's Prayer Shawl Ministry has distributed nearly 400 shawls to places as far away as the Netherlands, Germany and Peru.

Tomatoes, string beans, cucumbers, lettuce, squash and other vegetables ringed with yellow and orange dwarf marigolds have taken the place of a large flowerbed alongside the church entrance ramp at **Queensbury United Methodist Church** in New York.

The reason? Church member **Doug Meyerhoff** had a vision.

During a break in a Bible study, Meyerhoff spied a member of the church's Board of Trustees, armed with a pitchfork and a shovel, ready to tear out the weeds and perennials and replace them with grass.

Meyerhoff thought, Why not turn the bed into a vegetable garden and give the resulting fresh produce the **Open Door Food Pantry** in Glens Falls

The idea took root. Meyerhoff and his wife, armed with gardening tools and prayers, began to prepare the bed for the vegetable garden. Garden Time, a local garden center, donated young plants that were soon set out in neat rows.

The following Sunday, the congregation celebrated the new ministry with a dedication service.

Four hundred prayerfully crafted knitted and crocheted prayer shawls have been created so far by the women of the church. The Prayer Shawl Ministry began in May 2008, when members **Lois Rowe** and **Louise Archambault** asked the congregation if it would be interested in participating in a ministry that offered a prayer shawl to someone who needed to be wrapped in the warmth, love and faith of the congregation. More than 26 women began meeting at the church to talk and pray about how they could participate in the ministry. Yarn was purchased or donated. A crocheted angel is made to accompany each shawl. Before being distributed the shawls are placed on the altar and the congregation is invited to lay their hands on the shawls and pray for those who will receive the gifts of love.

"**Emmaus Intervention Project with Recent Immigrants and Refugees**," a ministry of **Emmaus United Methodist Church** in Albany, N.Y., has

become an official project of the **United Methodist Church Advance** for the 2009 through 2012 quadrennium. As Advance Project #3011057, the ministry will be promoted and marketed to United Methodist congregations throughout the connectional system. It grants the right to solicit United Methodist congregations for designated support for the ministry.

Troy Conference Disaster Response Coordinator for New York **Hank Coghill** and **Bill Borthwick** delivered 183 health kits, 137 school kits, 62 flood buckets, 6 layette kits and 3 bed kits to **Mission Central** in Mechanicsburg, Pa. in August. The kits were donated by local churches. Mission Central is a "mission warehouse" that supports the work of the **United Methodist Committee on Relief** (United Methodist ChurchOR). Since their beginning in June 2002, Mission Central has hosted thousands of volunteers who come to Mission Central to experience being "the hands and feet of God in service." With their volunteers, they process United Methodist ChurchOR "Relief Kits" for use around the world, provide all types of needed supplies for local and national ministries, and assist many projects that are sending God's love

DOORS TO EDUCATION

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY
Providing college scholarships for racial- and ethnic- minority students in the United States and International students.

"Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous and they will gain in learning."
Proverbs 9:9, NRSV

Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Arms.
The people of The United Methodist Church

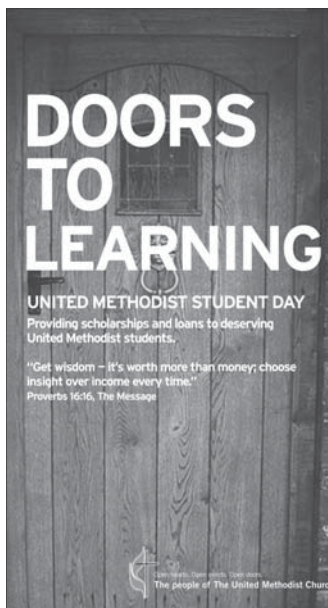


Dr. Belinda Forbes

around the world.

Dr. Belinda Forbes (Advance #12109Z), a United Methodist missionary to Nicaragua, attended the **Troy Conference Volunteer-in-Missions** meeting on Sept. 25, visited **First United Methodist Church** in Schenectady, N.Y., on Sept. 27. The congregation has a covenant relationship with Forbes, who serves at **Acción Médica Cristiana**. Churches and individuals can partner with a missionary by into a Covenant Relationship. The partnership is more than a financial commitment; it is a dynamic relationship where the church and missionary pray for one another and communicate regularly. To learn more about Covenant Relationships, visit <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/advance/missionaries/covenant/>.

The Rev. **Bill Elwell**, pastor of the **Bristol Federated Church and Monkton Friends Church** in Vermont and the Disaster Relief Coordinator for Vermont, will attend a training at the **United Methodist ChurchOR Depot at Sager-Brown** in Baldwinsville, La., Nov. 16 through 20 to learn how the **United Methodist ChurchOR** operates. The **Conference Board of Global Ministries** pays a portion of



the transportation for the training, while United Methodist ChurchOR pays the rest.

The Sunday School students of **Fortsville United Methodist Church** in New York decided to donate \$500 of their hard-earned mission collection to **Heifer International** to purchase a heifer. But first they decided to challenge their congregation to raise enough money in the Sunday School's annual Coins-for-Mission drive for a second heifer. The students presented a Reader's Theater called "A Tale of Two Cows," to the congregation, challenging them to bring in another \$500 in coin containers made by the students.

Fortsville's Trustees then offered to donate money for another heifer if the students met their goal. That led to the Administrative Council agreeing to make a donation for another heifer if the challenge was met. For a month, the students encouraged the congregation to fill their coin containers every Sunday. After sorting and wrapping pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters, the students discovered they had collected enough coins to purchase not one, but two more heifers. The Sunday school made a donation for a third heifer. The trustees and Administrative Council fulfilled their pledge leading to the purchase of a fourth and fifth heifer. The students were proud of their efforts and grateful for the support of the congregation in their own Heifer Church Challenge to reach out and help others through Heifer International.

Ten **Troy Conference** students are 2009 recipients of scholarships and loans from the **General Board of Higher Education and Ministry**, receiving awards in excess of \$18,000. The recipients include **Anna Shippe of Centenary United Methodist Church** in Greenwich, N.Y., currently a student at the SUNY-Stony Brook; **Christian Geuther of Christ United Methodist Church** in Troy, N.Y., currently a student at Boston University School of Theology; **Cheryl Meachen of First United Methodist Church**, Brattleboro, Vt., a student at Boston University School of Theology; **Jonathan Flint of First United Methodist Church**, Burlington, Vt., a student at Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pa.; **Corey Brown of Granville United Methodist Church** a student at SUNY College of Technology at Canton; **Timothy Hatlee of Jonesville United Methodist Church**, N.Y., a student at Syracuse University; **Shannon Rivenburg of Newtonville United Methodist Church**, N.Y., at Western State College of Colorado, Gunnison, Co.; **Timothy Kineke of Shenendehowa United Methodist Church** in Clifton Park, N.Y., a student at Syracuse University; and **Brett Chipman of Williston Federated Church** in Williston, Vt., a student at Syracuse University. Scholarships and loans are funded, in part, by the donations received during **World Communion Sunday**, Oct. 4, and **United Methodist Student Day**, Nov. 29, as well as from the **Native American Ministries Sunday**, observed in



Bishop Matthews to lead group to Oberammergau 2010 Passion Play

Bishop Marcus Matthew of the New York West Episcopal Area, will lead a 10-day travel program to Europe which will have as its highlight an optional to see the 2010 performance of the Oberammergau Passion Play. An educational itinerary has been developed and participants in this travel program will depart on July 27.

During the journey, groups will worship and have meditations at appropriate places. Highlights include Innsbruck, Salzburg, the optional Oberammergau Passion Play, the Brenner Pass and Bressanone in Italy, the Abbey of Ettal, the Weis Church, and an Optional Tour of Neuschwanstein Castle, the castle that inspired Walt Disney.

Participants will experience the Passion of Christ through music and drama and learn about the roots of

Christianity in Europe and how the church shaped European history.

The journey is open to church members, their families and friends. The travel/study program has been arranged by Educational Opportunities, a Christian organization whose objective is to provide pastors and church members with affordable, first class learning experiences. One advantage of this customized itinerary is the one week stay in family run Austrian hotels which will serve as home base, eliminating frequent re-packing and long trips via ground transportation.

For more information, contact Rev. Deborah Waldron at (315) 858-1134 or deborahlnw@gmail.com. You can also contact your local pastor for information or visit the EO web site at www.eo.travelwithus.com.

GBOD conducts survey on economic crisis and church

The General Board of Discipleship is conducting a research survey to discover how the current global economic crisis is affecting practices of worship across the United Methodist Church. I

n particular, the Board is interested in learning how the economy has affected staffing, programming and the purchase and use of resources by local congregations, annual conferences, campus ministries, and other faith com-

munities within our denomination that gather for worship.

The findings of the survey will be published and used by the Center for Worship Resourcing in the coming year.

The survey may be found online at www.surveygizmo.com/s/164615/4gv6b or can be accessed by clicking on the link to the survey on the GBOD website at www.gobd.org/worship.

Spirit from page 1

Spirit with her through airport security on her way to and from Wesley Theological Seminary. "I think some of the kids were looking at me like I was a little bit strange," she laughs.

She reflects that the lengthy Course of Study program remains upbeat and friendly with awards like Spirit and the Hospitality Hat, and she explains how Spirit's recipients are chosen. "The current recipient, usually in consultation

with other students in the program, looks for a person who is cheerful and helpful and exudes a spirit for Christ," she says. "When you have spirit like that, it's visible."

Pastor Carol is glad to carry on that proud tradition. She has suggested, however, that the Spirit award be given out after each term, rather than only at the end of the summer term.

"Spirit needs to be shared," she says.



Celebrating 20 years of camp ministry in Vermont

The Rev. David Murphy, left, welcomes guests to the 20th anniversary celebration of Covenant Hills Christian Camp located near Cabot, Vt. The anniversary celebration paid tribute to the formation of the camp, a joint program of Troy Conference of the United Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ. Above, Rev. Jim McPhee, from left, assistant to Bishop Peter Weaver of the New England Annual Conference, speaks with retired Troy Conference Executive Camp Director the Rev. Harold Shippey and Carol Shippey. Covenant Hills Camp will become part of the New England Conference next year when the Vermont churches of Troy Conference unite with the New England Annual Conference..

Participants show commitment to ending poverty *from page 1*

planned activity for every night. We enjoyed story tellers, musicians, parachute games, a movie, a softball game and campfires in the evening with s'mores and hobo pies."

Participants of the Tent-A-Thon camp out in tents to show their commitment to eliminate poverty. They may opt to stay one night or for the entire week. Work schedules may be maintained throughout the event but campers must return to the site each evening. Tents collect pledges from family, neighbors, friends and co-workers for each night they participate.

Arnott explained the experience of the event as "giving up the comforts of your own home, to enable others to have their own home."

A strong supporter of Habitat, Arnott likes the program because it is a hand-up, not a hand-out.

"The owners of Habitat houses pay back the cost of the home with zero interest," she said. "The donations to Habitat are multiplied year after year. As the houses are repaid, the money is used to build additional houses, which will also be repaid.

"Habitat houses are similar to the roots of our country," she said. "As the west was settled, neighbors would band together for a barn raising to help out neighbors. This is exactly the way that Habitat builds houses. A good portion of the funds raised from this event will go to the sixth United Methodist house built in Albany."

This year's Tent-A-Thon was held in August at Tawasentha Park in Guilderland, N.Y. A new attendee included the Rev. Janice Palm, pastor of Delmar United Methodist Church, N.Y. Palm had been involved with Habitat for many years, as a Pastor at Wilmington

United Methodist Church and also as a family project.

"The Wilmington United Methodist Church (N.Y.) started a Habitat program, which became a nonprofit organization for the High Peaks area," Palm said. "With that experience my family also got involved. Rather than giving to one another at Christmas, we gave to various Habitats. When I came to Delmar United Methodist Church and found the church involved with Habitat, it was a natural step for me to continue the support."

Palm said her reasons for attending this year's Tent-A-Thon was "a way to help others in the church become aware and involved with Habitat either through camping out or making a donation. I stayed over one night. I am sure that the tent accommodations and 'catered' supper I was offered were far better than what some without housing endure. "While there, I was impressed with several who stayed many or all of the nights," she said. "One couple kept their work schedule up during the week. That meant that they got up at 4 a.m. in order to go home and freshen up and be able to make it to a job north of the Capital District area."

Another participant from Delmar United Methodist Church was Kevin Conley who stayed for two nights and all day on Saturday, to help keep watch over the tents.

Conley said, "The Tent-A-Thon provides an opportunity to meet people from other churches in the Capital area in a relaxed environment. The park is in a rural area, so the stars are brilliant. I saw two

shooting stars on my first night. Sunsets over the Helderbergs are beautiful. Route 146 is conducive to bike riding, which I did early Saturday. I find the event to be a relaxing experience."

Two other congregants from Delmar United Methodist Church provided entertainment for the event: Dave Hart, a musician and Jen Bailey with Parachute Play.

People from Voorheesville, Calvary, Slingerlands and Pine Grove United Methodist Churches also participated in the ecumenical event.

Ericka Small, Development Director of Capital District Habitat for Humanity expressed appreciation of the United Methodist Church and their continual support of Habitat.

"The United Methodist Church is

one of our most important sponsors," she said. "No one else has sponsored more houses in the local affiliate. The estimated amount raised by the Tent-A-Thon was over \$7,000. The funds will be used to complete current construction at 5 Stephen Street in Albany and the balance banked towards the next United Methodist house."

The Tent-A-Thon offers good fellowship, a break from routine in a peaceful setting, all while raising funds to benefit those in need. Next year's Tent-A-Thon will be held in Tawasentha Park in Guilderland during the third week of August.

For more information contact the Habitat offices at (518) 462-2993 or check the website at www.CapitalDistrictHabitat.org.



Started 16 years ago by the congregation of McKownville United Methodist Church in Albany, N.Y., the Habitat for Humanity Tent-A-Thon is now a community event. Above, participants set up their tents in Tawasentha Park in Guilderland, N.Y.