



USPS 016-748
Vol. 13 No. 1 February/March 2009

How's your connection?

Ministry in the age of online networking

By Rebecca Clark

It's Wednesday morning, and I am doing an important aspect of my ministry. I'm updating my Facebook status. Later, I plan to enter a new blog post, respond to some questions I was sent by email, and check to see how many people downloaded last Sunday's sermon.

Just playing around on the Internet?

I don't think so.

For almost a year, I've been maintaining a blog (an online journal or web log) at pastorbecca.com, where I post notes, reflections, stories, and recordings of recent sermons. I know that these resources are accessed by members of the two congregations where I serve, especially when they are out of town, Methodists from around the connection, friends and family keeping up with me from afar, and people I've never met who might be interested in one individual's take on faith

Networking continued page 17



What if church wasn't just a building, but thousands of doors?

In late April, the United Methodist Church will begin to open doors, 24/7 at www.10000doors.org, doors that will connect people with ministries and missions throughout the world. Part of the "Rethink Church" awareness campaign, the website will connect local church ministries with people both inside and outside the church. The upper New York area has been selected as a test market for the campaign. Stories on pages 18 and 20.

Transition already underway as Vermonters look East

By Rebecca Clark

Twenty-two lay and clergy persons from Troy and New England annual conferences met on Jan. 6 in Lebanon, N.H., to continue conversation around the upcoming change in conference boundaries.

On this day of Epiphany, participants discussed a vision of a new conference, a "new and improved" New England Annual Conference.

"We don't know exactly what it will look like," said John Blackadar, District Superintendent of the New Hampshire District, "but it will mean that the New England Annual Conference is going to have to practice radical hospitality. My hope is that as we figure out how that plays out on a conference level, it might get translated back to local churches practicing greater hospitality."

John Marshall, pastor of Grace United Methodist Church in St. Johnsbury, Vt., celebrated the opportunity that a boundaries change might be an inspiration to try something new.

"If we are going to reverse the current declining trend of United Methodism in the New England area, we may need to make changes," Marshall said. "This may be a great excuse to make the needed changes."

Change continued page 6

Inside ...

Meet the new Director of Skye Farm Camp

Page 5

Church re-vamps way of operation

Page 8

Winter Camping News Brochure

Page 9-12

On Becoming New

Stories from the New Area Conference Team (New ACT) and

The Vermont-New England Transitional Team

Pages 6 and 7

Vision for New ACT continues to unfold

By Marilyn J. Kasperek

The New Area/Conference Team (New ACT) continued their visioning process for the new Upper New York conference and reviewed how the nuts and bolts of the new structure will be assembled, during a meeting in Cicero, N.Y., on Jan. 10.

As has been their practice, members of New ACT spent a time of study and meditation on scripture early in their gathering. It was a time of reflection on how God's word is speaking to this transition team as they seek to set the direction for the new conference and begin to develop the structure which will support the evolving conference.

"People need to understand everything we do is under girded by prayer," Bishop Marcus Matthews noted. "It makes our work unique and different."

Nuts and Bolts

As the group began their work of the day, Anne Hutchins was named as staff person for New ACT, with the role of taking minutes, distributing materials, etc. Hutchins will be compensated from funds apportioned by the Northeastern Jurisdiction for transition to the new conference at the same rate of pay she receives for her work in the North Central New York Conference. She was affirmed unanimously.

Bishop Matthews introduced John Goolsbey to New ACT. Goolsbey is serving as a consultant to the newly formed Administration, Property and Finance Task Force.

Goolsbey is a layperson and Deputy General

New ACT continued page 7

I wonder as I wander ...

From the road to Bethlehem to the road to Jerusalem

We Christians are not a settled people. Rather, our faith story is one of a community on a pilgrimage. Our seasons of the Christian year remind us of varying stages of that journey.

In Epiphany, we began with the road to Bethlehem, the road traveled by Wise Ones who followed a star on a route they did not have fully laid out for them. That star led them to find a newborn, to whom they gave lavish and unusual gifts. They sensed in this helpless child one who brought the very life of God into human existence, one who would change the direction of their journey. In fact, they went home another way, Matthew's gospel tells us. In this very beginning of the pilgrimage, we discover that this child Jesus, God's Word to us and with us, is meant to be a "light to the nations," not just for the chosen few.

Part way through Epiphany, we encounter the adult Jesus, newly baptized by John and proclaimed through the Holy Spirit as "the beloved child" of God, inviting persons to join him on the journey to which God has invited him. "Come with me!" Jesus said. In John's Gospel the first ones to hear the invitation are Andrew and Simon Peter his brother, Philip and Nathanael, who at first did not believe that "anything good could come from Nazareth!"



Bishop Hassinger

Those first disciples then began a three-year long journey, which we focus on in Lent, the journey of discipleship, which led them towards Jerusalem. During that journey, those disciples learned that they would go to places they had not expected, including Samaria, a place they previously had been taught to avoid because of racial and religious differences. They discovered that they were asked to meet with and deal with unsavory people, whom formerly they would have kept at arms' length: the women who journeyed with them, the tax collectors who represented the oppressive government, the lepers and the poor, the hungry who needed food for the body as well as nurture for their spirits. They recognized that they were asked to take risks outside their comfort zone for the sake of bringing God's wholeness to broken people and challenging the systems which kept people from being whole.

Life was never the same for those who took that journey with Jesus towards Jerusalem. At times that journey was exciting and energizing. At other times it was scary and the future seemed uncertain. What kept them on the journey was the vision which Jesus kept before them, of God's longing for reconciliation with and relationship with all people, no matter what their racial or ethnic background, no matter what their economic reality, no matter what their profession or means of earning a living, no matter what their religious "party."

As I've pondered the journeys to which God has invited us as people of faith in the Albany Episcopal Area, I believe that Jesus has invited us on a journey of faithful following that will lead us to places we had never anticipated. We have been given an unprecedented opportunity to follow Jesus' way in ways that connect with the 21st century. This journey is not about conference mergers, or downsizing the number of bishops. If that is our focus, we will be going nowhere fast. Rather this journey is about:

Recognizing that the church of this century needs to focus on "being" faithful to that mission of Jesus in ways that reach out to the whole world, beyond the walls and structures of our buildings and our current structures and organizations, and beyond our current comfort zones.

Working with those both within the Christian community and at times to partner with our neighbors who are "un-churched" or "de-churched", in order to bring the wholeness which God offers to us and to the whole world, to bring healing to the broken and broken-hearted, and to seek freedom for those who are captive to whatever binds them, to bring food for the spirit to those who are "poor in spirit," and food for the body to those who are hungry.

Finding the resources—and believing that God will provide the resources we need as we go along—that will help us to be faithful and engage in the mission.

Just as the Wise Ones had to go home by another way, transformed by the encounter with God's presence in the baby in the manger, just as the disciples had to discover that their presuppositions about what worked needed to give way to new ways of being, thinking, and behaving, so I believe that we are called to this journey for this time.

This is the work that is at the core of what your conference leadership has been engaged in over these last several months. The extended cabinets of both Troy and Wyoming Conferences have been considering prayerfully what it means for all of us to be on this journey at this time. We know that we need to become clearer about God's mission and vision for us, and to covenant to new ways of being before we identify the structures and procedures by which we will carry out that mission and vision. And we believe that any structural work needs to be consistent with the mission and vision.

This work is not just about the appointment cabinet working on appointments together, though we are. That helps us to live our way into "being" part of a larger cabinet. This work is not just about the extended cabinet supporting each other through this transition process, though we are. We are spending consider-

able amount of "balcony time" to get a view of "the big picture," and to prepare ourselves for leading in this post-Christendom time, when "being church" looks and is different from what worked in the mid-20th century. This work is not just about the Boards of Ordained Ministry thoughtfully and prayerfully examining what changes are required as they seek to credential ordained leadership for a different context.

Similar work is going on in the New ACT group, in the Upper New York Area, and the input from those who were part of a mid-November gathering of leaders from various groups will be shared more widely in the near future for your response and feedback. Similar work is also happening as the Central Pennsylvania and Wyoming conferences team, as leaders will be gathering in late February. A conversation between persons from Vermont and New England in early January also held before us the question of our common vision and witness.

Not only are these conversations appropriate in these larger venues. Every local church needs to be engaged in examining "How is God calling us to faithful journeying in our communities now? Where is God leading us to share the good news about the transformation that comes to lives and faith communities through God's presence with us?"

As your church moves from Epiphany into the season of Lent, I invite you to engage in prayerful conversations—in small groups, in the Church Council, in other settings. Hear Jesus' invitation, "Come with me!" And be open to that journey taking you to unexpected places, to engage in dialogue with unusual people, to face opportunities and take risks.

At the same time that these efforts at clarifying vision and mission are happening, there are also dialogues among the six conferences about how to deal with pensions and health benefits, with financial and property assets and administrative matters, and with short- and long-range communication and information technology strategies. In all of these matters, groups are drawn from leadership of the 6 conferences and are resourced by staff persons from general church agencies. In all of these areas, it is expected that the specific details will be dealt with in light of our overarching vision and mission, and not out of expediency or simply adopting the model of a particular annual conference.

We are the people whom God is choosing at this time and in this region to follow boldly into a different future, a future that is faithful to the hospitality and grace and compassion which Christ has offered to us.

I'm reminded of a hymn written by Charles Albert Tindley, prolific hymn writer and founding pastor of the African American congregation of Tindley Temple in Philadelphia, Pa.

*Beams of heaven as I go, through this wilderness below,
guide my feet in peaceful ways, turn my midnights into days.
When in the darkness I would grope, faith always sees a star of hope,
and soon from all life's grief and danger I shall be free someday.
I do not know how long 'twill be, nor what the future holds for me,
but this I know: if Jesus leads me, I shall get home someday.* (UM Hymnal, 524)

Perhaps Tindley's words might be our theme song as we journey towards Jerusalem.



(USPS 016-748) is published February, April, June, August, October and December by the Troy Conference of the United Methodist Church, 396 Loudon Rd., Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866. Periodicals postage paid at Saratoga Springs, NY, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
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Letters, news items and photos are invited and should be sent to the editor. Publication cannot be guaranteed, but all submissions will be carefully reviewed for use. The editor reserves the right to edit material to conform to editorial policy, style and length. The deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month for publication in the next month's issue. Individual subscriptions are available through the Conference Office.

Mission of church to nurture faith, not maintain building

By Bob Lowenthal, Green Mountain District Superintendent

I have been thinking lately about turnarounds, reversals, '180s.' As I come to the closing months of my time as a superintendent, I remember a turn around eight years ago, after I said for years, to myself and others: "I'll never be a district superintendent."

Of course, Christian life is about turnarounds. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus returned from his wilderness journey and began his ministry saying, "Repent and believe the Gospel"—"turn around, turn toward the good news."

In his teaching, Jesus many times spoke of turning things upside down:

"Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

"Whoever becomes humble like a child will be greatest in the Kingdom of God."

"But many who are first shall be last, and the last will be first."

Jesus spoke of reversals many times in his ministry:

Being partly a product of the '60s, I also heard this message from many directions, often in the music I listened to. I believe that Bob Dylan was one of the prophets of the '60s, and he resonated with Jesus' words and put them to verse:

"The line it is drawn, the curse it is cast. The slow one now will later be fast, as the present now will later be past- the order is rapidly fadin'. And the first one now will later be last, for the times they are a'changin'."

As I think about the church (and I think about the church a lot!), there are some turnarounds that have got me to thinking differently about our life together in the Body of Christ. Most of these I have discovered- I think that we are co-creators with God, but mostly we discover what is already there, and hear through fellow travelers. And these turnarounds have forced me to think differently about how we go about church.

The first is a quote from a Catholic community's publication, and says:

"It's not so much that God's church needs a mission, as that God's mission needs a church."

This one is still working on me and will continue to inspire different ways of seeing, but mostly it turns me, and maybe the church, from seeking to create our own mission, fulfilling our own desires for the church, to seeking God's vision, and listening, always, for God's voice and direction.



Lowenthal

There are two other turnarounds that reinforce that statement. The first was inspired by a sermon at the Williston Federated Church:

"In Advent, we ask not so much what we wait for from God, but what is God waiting for from us."

And this one: *"It's not so much that we need Jesus on our side as we need to be on Jesus' side."*

All of these statements turn me toward God for direction, rather than trying to see and explain my vision. The church would do well, I think, to do this kind of turning.

Bill Easum, in his writing and teaching, has often suggested turnarounds. The one I remember that has had an impact on my thinking about church was inspired, I think, by Jesus' words about being a servant: Easum says that being a member of a church is not about privilege and entitlement, but about service and serving.

I grew up thinking that if you became a member, then you were entitled to the services of the church and the pastor, you got invited to potluck suppers and the programs of the church, and got a good parking place. One of the manifestations of this kind of thinking, Easum says, is that members pay for wedding services and nonmembers get the services of the church free.

But according to Easum, membership doesn't so much have its privileges but its obligations and responsibilities. This thought turns assumptions upside down—at least, it did for me.

One turnaround churches struggle with involves the church building.

We have many wonderful, historic church buildings in Vermont. Some are famous calendar views, right up there with Vermont's covered bridges. Many of these church buildings are a reminder of the presence of the church in those places—a good thing. The problem is that often it seems that the mission of the church is to maintain and preserve the building, rather than to nurture and offer faith and discipleship, and care for the world.

But, turn that around to "The church does not serve the building, the building serves the church."

God is continually calling me to turn around, away from false attitudes and understanding, away from my idols, and toward the Good News of Jesus Christ. I pray that the church can get turned around enough to face the light, and become all that God has in mind for us.

Because I do believe that it's not that God's church needs a mission; God's mission needs a church—our church.

Images of Christian community

By Holly Nye, Conference Minister

On a recent snowy Sunday, I had the privilege of being in worship with the congregations of the Champlain-Three Steeples and the Mooers/Mooers Forks United Methodist Churches in New York, as well as several visitors from the area. While it was wonderful to share in leadership with pastors Al Johnson and Steve Loan, what was remarkable about this Sunday was the setting: to get to our gathering space, we walked past the foosball table, pool table and the bar!

You see, the pastors had done some reflecting on what it might mean to take the church out into the world, and for my visit, they had reserved the local VFW hall dining area. Worshipers sat around tables, and a pot-luck brunch awaited us in the back of the room. The first slide on the screen up front proclaimed, "The church has left the building!" The call to worship drew on Eugene Peterson's version of Revelation 21 in *The Message*: "Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood..."

We sang and prayed, we heard the Baptism Sunday text from Mark, which refers to "changed life" no less than five times, and we heard the Acts 2 text that has guided much of my work these past months. Around our tables and in the larger group, we reflected on what kind of changed lives we envision for our congregations in this time and place.

We talked about the quality of life described in the book of Acts, where the followers of Christ came together to attend to God in prayer, learning and fellowship, and served the world, all in such a way that others noticed and wanted to share in this changed life. How can our congregations cultivate, and offer to others, a way of living that shines forth as a life-giving alternative to the stresses and obsessions of life in the 21st century, what Peterson calls "this sick and stupid culture" in Acts 2:40?

We noted that this kind of life in Christian community calls for a clear sense of **purpose** and shared engagement in **practices** of shared prayer and study. In talking around our tables about what we heard in the texts, and where we have seen God at work in our communities, we lived into some of those practices. And while someone noted that it would be so much easier if God would speak to us directly—like Morgan Freeman in the back seat of the car in *Evan Almighty*—a film scene we discussed briefly—we remembered that in Christian communities of support and accountability, God becomes present to us through and among



Nye

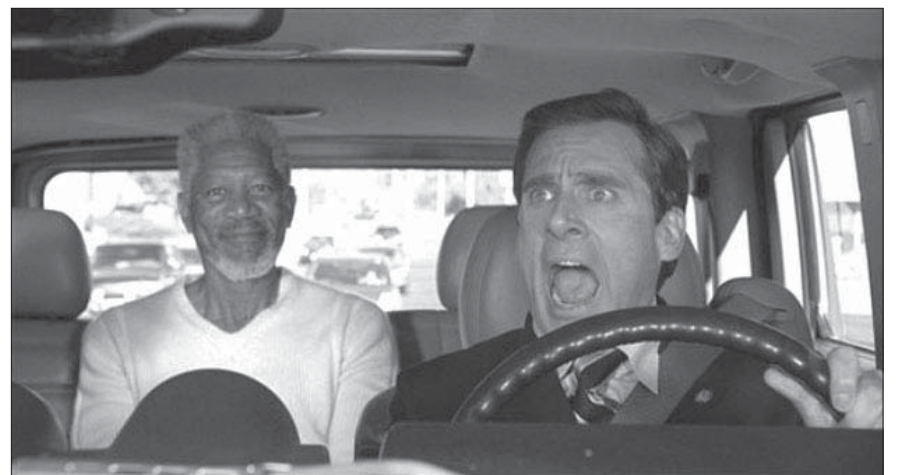


Photo courtesy Universal Pictures

our brothers and sisters.

Since this gathering took place the day after a New Area/Conference Team (New ACT) meeting, I was able to describe how that team is coming to see that the focus of an annual conference needs to be on "the neighbor"—on creating a collective way of life that supports and empowers local congregations to be present in life-giving ways to those **not** in our churches. This emerging focus is, I hope, the starting places for many more conversations among congregations wishing to fulfill their call to attend to God and tend to the their neighbors' needs.

Worship on that Sunday did not really end with a song or benediction. Our prayers and singing led right into the blessing of a meal, which led to movement and conversation, which led to games of foosball and billiards. It was all a part of our celebration. As I left the building, past the darkened bar and out past the cannons in the VFW parking lot, the image of Christian community in Acts 2:42, 46 echoed in my mind: "They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers....every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw."

Congregations are encouraged to engage in the New Year/New Vision exercise mailed to churches from the Covenant Council in December, and available online at http://troy.brickeriver.com/files/oFiles_Library_XZXLZ/CC_New_Year_Letter_PXJEK82P.pdf. Any congregation wishing assistance from a trained spiritual director for this process may contact Evie Doyon, Faith Development Coordinator at eviedo@gmail.com or (802) 485-7144

Farrell accepts superintendent appointment with leap of faith



On one hand, Brigid Farrell was shocked — “Why me?” she said. On the other, because of her background and interests, the request made sense.

So, when the Rev. Bob Lowenthal, Green Mountain District Superintendent, gave her a call just before Thanksgiving, inviting her to have lunch with the bishop and saying, “You know what this is about,” she was somewhat prepared.

“Basically,” Farrell said, “he told me that the bishop wanted to talk to me about going on the district.”

Farrell said that throughout the process, which included conversations with the bishop and meeting the Green Mountain District Superintendency Committee, she alternated between wondering why she was considering the appointment and moments of peace and assurance “that this was part of God’s plan, that this was the next turn on the journey.

“I take [the appointment] with a huge leap of faith,” she said. “It’s a challenge, but I have a great trust in God and the process, and a hope and assurance that I do this with God’s help and God’s presence.”

Part of the challenge facing Farrell as she steps into the role of District Superintendent on July 1 is a major transition as the Vermont churches of Troy Conference join the New England Annual Conference on July 1, 2010.

“I think there will be a lot of grief and anxiety, as well as a lot of excitement,” Farrell said. “Part of my job as District Superintendent will be to listen to people’s stories and try to alleviate the anxiety while walking with the folks of the Green Mountain District.”

She hopes to help people keep their focus on Christ and on their mission and ministry in the midst of these major changes, and will seek ways to connect the people of Vermont with the New England Conference.

“I will be encouraging people to get out of the church building,” she said. “I think the mission and ministry, if we are going to be a viable denomination, is not just for people who found their way through the doors [of the church].

“We need to look for new ways to reach out to people in love, in acceptance and in hope,” she said.

She also wants to help connect

people with each other through cluster groups or shared ministries.

“I see the role of district superintendent as a pastoral role, which is not only about care giving and coaching, but about holding a vision of something better in front of people and helping them find ways to be part of that vision,” she said.

The major part of that vision, she said, is looking for where God is at work in the world and in each person’s life, “where God is breaking in and shining new light and seeing emerging ministries they might not have noticed before,” she said.

Because this is a time of transition, she said, it is also a good time to take advantage of these changes and look at the church and its role in the community with new eyes and seek new ways of being in mission and ministry.

“This is not a time to fall back on doing things the way we’ve done them before,” she said. “It’s a time of possibilities, of resurrection and new beginnings. Like the Magi, we are following the star in the East. Somehow, if we follow that light, we will be changed and will go about our work in a new way.”

Background in education

A native of Vermont, Farrell graduated from Colby College in Waterville, Me., with a bachelor’s degree in Classics and English and Medieval Western Studies in 1974, and later earned a masters in education at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. From 1976 to 1996, she taught at Marion Cross Elementary School in Norwich, Vt., primarily the first grade and served as acting principal for a year.

Farrell sees similarities in the work she did as a principal and that she will do as a district superintendent. As a principal, she often found herself in the role of counselor. “A lot of the teachers I worked with had teenagers or dying parents. I would listen to their stories and help them sort out their professional or personal lives,” she said.

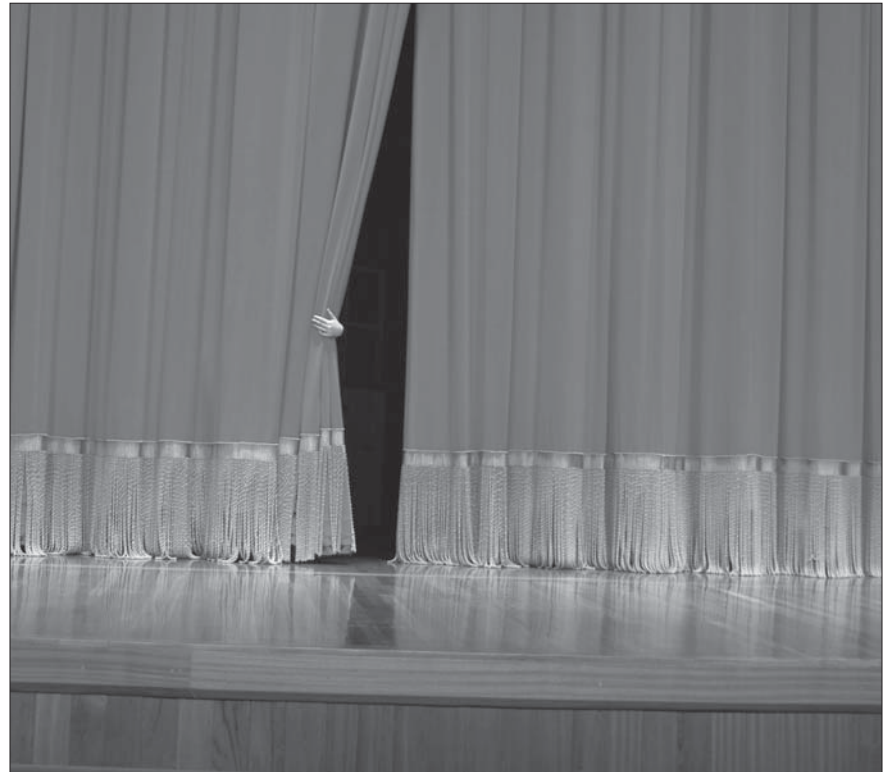
She notes the similarities between the professions—“I would call it pastoral leadership,” she said, “but that’s not what you call it in the public schools.”

In addition to listening to people’s stories and providing guidance as they worked out their problems, Farrell said that she also did a lot of work in conflict resolution and helped four or five schools work through the changes in education that happened in the late 1980s, early 1990s.

“Education was becoming much more regulated and driven by test scores and falling revenues,” she said. “It was becoming more of a business.”

Despite loving the field of education, Farrell eventually discovered she wasn’t feeling challenged by the work.

Mid-career continued page 16



Pulling back the curtain

By Jan Rowell, Embury District Superintendent

Just about a year ago, following my anticipated appointment as Embury District Superintendent by Bishop Hassinger, I began meeting with our cabinet to learn the ropes in preparation for my new responsibilities. I recall in my first meeting with them, watching our mysterious appointment process unfold. As a United Methodist clergyperson for many years, I have been in those reflective conversations with Staff Parish Relations committees in my congregations about our appointment advice forms to the district superintendent and bishop. I have been introduced by various duperintendents to a new SPR committee, and of course joined the speculation with colleagues about who would be moving where during the appointment season. Being in the room as the decisions were made was certainly a new view.

So what’s the scoop? Here is what happened. When a congregation was open, due to the retirement, moving, or other circumstance of the pastor, the district superintendent of that church would present the Church Profile, previously prepared by the SPR committee, to the Bishop and DS’s. This profile is the church’s presentation of itself—strengths and needs, hopes and struggles, and pastoral gifts and skills that they felt would be needed at this time in their ministry.

Next, Bishop Hassinger called for a time of silence and prayer, as the Superintendents listened for God’s guidance and wisdom. Several moments of quiet passed. Then she asked, “Who do we know that would bring the needed gifts to this congregation’s ministry at this time?” Gradually out of the quiet, several names were lifted up, with no comment about why. After all possibilities were named, she would lead the group back to each one, asking, “What are the things that would make this pastor a good match for this congregation?” And then, “What are the impediments that you see?”

At that point, concerns such as family, housing available, salary, etc., would be introduced and considered. In that conversation, clarity and agreement around the table often naturally emerged. On occasion, when it did not, the decision was set aside and revisited another day, waiting for the Spirit’s insight and wisdom.

For me, it was such a prayerful process, focused first of all on the congregation’s ministry, with careful attention also given to family and personal needs. At points the impediments appeared insurmountable. And then a way would open. For me, it was humbling and awesome to see it happen.

This year our Troy cabinet is working on appointments along with the Wyoming Conference superintendents, also led by Bishop Hassinger. This gives us the opportunity to understand more about the pastors and congregations of that Conference as our New York congregations prepare to come together. Now, as I move into the new responsibilities of this work, I am grateful to have seen already the degree to which the process seeks to be guided by the wisdom and grace of God.

Troy Annual Conference Session

June 10 through 13

Saratoga Springs City Center

New York

District Conferences May 16



New Skye Farm Camp Director comes home

By Sandra Brands

Dave Johnston is no stranger to New England, United Methodism or camping. In fact, the new Executive Director of Skye Farm Camp in New York, served as a Camp Director in the New Hampshire Annual Conference and the Executive Director of Camps, Conferences and Retreats in the Western New York Annual Conference.

Though he has spent the last three years in the Midwest as Executive Director of Presbyterian Camps for the Presbytery of Chicago, overseeing its camps in Saugatuck, Mich., when he heard about the Rev. Harold Shippey's decision to retire as the Executive Director of Skye Farm Camp and Director of Troy Conference Camping and Retreat Ministries, he applied and was excited to be offered the position.

"I'm coming home in a lot of ways," Johnston said. "I'm from the Northeast so I'm comfortable with that; I have lived in the mountains my whole life; and the weather is normal from my point of view."

Mostly, he said, he's excited because, "Skye Farm has an amazing reputation. Harold has done an amazing job.

"This is the first position in camping that I've taken over that is running well," he said. "The people on [the Board of Camping and Retreat Ministry (BCRM)] get along and talk to one another. The idea that I can start and not spend two years keeping the building from falling down is kind of cool."

Redefining position

Despite his enthusiasm, Johnston said that he did hesitate when he realized that he would be coming in the midst of a major transition. He'd been through a merger once before, when the New Hampshire Conference became part of the New England Conference. Despite the uncertainty, Johnston decided to accept the job.

The pending transition also meant that the camp director position had to change, according to Stuart Williams, chair of the BCRM.

The two camps owned and operated by Troy Conference—Skye Farm Camp and Covenant Hills Christian Camp—are scheduled to transition to two different annual conferences in 2010," Williams said. "The Troy Conference BCRM, in cooperation with the Personnel Committee, has developed a new Executive Director job description for Skye Farm Camp. The responsibilities are expanding, with the transition to a new conference, the completion of a new retreat facility, and the related promotion of retreat ministry that has been added to the position."

Shippey, as Director of Camping and Retreat Ministries, had oversight of the conference camping program as a whole, Williams said, a position he has "undertaken with energy and dedica-

tion for the past nine years."

For the next 12- to 16-months, the oversight of the conference program "will be the responsibility of the Conference Board of Camping and Retreat Ministry (BCRM), along with [the Rev. Holly Nye, Conference Minister]," Williams said. "The BCRM will be working with [Johnston] and Todd Marlow, Covenant Hills Executive Director, and the two camp site committees to ensure both camps are on strong footing as we join the new conferences and continue their important ministries."

Johnston is prepared to help the camping programs make the transition to a new conference and sees the biggest challenge facing the program is people's lack of awareness of camps outside their current area. "People in Western New York may not be very interested in what's happening in camps in Eastern New York," he said. "We'll be looking for ways to make all the camps in the new [Upper New York] conference relevant. Part of what we'll have to do is educate people as to what's unique about each camp ministry and that camping is an important part of a conference's ministry.

"We're not a cute thing that we do on the side," he said.

He's also excited about the new retreat center that is under development at Skye Farm. "There's a lot of work to be done, and one of my tasks will be to work with volunteers [as the development of the center] 'plays out.'"

Life changes

A native of Western Massachusetts, Johnston grew up in the rural area outside of South Hampton. After graduating from Springfield College in Springfield, Mass., with a B.S. in Education, Johnston taught at an elementary school before becoming principal of an elementary school and later, principal at a junior/senior high school, all in New Hampshire.

During his years in education, Johnston spent summers as a camp director for the Boy Scouts of America at camps in Connecticut and New Hampshire. It was while he was working with the Boy Scouts camping program that Johnston was encouraged to apply for the position of Camp Director at Camp Wanakee, near Meredith, N.H.

"I was a member of the United Methodist Church in Canaan, N.H.," Johnston said. "The pastor told me they were looking for a director at a local camp and he was on the search committee. He asked me if I would consider applying for the job."

In 1992, Johnston left the field of education to take on the role of camp director and youth director of the New Hampshire Annual Conference. The two-pronged job was "part-time," he said. "Because it was part-time, I was also working as a freelance fundraiser. I made most of my money as a fund-



Dave Johnston, the new Executive Director of Skye Farm Camp in New York, is a native of New England, while his wife, Vanessa, is originally from South Africa. The couple will live on the grounds of Skye Farm Camp and hope to be settled in by early February.

raiser, but I spent most of my time at camp."

In 2000, learning that his father was dying of cancer, Johnston resigned as Camp Director, and supporting himself as a fundraiser, he spent the last year of his father's life with family.

After his father's death, Johnston decided to return to camping and became the Executive Director of Camps, Conferences and Retreats in the Western New York Annual Conference.

"I realized [camping ministries were] where I wanted to be and I'm pretty sure that's where God wanted me to be," he said. "I applied for a number of jobs, and ended up in Western New York as Executive Director of Camping, Conferences and Retreat Ministries.

Johnston's life changed in other ways, as well. In 2001, he began dating Vanessa Veall, a young South African woman who had worked as an international camp counselor at Wanakee in 1999 and 2000.

"Vanessa was the first South African I'd ever chosen [to be a camp counselor from a pool of international applicants] because of the apartheid thing," he said. Hiring her "was an experience. I was worried that I would bring in a white South African who would have issues not compatible with the United States."

In fact, Vanessa, at the time a member of the Methodist Church of South Africa, said the South African church was very active in the truth and reconciliation movement.

Johnston said he found that "South Africans were more integrated than we were. When we went over to visit two years ago, we attended an Easter service and Vanessa's church had totally transformed. The service began in Sutu, went to English, then went to Zulu—this was a church that had been a lily white church."

The couple married in 2002—twice. They married once in South Africa and then remarried in Vermont due to United States law, which does not

recognize a marriage between a U.S. citizen and an international citizen held outside of the United States.

Living the Bible

Like Johnston, Vanessa sees camping as ministry that changes people's lives daily. Camping is a ministry where people get to live the Bible not just read it," she said, adding that Bible study lessons are integrated throughout the camp day, whether campers are engaged in a craft activity or a hike.

"Depending on what the theme is, you can take an idea out of the study and bring up the message throughout the day, concluding at the campfire by asking campers to reflect on how the day's lesson impacted their lives and how they will take it back and share it with others."

Johnston agrees and says in the camp setting, there is time to reinforce the point being made.

"It's exciting to reach anyone," he said. "There's nothing better than a parent coming up to you and saying, 'I don't know what happened, but my child is polite ...'"

"Initially, when I started working for the Scouts, it was just fun," he said. "It wasn't to save souls ... there was no big picture thing; it was just a great way to spend a summer. I soon realized that we could really make a difference in people's lives, that people's lives really changed through summer camping."

If the question, 'How many people in this room went into ministry because of something that happened at camp?' I'll bet three-quarters of the room stands up."

Johnston says that he will be available to visit churches, whether on Sundays or for a special event, to talk about the Skye Farm Camping program. "I'd love to be able to tell people what we're up to and ask them what direction they think the camping ministry should go."

Johnston can be reached at Skye Farm Camp after the first of February, (518) 494-7170.

Vision and purpose vital to success of our work together

By Bill Gottschalk-Fielding

"Hello again, Bill. Glad to see you back," the clerk said with a smile as I pulled out a twenty to pay for my purchase. Normally, I would have welcomed this friendliness, but in that moment I found the clerk's familiarity a little irritating. It meant I'd been in his hardware store so many times that day (six times by then, I think), that my face was as familiar as the photos of the wife and kids he kept in his wallet.

I'd been working on a plumbing project at home and I'd not done a good job of figuring out exactly what needed to be done. I'd made a number of poor assumptions, failed to identify the tools and supplies I'd need, attempted a couple of tasks I really didn't know how to do, waited too long to ask for help, and had to start over at least twice before things came together. I was a living, breathing (and often complaining) embodiment of the adage, "Failure to plan is a plan to fail". Hence the six trips to my local hardware store.

I realize fixing the kitchen sink and developing a new annual conference aren't the same tasks, but I share my amateur plumbing experiences as a way to explain where we are in the new conference design process and why we are where we are.

To quote another familiar but truthful adage, we are seeking to "begin with the end in mind." The "end" for you and me as future members our new conference is the picture we hold in our minds and hearts of a future of vibrant Methodism in upper New York. This picture of the future is our vision, which answers the question "what are we seeking?" Tightly linked to this question of vision is our understanding of our new conference's purpose. "How do we (members of an upper New York conference) work together to help God turn vision into reality?" Designing an annual conference without a clear sense of vision and purpose makes as little sense as attempting to fix a kitchen sink with no clue as to what the cook needs, where the leaks are or where the hot water hook-up can be found.

At our last New A.C.T meeting (New Area and Conference Team) held Saturday, Jan. 10 in Cicero, N.Y., our focus was on articulating the guiding vision and the primary purpose of our new conference. The resource material we used to formulate these understandings included 601 of the Discipline on the purpose of an annual conference, the request made to the Northeast Jurisdictional Conference in July of last year to create the new conference, the work done in early fall with New A.C.T. around the question "what do we long to be different about us in five-to-eight years," feedback drawn from a November meeting of over 100 key leaders from all four upstate New York conferences, and a recent discussion by New A.C.T. around the question "who is the primary clientele of our new conference?"

The emerging sense of God's vision for us includes a deep concern that our new conference be focused on "bringing the church into the Neighborhood and the Neighborhood into the church," as well as providing resources to nurture and equip lay and clergy leaders to engage in this ministry. New A.C.T. has asked two of our members (along with our conference communicators) to further develop these thoughts into a working vision and purpose statement to be reviewed and affirmed at our February meeting.

With that statement in hand, you and I will be in a better position to tackle all we need to do over the next 12 months as we build our new conference. It's still going to involve a lot of work, but at least we'll know we're moving together in a productive direction.

Do you have some thoughts and feelings about any of this? I'd like to hear from you. My email address is pastor32@twcny.rr.com. Please be in touch.

Gottschalk-Fielding is the convener for the New Area Conference Team (New ACT)



Gottschalk-Fielding

On Becoming New

Stories from the New Area Conference Team (New ACT) and

The Vermont-New England Transitional Team

Change expected to be mutual *from page 1*

This sentiment was echoed by Troy Conference Faith Development Coordinator Evie Doyon who said, "If there's something you folks would like to try differently, try it in Vermont!"

The atmosphere for the day-long gathering was optimistic, friendly, and prayerful, with Bishop Peter D. Weaver of the Boston Episcopal Area and Susan W. Hassinger of the Albany Episcopal Area opening and closing the meeting with worshipful reflection.

The bishops' insights helped frame the transition by celebrating the progress already being made as teams meet to focus on specific issues such as pensions and insurance. The bishops' also celebrated the connections already being made as churches in Vermont and in the New England Annual Conference begin to share resources and ideas, and new relationships are forged in gatherings of youth and United Methodist Women.

"That's what we want people to know," Bishop Hassinger said, "that this transition is already underway!"

A key challenge in the transition to a 'new and improved' conference, the team determined, is that while some folks may feel this transition keenly, others may be largely unaware of the change or the impact that it may have on the local church. In the months ahead, the team hopes to strengthen the

connection within the forming conference by building awareness between churches as a way to practice hospitality with one another.

Knowing one another is a central part of feeling included and welcomed in a radical way, a lesson New England Annual Conference has been learning since its re-formation in 1996.

"Most of us here in this room and many of us in leadership in New England Annual Conference didn't start out in Southern New England," pointed out Jim McPhee, Assistant to Bishop Weaver. "There was room for new people and other gifts brought to the table as the Conference came together."

"We don't want to assimilate you," said Alex Wood, New England Conference's Communications Director. "We expect to be changed as well."

In the midst of the changes underway, the transition team plans to offer itself as a resource for folks who have questions about the process, and communicate and celebrate the connections that have been made. The team also hopes to continue to lift up the vision of an inclusive new conference, engaging in new and exciting ministries together in all of New England.

"The question is," Bishop Weaver said, "can we model radical community in the world?"

The Troy Conference
Board of Camping and Retreat Ministry
invite you to a

Mid-Winter Celebration

To honor

the Rev. Harold A. Shippey

in his retirement

Saturday, Feb. 28, 4 to 7 p.m.

Queensbury United Methodist Church
460 Aviation Rd., Queensbury, N.Y.

Reception 4 p.m. * Catered meal and program 5 p.m.

Contribution of \$20 for meal and gift

RSVP Judy Palmer in the Conference Office
(518) 584 8214 x14; Campsecretary@troyac.org

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ E-mail _____
Please reserve for _____ people @ \$20 each:

Enclose check to: Skye Farm Camp and Retreat Center
396 Loudon Rd., Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866

(Letters and mementos may also be sent to Judy Palmer or brought to the gathering)

Keep up with news on the emerging conferences at www.newconferences.info

New ACT forms sub teams for 'nuts and bolts' work *from page 1*

Secretary and business manager of the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA). He has served in eight conferences and is a certified financial planner. "It was a pleasure and delight to experience John," Bishop Matthews said. "Our journey began yesterday. He is one of the persons we will enjoy having work with us over the next several months—welcome."

Goolsbey will be the primary New ACT contact to GCFA. GCFA has agreed to provide assistance in the formation of the new conference configurations including legal, software, financial issues, interpretation of the Book of Discipline, etc.

The Administration, Property and Finance Task Force met for the first time on Jan. 9. Attending were five representatives from all six of the conferences involved in the creation of the three new conference configurations. Members include the Chancellors, Treasurers, and representatives of the Boards of Trustees, Finance and Camps, Conferences and Retreat centers.

This Task Force is responsible for assets that are not pension related. North Central New York Chancellor, Scott DelConte drafted a document listing the areas from which information and materials need to be gathered: corporate, operations, employee, contracts, litigation, environmental, financial due diligence, taxes, non-pension funds, affiliated organizations, accounting, administration.

One person from each conference was designated to collect documents: Pat Curtin, North Central New York, Barb Gasiewicz, Western New York, Robert Heron, Troy, and Don Schmitt, Wyoming.

Dr. Rene Wilbur of the Troy Conference was affirmed as Convener of the Administration, Property and Finance Task Force. A layperson, Dr. Wilbur is a former Deputy General Secretary of the Board of Global Ministries.

Director of Connectional Ministry Western New York Conference Rev. Larry Lundgren will serve as resource person and collector and distributor of these records.

Four subgroups of the Administration, Property and Finance Task Force and conveners for each were set up: Finance—Robert Sherburne; Trustees—Tom Clemow, II; Legal—Scott DelConte; and Administration—Debbie Byers. Conveners will organize the first meetings of the subgroups where processes will be identified and tasks delegated. Nominations for subgroup members will come from the persons responsible in each conference for compiling the checklist information.

Subgroups will meet every 30 days with the larger Task Force coming together every 60 days.

The Joint Distribution Team organized on Jan. 21. It will be responsible for allocating pension responsibility and distributing equitably permanent fund and other pension assets. Director of Connectional Ministries in North Central New York Conference Rev. Stephen Deckard will serve as resource person to the Joint Distribution Team.

Scott DelConte was affirmed as key Chancellor to coordinate various legal proceedings of the six-conference group. The Chancellor's specific compensation plan will come before a future New ACT meeting.

Barbara Gasiewicz was affirmed as New ACT Treasurer. With that appointment the Northeastern Jurisdiction Treasurer will release funds for use in creation of the new conference. Gasiewicz has served as treasurer in the Western New York Conference for sixteen years and has been handling the New ACT expenses.

Inclusiveness

Questions were raised on diversity on the various teams, with a member of New ACT noting a key piece of

the creation of the new conference is ensuring that people of color feel part of every aspect, and recognition is made that we have done a poor job in the past. Much of current representation is by virtue of office. Care will be taken to seek diversity on the sub teams.

Bishop Susan Hassinger and Bishop Matthews lifted up possible ways to address inclusiveness. Bishop Matthews suggested that one or two persons could come up with a way New ACT can monitor itself.

Sub teams

Steve Deckard, George Nicholas, Jan Rothfuss, and Evie Doyan will develop a sub team recruitment process, so that as sub teams are needed to do the work they can be quickly developed with a defined purpose of team, and reporting procedure.

A budget sub team with Larry Lundgren, Barbara Gasiewicz and Mark Marino was formed. They will prepare a revised budget showing what funds the team has and what funds and expenses are anticipated.

A sub team to develop a glossary of terms providing a common language will be convened.

Primary Clientele

New ACT members had circulated their answers to the question, "Who is our primary clientele?" prior to coming together in January.

Convener the Reverend Bill Gottschalk-Fielding shared an overview of those responses. "What emerged from contributions is that the Upper New York Area will be primarily directed to reach out to our neighbors in Upstate New York while at the same time providing nurture and support to church members who will be engaged in reaching neighbors," Rev. Gottschalk-Fielding shared. "We are here to serve others and that is the way we serve God."

The group broke into small groups for discussion around those statements. That discussion led to an emerging consensus that rather than being membership centered, we need to be outward focused.

Vision and purpose

Darryl Barrow and Kristin Dart were designated to write a vision and purpose statement of no more than six or seven lines to be sent to the entire New ACT for feedback. Communicators from Troy, Wyoming, North Central and Western New York will work with the vision once it is drafted.

When a question arises in the creation of the new Upper New York conference it will be laid up against the vision and purpose statement.

The only body that can finalize that vision and purpose statement is the new Annual Conference. It will be used as a blueprint or model around which New ACT will guide its work and will be brought before the new Annual Conference for their determination as to whether to keep it or develop a new one.

Bishop Matthews called on all to keep the vision and purpose in their daily prayers as well as Darryl and Kristin as they draft those statements.

Sources of information

Work is underway on the New ACT website which should be launched in February. Updates on New ACT and opportunities for United Methodists in Upper New York to be part of the process will be shared on the Upper New York website and in all communication tools available within the conferences.

Next meeting

The next New ACT meeting is Feb. 21 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Cicero, N.Y., at the North Central New York Conference Center.

Albany area extended cabinets meet to discuss boundary changes

On Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 15 and 16, the Albany Area Extended Cabinet, which includes the Wyoming and Troy conferences district superintendents, treasurers, lay leaders and director of connectional ministry or conference minister, met in retreat at the Rensselaerville Institute in Rensselaerville, N.Y. The cabinet spent time in discussing the upcoming boundary changes and considering how to work together in a larger configuration across conference lines in the new Upper New York Area Conference.

Bishop Hassinger outlined four purposes for the retreat:

To continue to reflect on our "adaptive challenge," particularly as it relates to the development and deployment of clergy and lay leadership in the Albany Episcopal Area.

To reflect on where God has been

seen at work in the conferences/districts/areas of responsibility.

To engage in superintending and leadership in our larger configuration.

To identify next steps that grow out of the above conversations.

She posed three questions to frame the "adaptive challenge" which the two conferences need to address:

◆ What is the mission of Christ in our region in the 21st century?

◆ What does an annual conference look like that seeks to fulfill that mission, and that is grounded in scripture and tradition?

◆ How can we move toward that mission, that image, given our current realities?

The retreat was conducted in the context of worship. Members of the two conferences met together as one body, conferred in small groups and shared by

areas of responsibility, *i.e.*, district superintendents, laity, ordained ministry.

Always before them were the questions: What is our purpose? What are our desired outcomes? What do we need to pay attention to in order to

move toward those desired outcomes?

Following the retreat, Bishop Hassinger and the district superintendents remained to engage in another two days of joint discussions on the coming year's appointment needs.

RCM offers 'Called to Witness' training

"Called to Witness: All Means All," a training event featuring a representative from the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) will be offered Saturday, Feb. 21, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at First United Methodist Church of Schenectady in N.Y.

The training is designed to help people learn how to share stories with those who will vote on a constitutional

amendment at Annual Conference Session in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., June 10 through 13.

For more information or to register, contact Clunn at (518) 878-6737 or sclunn@yahoo.com or visit the Upper New York Reconciling Ministries Network web site at www.unyrmn.org. Registration is limited to 50.

Congregation re-vamps traditional way of operating

By Cynthia Lovely

It was definitely one of those days. You were late for work because your kids missed their school bus. Your boss gave you two new projects with tight deadlines and you just realized you had a business dinner the next evening. While attempting to multi-task, you spilled coffee on an important contract and addressed a CEO by the wrong name. As the day drew to a close, you couldn't wait to escape the office and head home. You checked your emails one last time and let out a groan. "Important church meeting tonight at 7:15 p.m. All ministry leaders need to attend."

Sound familiar? In our time-starved society it can be difficult to carve out a slot for church responsibilities and activities. The spiritual longing is present within us but the reality of juggling busy careers and family duties tends to silence the impulse to become involved in yet one more area. Often our spiritual lives and church involvement are relegated to the back burner.

Voorheesville United Methodist Church recognized this conflict and made a decision to re-vamp their traditional mode of church planning. Holly Cargill-Cramer, chair of the church council, offered some suggestions when she assumed the position. In reviewing their typical planning she said, "We had about 10 team meetings throughout the month. It's a wonder we could keep any of them going at that rate. Most people don't get out of work till 5 p.m. and rarely get home before 6 p.m. Then you have to throw together a meal, gulp it down, and break the speed limit to get to the meeting on time."

The solution: establish one meeting night per month for all committees and boards. Along with the attraction of a single meeting they added the

'Staffing our church school with college students has injected the energy of youth into our Christian Ed. Program.'

Pastor Brian Gould

lure of a dinner served at the church before the meeting. A food service team preps the meals; attendees need only show up between 6 and 6:50 p.m. Many members now avail themselves of this convenience--someone else is cooking!--and have enjoyed the meals along with the added benefit of community fellowship.

The time frame for the evening is well-organized and split into proper segments. At 6:50 p.m., the group separates into their specific teams. The team with the most members present gains the bonus of using the most comfortable meeting room that evening. Once in their different rooms, the teams discuss their agendas and activities for that month. Precisely at 8 p.m. they regroup for the main council meeting.

"I work very hard to make sure that the council meetings are snappy," Cargill-Cramer said. "Anyone who wishes to speak or give a report has the opportunity. I try to end the meeting by 9 or 9:15 p.m. The group has become very good at giving me the high sign if we're pushing the hour!"

Topics discussed at the council meeting include budget, appointments, elections, team reports and three long-term objectives for the future. Participation in the meetings has increased since this new plan has been put into effect. Normal attendance now runs about 25, compared to 12 prior to the new format, with as many as 60 people at one particular dinner. Since childcare is another appealing addition to this new

set up, participation of parents with young children has increased.

Brian Gould, pastor at Voorheesville UMC, is pleased with the success of the program.

"The monthly meeting night has added a delightful synergy to our ministries here in Voorheesville," he said. "Because ministry teams meet on the same evening as the church council, news of a team's activities reaches the council immediately rather than days or weeks later. Everything is fresh! Church council attendance is also improved. Perhaps best of all, the shared meal that begins the evening brings church members together who have not interacted before. The number of evening commitments for our church leaders is reduced, hopefully averting burnout."

The congregation has also found a new approach to Sunday school. While struggling to find volunteers to teach the children, they found members were hesitant to add more duties to their hectic schedules.

People were unwilling to sacrifice their own worship time in exchange for more duties. In response, the church reached out to the college community for assistance, linking with college ministries on campus. The end result brought two new teachers to the church. The main requirements were that the student volunteers would be people of faith and that they would agree to follow the established curriculum.

Cassie Cramer and Cassie Muth fit those requirements. Also known as Miss

Cassie I and Miss Cassie II, both of the students have had previous experience teaching in a church setting. Cramer, a student at Sage College of Albany, teaches the Pre-K through third grade weekly. Muth, from State University of New York, Albany, teaches fourth grade and up. The students follow the Whole People of God curriculum which is very similar to the adult lectionary themes.

"It is an enriching experience to work with the students every Sunday," said Cramer, a member at Voorheesville UMC. "Last year our project was to raise \$120 to buy a Basket of Hope from Heifer International. We not only met our goal, we doubled it. For 2009, our year long project is to raise \$5,000 for an Ark from Heifer, through various fundraising activities."

The students are a welcome addition to the church community and they in turn, receive the benefit of a close church fellowship.

"Staffing our church school with college students has injected the energy of youth into our Christian Ed. Program," said Gould.

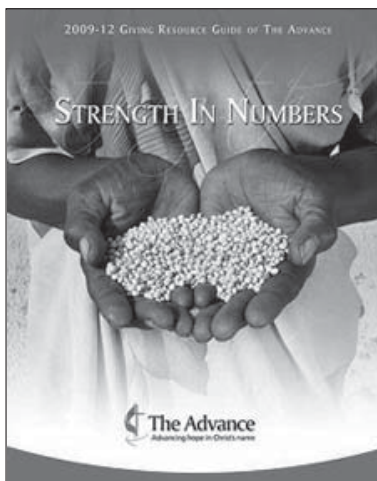
To encourage their studies, the student volunteers also receive an "educational award" from the church.

The success of both of these new ideas—college student teachers in Sunday school and a one evening/month planning meeting--has been evident in the church body. Older members who have already put in years of volunteer duties are able to support the new student teachers and enjoy a welcome respite. Newer members from two-income families or busy single parents are able to fulfill their personal responsibilities and still be involved in church planning without being overwhelmed with weekly meetings.

The changes, Gould said, have created a "win-win situation."

Advance issues new resource guide

Almost a thousand projects and programs in 100 countries are included in the new Giving Resource Guide from The Advance, the United Methodist designated mission giving channel. Subtitled Strength in Numbers, the 111-page guide, a magazine-style catalogue, lists approved recipients



"second-mile" mission giving, the "first mile" being mission support included in World Service apportionments to congregations. Copies of the guide were mailed in January to all bishops, pastors, associate pastors, diaconal ministers, and a wide range of annual conference officers and staff members.

Other mailings are planned. Persons needing the print guide for their work on congregation, conference, or institutional levels may obtain single copies on-line at <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/> or by calling Cokesbury at (800) 672-1789.

for the quadrennium, or four-year period, from 2009-2012. It also contains other information on mission support, such as how congregations can enter into Covenant Relationships with missionaries. The Advance represents

AUMS (Albany United Methodist Society)

50th Anniversary Celebration & Fundraiser

Friday, April 3, 6 p.m.

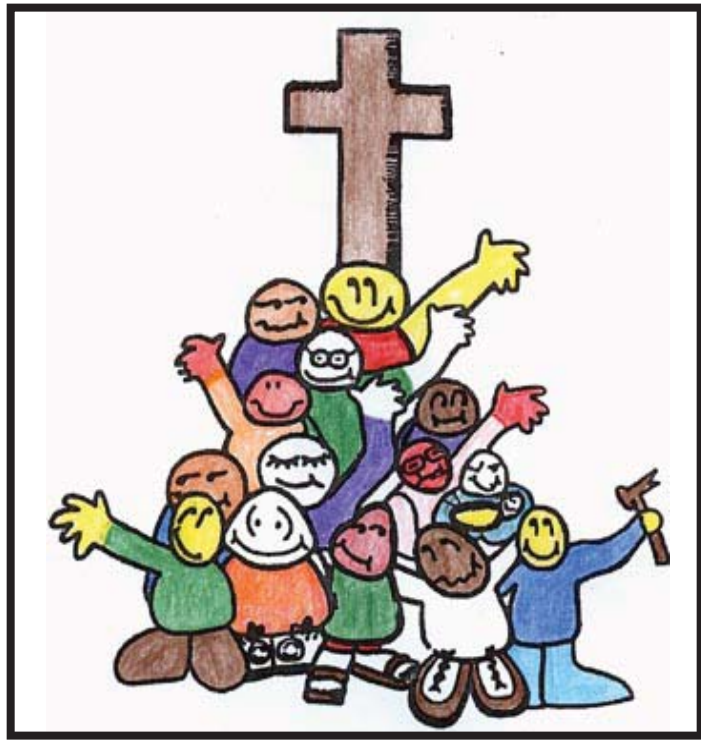
First Presbyterian Church,
362 State St., Albany, N.Y.

Keynote Speaker:

REV. RANDY NUGENT
former Executive Director of AUMS

Reservations: (518) 432-0818

Tickets: \$35



CAMPING NEWS

NEWS FROM TROY ANNUAL CONFERENCE'S
VERMONT CONFERENCE CAMPING PROGRAM
COVENANT HILLS CHRISTIAN CAMP
SKYE FARM CAMP

HANDLE WITH CARE

Harold Shippey and the theme "Handle With Care" seem to be made for each other. In his many roles, Harold has embodied the concepts of **Handle With Care** for all of us. Handle with care.....



...every camper, as the family's most precious gift to share with us.

...all volunteer and professional staff.

...the deep theological issues and concerns of the Christian faith.

...all matters of prejudice and injustice.

...the needs for environmental and ecological concern and planning.

...the volumes of governmental regulations, permits, etc.

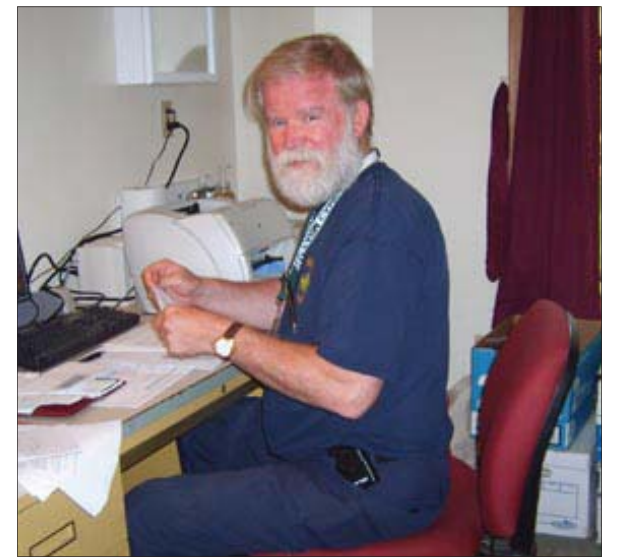
...the business and financial needs of a major camp operation.

...building and property maintenance and care.

...emergency medical needs of the camp and surrounding community.

...visioning and planning into the future.

...the primary needs of "health and safety" for everyone who used our property.



Thank you, Harold!
Enjoy your retirement!



We are proud.....

THE FRIENDSHIP FUND

Each week campers at Covenant Hills and Skye Farm have an opportunity to give to the Friendship Fund. **THANK YOU CAMPERS!**

2008 Friendship Fund Giving

Covenant Hills raised \$500 to support camper scholarships for 2009. In addition "Animal Crackers Campers" collected and donated money to support Heifer International.

Skye Farm raised \$912.39 for Heifer International which provides animals and training in caring for the animals in this country and around the world.



During the past three years the staff at Covenant Hills has been working with the American Camp Association to become an accredited camp. During the 2007 summer we had our site visit and in the fall we found out that we had passed and were an accredited camp.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ACCREDITED BY THE AMERICAN CAMP ASSOCIATION?

For Covenant Hills the ACA prescribes nearly 300 standards that a camp must maintain in order to be accredited. The standards run the entire gamut of a camp's operation, from how staff are hired and trained to proper health center practices and procedures—from appropriate safety to how food is stored and prepared. Covenant Hills is involved with ACA in order to maintain a high level of camp operation. Every three years a site visit will be conducted to look over all the paperwork and see camp in action in order to renew our accreditation. For more information about the ACA please visit their website at: www.acacamps.org

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CAMP?

Covenant Hills Summer 2008

By Summer Staff

This summer was filled with many new faces and many returning ones. The camper season started with a group of counselors-in-training coming up to camp for leadership orientation. We then welcomed the CITs back as they returned to camp as volunteer mentors to our campers. The animals returned to camp this summer for Animal Crackers and the campers had a great time caring for them and learning about Heifer Internationl and how they help people around the world. Games, games, and more games spent days learning and playing all types of games, including water games. Splash Rascals kept the waterfront staff nice and busy during their stay at camp. The campers enjoyed being able to throw water balloons at their counselors and having a beach campfire. Our first coastal camp was so popular that we decided to offer another one and both were a huge success. The campers enjoyed spending time at the beach and trying local seafood. Camp Nation was a success with campers having lots of input on how they would spend their days and what they would do. We then finished our traditional camping season with Music, Arts, Dance and Drama and Rock Band Camp both giving an amazing Camp and Rock Band both giving an amazing Saturday performance.



Soulfood Camp

By Lauri Chipman

Soulfood Camp was a new offering at Skye Farm in 2008. We all fed our souls with music throughout the week. There was an older elementary group and a junior high group. Both met together for morning watch and heard the scripture verse for the day that went with the daily theme from the curriculum. We read the words to a song, listened to the music on CD or we all sang it and discussed its meaning. Again, each afternoon, we got together and listened to modern Christian songs that related to the scripture verse and story. Campers were encouraged to bring a CD with a song that they would like to share. We heard from one cabin group each day sharing the CDs brought by the campers. A wide spectrum of modern Christian music was shared. All enjoyed our time together singing and praising the Lord with our music.

Soulfood campers still got to enjoy all that Skye Farm has to offer with swimming, canoeing the lake in the peace canoe, hiking to the castle, sharing camp fires, sleeping in the cabin with no electricity, dancing in Kessler hall, eating wonderful food and being in the Adirondacks with great counselors.

On Friday we put together our Soulfood song books and decorated them. We ended our week with an all camp gathering in Kessler Hall to share our experiences with the other campers.

Many thanks to the counselors and all the summer staff that helped make our week so enjoyable. I look forward to seeing you all again next summer for another week of Soulfood!



Geocaching at Skye Farm

By Nancy Lott, Director of Geocaching Camp

Have you ever tried to get a kid to go hiking or for a walk with you only to get the response "that's boring" because they don't want to leave their movies and computer games? Try adding the adventure of a treasure hunt and the elements of computers and technology into the mix and you will get a completely different response (here is a secret...it works on grown-ups too)—that is what the heart of "geocaching" is all about. Geocaching camp at **Skye Farm** was designed to introduce campers to the high-tech treasure hunt game that is being played all over the world by thousands of players. It uses GPS (global positioning system) devices to get the latitude and longitude in order to hide and find "caches". At minimum they contain a logbook but they can also include small items such as toys, magnets or puzzles.

Our camp started on Monday and Tuesday by showing the campers a presentation of the computer aspects of geocaching (www.geocaching.com). That included the history, how to find the coordinates of a cache and the guidelines for hiding a cache. Then, they learned how to use the GPS devices to mark waypoints and practiced hiding and finding items around camp. We also managed to work in the traditional camp fun of community arts, nature and of course swim time. On Wednesday we were ready to try our skills and we took a trip to Up Yonda Farm Environmental Education Center (www.upyondafarm.com) in Bolton Landing where we quickly found two real caches -- "Log It In" (GCWF5G) and "Yonda Cache" (GCKEEX). We also got a great view of Lake George and enjoyed the free museum while learning something about water conservation.

On Thursday we made our own geocache and hid it just off camp property. We also included a trackable travel bug named "Elliot" (2DZP7F). It is a dog tag attached to a Skye Farm post card. Trackable items are items that geocachers move from cache to cache. The campers will be able to watch Elliot's travels online throughout the year. His goal is to come back to Skye Farm every Summer. On Friday we found two more geocaches on Thomas Mountain -- "Hootyhoo Made Me Do It" (GC175B5) and "Thomas Mountain" (GC10VKM). The second one contained a travel bug called "I'm in hog heaven" which we took to move along

It was fun watching the kids following the GPS directions and exciting for the campers when they could see that they were close to the caches and they could start looking with their eyes. They liked seeing what was in the boxes (you are supposed to take something, leave something) and signing the log. They learned also that part of the purpose of this game is to see things that you might not normally see. On top of Thomas Mountain we found a blueberry patch with ripe blueberries and enjoyed a great view while we ate our lunch. Geocaching's practice of "Cache-in, Trash-out" fit in perfectly with this year's theme of "Handle with Care". In each of our hikes we made sure we carried a trash bag and picked up any garbage we found to carry out with us.

It was so rewarding to hear more than one camper say that they wanted to try geocaching with their families when they got home. As director I hope that the camp will spark an interest in getting outdoors and enjoying a walk with the family, not only with the campers, but also with the people that they talk to about what they did at camp this year. I also hope that they came away with an appreciation for our one earth and a desire to conserve all that God created for us.



Covenant Hills to celebrate 20 years of camping

Do you have any pictures or stories from camp over the years?

If so, we would love to hear from you. We are looking to put together people's memories for the twenty year celebration happening this summer. Whether as a camper, volunteer or parent reliving camper memories, email us at chccdiretor@gmail.com and share your pictures or stories.

Store

The Covenant Hills store has T-shirts, sweatshirts and flannel pj pants available for you to buy throughout the year. These make great gifts for any special occasion. Please contact Vivian at chccdiretor@gmail.com to place an order. Cost:

T-shirts \$10

Sweatshirts \$25

Flannel pj pants \$15

An additional \$2 will be charged for shipping.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

We want to thank those listed here and many others who have contributed time and energy as well as donations of money and useful items to make the camping program a success. We are sorry if we have omitted any names that should be here.

Covenant Hills 2008 Volunteers

Agape Team and Volunteers
 Kelley Alderman, Richford VT
 Jean Backhaus, Richford VT
 Trevor Banister,
 Heather Benton,
 David Blanshine, Charlotte VT
 Rachel Bower, Montpelier VT
 Jerry Breen,
 Bonnie Chase, Waterville VT
 Church Groups
 Paige Cleary, Waterbury Ctr VT
 Closing Team
 Bar Connelly, Lower Waterford VT
 Paul Connelly, Lower Waterford VT
 Katie Curler, N. Ferrisburg VT
 Lynn Elwood, Highgate Ctr. VT
 Betsey Erwin, Granitville VT
 Skip Flanders,
 Kristen Fowler, Barre VT
 Becci Geary, Hardwick VT
 Emily Hazard,
 Charlene Helman, Barre VT
 Rachel Helman, Barre VT
 Sarah Helman, Barre VT
 Scott Helman, Barre VT

Kassie Howe, Rutland VT
 Lisa Kaija, Reading VT
 Wanda Locke, Waterville VT
 Doug MacDonald, Enosburg VT
 Dave MacGowan, Waterbury VT
 Becky Mackin, Barre VT
 Elizabeth Mackin, Barre VT
 Vivian Marlow, Richford VT
 Sondra Masse, Richford VT
 Ellen Moore, E. Haven VT
 Michael Moore, E. Haven VT
 Megan O'Daniel,
 Opening Team
 Lori Polhemus, Bondville VT
 Kyle Reardon, Rutland VT
 Sandi Reardon, Rutland VT
 Tim Reardon, Rutland VT
 Curtiss Rude,
 Jeremiah Schuyler, Fairfax VT
 John Schuyler, Frankfort NY
 Site Committee
 Diana Skiles,
 Benjamin Taylor, Claryville NY
 Katie Taylor, Claryville NY
 Youth and Church Groups **Volunteers**



Sandy Reardon, Volunteer Director of Teddy Bear Camp works with campers making duck pillows.

New adult lodge at Skye Farm nearing completion

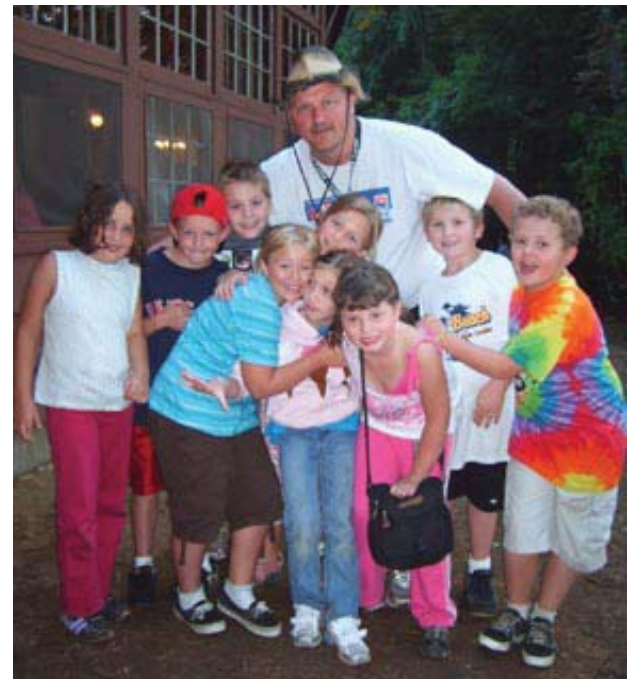
The new Adult lodge at Skye Farm is in the final stages of being furnished and ready for occupancy. It is possible to use it in conjunction with Ogden Lodge as a comfortable adult sleeping facility with four private rooms each with their own bathroom. It is equipped with a small refrigerator, a microwave, coffee maker and some dishes making it ideal to be used separately for a small group of folks who want to bring their own food to prepare a continental breakfast, light lunch and go to an area restaurant for their main meal. If you are interested in using this building in either way please call Skye Farm at 518-494-7170 for more information and to inquire about booking.



Photo by Harold Shippey

Skye Farm 2008 Volunteers

Debbie Acker-Cole, Albany, NY
 Amy Alberts, Peru NY
 Becky Albrecht, Hudson Falls, NY
 Carol Ames, Newcomb NY
 Fred Anderson, Schaghticoke
 Jill Anderson, Schaghticoke NY
 Catherine Armani-Munn, Plattsburgh
 Caroline Ashton, Cambridge NY
 Bob Atkinson, Clifton Park NY
 Regina Ballard, Granville NY
 Debra Barnes
 Bonnie Bates, Schuylerville NY
 Nancy Beberwyck, Schenectady, NY
 Fran Berger, Castleton, NY
 Steve Berger, Castleton, NY
 Robert Bour, Niskayuna NY
 Cindy Ann Bowers, Niskayuna NY
 Elizabeth Bradley, Troy NY
 Tom Breitenbach, Altamont NY
 Penny Brink, Caroga Lake NY
 Forrest Burnetter, Ballston Spa NY
 Julie Burnetter, Ballston Spa NY
 Steve Butler, Sar. Springs NY
 Joan Butler, Sar. Springs NY
 Alan Cederstrom, Queensbury
 David Cederstrom, Queensbury
 Harriet Cederstrom, Queensbury
 Wil Chamberlin, Sar. Springs NY
 Laurie Chipman, Jericho VT
 Kay Cipperly, Troy NY
 Steve Clunn, Schenectady NY
 Ed Cole, Albany NY
 Krystal Cole, Albany NY
 Moriyima Cole, Altamont NY
 Ian Collier, Hudson Falls NY
 Mark Collier, Hudson Falls NY
 Shelley Collier, Hudson Falls NY
 Brenda Collins, Hudson Falls NY
 Marty Connor, Ellenburg Depot NY
 Steve Connor, Ellenburg Depot NY
 Kelly Corby, Fountainville PA
 Carl Davis, Shaftsbury VT
 Mike Davis, West Sand Lake NY
 Sherry DeCastro, Mechanicville NY
 Lisa Delano, Ballston Spa NY
 Rick Dellio, Valley Falls NY
 Mark DeVit, S. Glens Falls NY
 Kevin Doherty, Revere MA
 Ann-Lorrie Doherty, Revere MA
 Cathie Dunkleberger, Rexford NY
 Jay Dunkleberger, Rexford NY
 Ronald Durfee, Ballston Lake NY
 Debbie Earthowl, Salem NY
 Deb Elliott, Scotia NY
 Peter Elmendorf, Saratoga Springs
 Bill Face
 Nicloe Ferrante, New Paltz NY
 Jillian Ferron, Malta, NY
 David Fifield, Clifton Park NY
 Len Finke, E. Greenbush NY
 Tracy Fortin
 Amanda Gaige,
 Roberta Gallerie, Albany NY
 Bo Geel, Schenectady NY
 Russ Gettig, Averill Park NY
 Tim Gow, Bolton Ldg. NY
 Bob Gifford, Troy NY
 Bob Glennon, Brattleboro VT
 Jennifer Glode, Wevertown, NY
 Bruce Goldsmith, Granville NY
 Penny Goldsmith, Granville NY
 Pete Gradoni, Guilderland NY
 Val Gray, Averill Park NY
 Rebecca Grugan,
 Sheryll Hagy, Gansevoort NY
 Arthur F. Hagy, Jr., Troy NY
 Alisa Harris, Scotia NY
 Paul Harris, Scotia NY
 Pat Hassel, Altamont NY
 Todd Hassel, Altamont NY
 Stan Hatch, Cadyville NY
 David Haverly, Berne NY
 Christine Hazard, Sar. Springs NY
 George Herrick, E. Greenbush NY
 Liz Hill, Johnsonville, NY
 Susan Hill, Valley Falls
 Cindy Hoard, Sebago ME
 Debbie Hyde, Latham NY
 Bud Jameson, Queensbury NY
 Andrew Jewell, Albany NY
 Ryan Johnson, Ft. Edward NY



Ed Kersmanc, Volunteer Counselor, enjoys his young campers in the Animal Crackers Camp.

Edward Kersmanc, Albany NY
 Amy King, Clifton Park NY
 Dawn Kirby, Friendswood TX
 Cory Knight, Peru NY
 Gabrielle Knight, Peru NY
 George Knight, Peru NY
 Lana Knight, Peru NY
 Bill Kohler, Clifton Park NY
 Patti Krekeler, Albany NY
 Paul Krekeler, Albany NY
 Linda LaCasse, Broadalbin NY
 Taylor LaCasse, Broadalbin NY
 Bill Lasher, Galway NY
 Emily Lasher, Cobleskill NY
 Hannah Lasher, Cobleskill NY
 Joanna Lasher, Galway NY
 Lori Lasher, Cobleskill NY
 Samuel Lasher, Cobleskill NY
 Terry Lasher, Cobleskill NY
 Alex Latham, Troy NY
 Mark Lawson, E. Syracuse NY
 Charry Lawson, E. Syracuse NY
 Katie LeCours, Gansevoort NY
 Lynn Lehman, Round Lake NY
 Darcianne Leizer, Guilderland NY
 David Little, Troy NY
 Bob Long, Schenectady NY
 Robert Longhurst, Chestertown NY
 Steve Lott, Niskayuna NY
 Judy Lott, Schenectady NY
 Nancy Lott, Albany NY
 Ed Lyon, Salem NY
 Cathy Mackey, Watervliet NY
 Diane Marino, Schuylerville NY
 Jackie Marino, Valley Falls NY
 Ralph Marino, Valley Falls NY
 Stephen Marino, Schuylerville NY
 Amanda Markessinis, Albany NY
 Donna Markessinis, Albany NY
 Betty Marschner, Albany NY
 Linda Marschner, E. Greenbush
 David Martin, Troy NY
 Damian Martinez, Newark NJ
 Susan Mason, Glens Falls NY
 Jennifer McMinn, Ballston Spa NY
 Elizabeth Meehan, Ballston Spa NY
 Ernie Melin, Saratoga Springs NY
 Erica Miller, Saratoga Springs NY
 Mark Miller,
 Diane Mosher, Berlin NY
 Keith Mueller, Peru NY
 Susan Mueller, Peru NY
 Eileen Murphy, Stephentown NY
 Maureen Musto, Albany NY
 Lauri Nair, Clifton Park, NY
 Richard Nason, Glens Falls NY
 Todd Nemece, Guilderland NY
 Jana Neitzel, Altamont NY
 Jessie Neitzel, Altamont NY
 Mary Neitzel, Altamont NY
 Oakley Neitzel, Altamont NY
 David Orr, Schenectady NY
 Joan Orton, Clifton Park NY
 John Orton, Clifton Park NY

Carol Osterhout, Schaghticoke
 David Osterhout, Schaghticoke
 Ed Osterhout, Schaghticoke NY
 Joshua Palmer, Cl. Park NY
 Judy Palmer, Schaghticoke NY
 Richard Palmer Schaghticoke NY
 Marianne Passarelli, Clintondale
 Charles Pemburn, Latham, NY
 Valerie Perrins, Troy NY
 Nikki Polcyn, Guilderland NY
 Tim Preddice, Gloversville NY
 Tom Risse, Troy NY
 Erica Rock, Troy NY
 James Rock, Peru NY
 Roxy Rock, Peru NY
 Tim Rock, Peru NY
 Lane Schermerhorn, Corinth NY
 Holly Schmidt, Delmar NY
 Chris Schmitt, Niskayuna NY
 Chuck Schmitt, Niskayuna NY
 Jane Schweikert, Albany NY
 Paul Scoville, Albany NY
 Corky Scranton, Esperance NY
 Lona Scranton, Esperance NY
 Elliott Sharrow, Stephentown NY
 Sarajeon Shepardson, Essex Jct. VT
 Carol Shippey, Warrensburg NY
 David Smith, Shaftsbury NY
 Louise Sobing, Cambridge NY
 Jill Sobon, Schuylerville NY
 Dennis Spilman, Sar. Springs NY
 Kimberly Stevens, Colonie NY
 Bill Stewart, Indian Lake NY
 B.J. Stewart, Indian Lake NY
 Angela Stott, Guilderland NY
 Cal Thayer, Clifton Park NY
 Mike Thomas, Ballston Spa NY
 Pat Thomas, Ballston Spa NY
 Judy Tomisman, Niskayuna NY
 Ed Troiano, Watervliet NY
 Sue Ellen Trumbell, Ctr. Rutland VT
 Melanie Tuxbury, Green Isl. NY
 Scott Tyler, Ticonderoga NY
 John Underwood, Salem NY
 Peg Underwood, Salem NY
 Harold Vance, Gansevoort NY
 Kristi VanPatten, Clifton Prk NY
 Dave VanSchaick, Rexford NY
 Carl VanTine, Clifton Park NY
 Marianne Verzi, Fishkill NY
 Bonnie Veysey, Selkirk NY
 Wayne Wales, Clifton Park NY
 Kelly Warner, S. Glens Falls NY
 Ben Werblow, Queensbury NY
 Barb Wiley, Johnsonville NY
 Paul Wiley, Johnsonville NY
 Amy Williams, Ballston Spa NY
 Beverly Williams, Gloversville NY
 Amy Williams, Ballston Spa NY
 Dee Williams, Ballston Spa NY
 Don Williams, Gloversville NY
 Kelly Williams, Ballston Spa NY
 Stuart Williams, Ballston Spa NY
 Nancy Wyant, N. Creek NY
 Rick Zutterling, Grnf. Ctr., NY

Volunteers Needed

Christian Camping is a mission and volunteerism is at the heart of mission work. We need you to be part of our program. Opportunities available for weekly directors, counselors, maintenance crew, babysitter, or share a gift of yours. Make camping your mission ... Volunteer! Names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses can be found on the back page under if you want to reach us...

LONESOME CAMPERS

By Art Hagy, *Granfather in Residence*

In preparation for camp, one of the major concerns of campers and parents alike is "Getting Homesick". As one of the Skye Farm staff members that deals with this, let me offer a bit of advice.

First of all, it is a lot more accurate to speak of "Getting Lonesome". All campers and parents get lonesome but very, very few actually get homesick. My experience has been that less than 1% of the campers actually get homesick and need to be picked up before the week ended. Both parents and campers can agree that it is normal to be lonesome. That lonesome feeling gets expressed by campers in a variety of ways. Some get quiet, others talk all the time, some pout while others cover it up with a big grin, and some cry for a while. These are all normal expressions of dealing with a new reality; they are lonesome.

For both parents and campers, being lonesome is a normal expression of love. I tell campers that it is a good sign when they become lonesome; it means they have someone at home who loves them and whom they love in return. Now, what to do about it?

PARENTS: Assure your campers that they are not failures or "sissies" if they are lonesome. It is normal. Assure them also that they will have a good time at camp and that the counselors, directors and staff will help them get through it. Try not to offer to come and get them from camp the minute they feel lonesome. Working their way through it is a normal part of maturation. Usually, with some help, the feeling subsides in about 20—30 minutes. The rest of the day they are having a great time. Your preparation for this will help them the most.

IF YOU WANT TO REACH US.....

Who do you call? For information about camp programs, staff or volunteer positions or contributions to the camping program.....

Executive Director of Skye Farm Camp
David Johnston
1884 E. Schroon River Rd.
Warrensburg, NY 12885
(518) 494-7170
skiefarmed@logical.net

Executive Director of Covenant Hills Christian Camp
Todd Marlow
96 Center St., Richford, VT 05476
(802) 848-9932
vt_marlow@hotmail.com

Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ
(802) 362-2930

Troy Annual Conference Board of Camping and Retreat Ministries
Stuart Williams, Chairperson
(518) 885-2785
sdwilliams56@aol.com

Conference Camping Office
Judy Palmer
(518) 584-8214 x14
campsecretary@troyac.org

CAMPERS: When you feel lonesome, talk to your counselor or director about it. No need to hide it. This is a normal feeling. Usually such lonesome feelings come early in the week. I find it is a good idea not to think about being away from home for a whole week, (which seems like a long time) but rather to think about just getting through to the next meal, or until tomorrow morning, or until the next swim period, etc. Break the week up into small segments. It will help. You will find that as you make friends with your cabin mates, the lonesome feelings get less and less until by the end of the week you really don't want to leave. Be patient, look forward to the next good event, and you will be surprised and pleased at the way you can handle the new feelings of being lonesome.

EVERYBODY: The rejoicing comes at the end of the week when parents are happy that they were able to deal with their separation and lonesomeness; campers were all smiles to see their family (often including the family dog) while they excitedly tell about their new friends at camp; camp staff says "YES" as they watch the results of an extra measure of TLC. Camp is a wonderful growing experience for everyone.

See you next summer.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIFTS AND DONATIONS

Covenant Hills

Lindsay/Marcheta Townsend
Vigne Memorial Gifts
David Blanshine
Carol Cole
Pawlett UCC
Rupert Ucc
Duckworth Foundation
Williamstown Federated
Hale Ritchie
Waterville UCC
Michael/Ellen Moore
Robert Mackin Family
UCC-Scholarship/Taylor's Barn
David MacGowan Family
Hornung Foundation

Stowe Community UCC
Scott Cousino
David Murphy
Gerine Piper
Randolph Ctr. UCC
Rutland UCC
Middlebury UCC
Schuyler Family
Helman Family
Richford High School
Marlow Family
Klofach Family
Desrosiers Family
Robert Gist
Hedding UMC

Skye Farm

Anonymous
Kate Archambault
Mike Booth
Cindy Bowers
Burnt Hills UMC
Joan/Steve Butler
Cambridge UMC
Center Brunswick UMC
Will Chamberlin
Cobleskill UMC
Corinth UMC Sunday School
Michael/Tracey Delaney
Doris Dunkleberger Fund
Emmanuel UMC, (Bolton Landing)

Henrietta Crisp Fund
Joy Fisher
Fonda/Fultonville UMC
Fortsville UMC
Gradon Taylor Fund
Arthur F. Hagy, Jr.
Hardwick UMC
Hazel Pierce Family
Margaret Hems
Hudson Falls UM Sunday School
Jericho UMC
Jimmy Halligan Fund
John Chase Fund
Judith Johnson
Stefan Karoly
Paul/Patricia Krekeler
Bill/Jo Lasher
Laurson Family
Steven Lott
Mary Maiellaro
Ralph/Jackie Marino
Diane/Stephen Marino
Keith Mueller
Lauri Nair
Richard Nason
Newtonville UMC
Northbush UMC
North Country Mission of Hope
Ed/Carol Osterhout
Pittstown UMC
Pownal UMC
RW Johnsbury UMC
Leon Steves
Troy Conference Staff
Troy Conference UMM
William/Natalie True
Albert Tucker
John/Peg Underwood
Valley Falls UMW
Waterford UMC
Ed Watson
Bev/Don Williams
Harold Williams

Our Camp Wish Lists 2009

Your contributions of any of the following items or services on our wish list will help us to continue to improve our facilities and support our staff and campers! *Thank You!*

SKYE FARM

- "Life jackets" PFDs—kayak style
- "No Smoking" and "First Aid/Choking" posters
- Buddy Bands—wrist bands for waterfront swimmer classification (blue, yellow, red)
- Cereal bowls, large quantity to fit dish rack
- Commercial dishwasher racks
- Electric griddles
- Front end loader for farm tractor
- Golf cart or "Gator"
- GPS units
- Kayak helmets
- Kick balls
- heavy duty volleyball nets
- playground equipment
- Kitchen convection oven rehab
- Kitchen scale
- Kitchen slicer rehab
- Oven Mitts—Commercial grade
- Paint brushes—new—2", 3", & 4"
- Photocopier
- Powered plumbing snake
- Rescue tubes
- Scrapers

- Snow shoes
- Soil discs for farm tractor
- Sunfish sails
- Walk-in Cooler—6' x 8'

COVENANT HILLS

- Beach Umbrellas
- Shade screen house
- Zero radius turn mower 60" deck
- Garden tools
- Flash lights
- Soccer balls
- Energy efficient washer and dryer
- 15 passenger mini bus
- Individual windows for faith lodge
- Work truck
- Waffle maker
- Life jackets
- Kayaks
- Floor hockey sticks
- Scholarship funds
- Laminator
- TV and DVD player

Palmer to retire as Skye Farm Camp Caretaker

By Dennis Spilman

After nearly 30 years on staff at Skye Farm Camp, Dick Palmer retired on Dec. 31.

Palmer began working at Skye Farm near Warrensburg, N.Y., in the summer of 1975 as Summer Maintenance Supervisor. In 1977 he became the Offsite Provisioner/Coordinator, a position he was well suited for due to his vast knowledge of the Adirondacks and his experience as a Boy Scout leader.

After a brief stint as Trading Post Supervisor in 1978, Palmer returned to the offsite position and remained there until he "retired" from Skye Farm in 1996. Since 2000, when the Rev. Har-

old Shippey became Executive Director of the camp, and the Director of Troy Conference's Camping and Retreat Ministry, Palmer became the year-round caretaker, shifting over to Offsite Coordinator for each summer camping season and then back to caretaker for the remainder of the year.

Palmer will remain on staff as summer Offsite Coordinator. He has brought a level of professionalism along with organizational skills that have enabled Skye Farm to function on a daily basis and grow in its mission to provide a meaningful Christian camping experience for thousands of children.



Palmer



A VIM team from Burnt Hills United Methodist Church, N.Y., take a break outside of Joe Ford's Rensselaer, N.Y., home. The house was seriously damaged during a flood last August, and Ford was in despair. The team knocked on his door and over the next few weeks restored his home—and his hope.

Flood victim gives thanks for VIM 'angels, friends'

The excerpts below are from a testimony Joe Ford, a resident of Rensselaer, N.Y., delivered to the people of Burnt Hills United Methodist Church in New York. Ford's home was devastated in a flood on Aug. 11, and he expresses his gratitude for the help he received from Troy Conference Volunteers-in-Mission teams led by Jack Hill and Hank Coghill, both members of the Burnt Hills church.

I was in my home as the water rose. It happened so quickly that I only had time to save my dog and two cats, and to quickly throw my pills into a plastic bag before getting into a boat with my pets through my porch window.

During the course of that evening and the following morning, the water subsided, and the following day I walked through mud and puddles of water on the street and into my home. My heart sank when I saw mud and puddles of water in my home as well.

Everything up to approximately three feet was covered in a layer of thick mud. I didn't know where I could possibly even start to clean and remove everything that was destroyed. I called a cleaning company which performs that work only to learn that it would cost me \$20,000 to remove the debris and another \$50,000 to repair my home. I didn't have the money so I knew that was never going to happen and that I had lost my home and most everything I owned.

I was overwhelmed by what had happened, and I fell into a very deep despair and remained in that very dark frame of mind until I received a phone call from a man who told me he was John Hill, and a member of the Methodist church's Volunteers in Mission. He told me that he and other volunteers were coming to my home to help me.

Shortly thereafter, John Hill and volunteers of this church [Burnt Hills UMC] and other Methodist churches from the Capital District came to my home and began working on it. They removed all the remaining water, all the mud, and all the debris which had been my possessions. Then they began taking on the now-rotting floors and walls and started to replace them.

All through this time I found it hard to believe that these wonderful people were doing this for me—someone they didn't even know. To me it was, and still is, a miracle.

When people ask me about all of you and why you're doing this for me, I tell them that you are angels, because to me that is what you really are. I came here today to thank all of you for the kind and wonderful people that you are. But I have come to realize that I am just one of the many, many people you've helped here in America, and other countries as well. I know that if every one of these people in their gratitude could travel the many miles to you to be here to thank you themselves, they would. Because they can't, I thank you today for them too.

I want you to know that members of the Methodist church, John and Susan Hill, came to my synagogue—Temple Israel in Albany—on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year. On that day, I got up before my congregation of about 600 people and told them all that you've done for me. I asked John and Susan to stand up, and my whole congregation applauded them and all of you. For Jews to clap their hands in applause in the sanctuary of the temple -- and especially on Yom Kippur -- happens rarely, as we're not supposed to do it. But after hearing all about you wonderful people and what you're doing for me, they couldn't help it.

Rev. [Ed] Hackett, Hank, all members of this congregation, I thank you for inviting me here today. The Hebrew words *Toda rabas* mean thank you very much. *Toda rabas* for all of you being my angels and for becoming my friends.

VIM rally planned for early November

Save the dates of Friday and Saturday, Nov. 6 and 7 at Shenendehowa United Methodist Church in Clifton Park, N.Y., for a Troy Conference Volunteers-in-Mission (VIM) Rally celebrating Troy Conference mission teams. Plans are being made to hold an Early Response Team training on Friday, Nov. 6, with some additional VIM training on Saturday.

Openings on VIM teams

McCurdy School in Espanola, N.M., April 26 to May 2. Jay and Cathie Dunkleberger will be taking a team to do both construction and other hands-on assistance needed by this school and its students. The school is operated by the Methodist Church for Hispanic and Pueblo Indian children in an economically challenged region of New Mexico. Costs are expected to be \$400 plus transportation. Contact

Volunteers-in-Mission

the Dunklebergers at (518) 371-7071 or jdunkleb@nycap.rr.com.

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

Contact Pete Huston at hustonjp@sprynet.com or (518) 399-0919 if you are able to help on any of the several local projects at Emmaus United Methodist Church in Albany, N.Y.. If interested in other short term projects or leading a team, contact Jay Dunkleberger at (518) 371-7071 or jdunkleb@nycap.rr.com.

Teams are going many places from the other three Upper New York conferences. Now is a good time to start making connections. Contact the Dunklebergers to find out about forming or being part of a multi-conference team.

More VIM opportunities are listed on the Northeast Jurisdiction websites at www.gbgm-umc.org/umvim-nej.

Nomads On a Mission In Divine Service

Nomads are usually retired or close to retirement, usually with an RV, looking for a purpose and personal mission, want to share their faith, and enjoy using their skills to help others. They work for three weeks, four days a week at various sites. If you are interested, contact them at (800) 406-6237, or get more information at www.nomadsumc.org, or contact Ernie and Vivian Melin, who have participated in Nomads for a number of years at eamelin@aol.com.

GBGM Primetimers events:

Primetimers is an educational and mission service experience for adults over 50 organized by the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). Primetimer events scheduled include:

"The Life and Spirit of Appalachia, Henderson Settlement, Frakes, Ky., April 19 through 25; the cost is \$505.

"Discovering Alaska," Eagle River United Methodist Camp, Auke Bay/Juneau, Ala.; the cost is \$940.

"Creating Community with the City's Poor," Denver Urban Ministries, Co., May 31 through June 6; the cost is \$740.

"Life on the Bayour Teche: History, Culture and UMCOR Sager Brown," Baldwin, La., Oct. 18 through 24; the cost is \$570.

"Living Witnesses: Learning from Native Americans of the Northwest," Wal-lowa Lake Camp, Portland, Or., July 17 through 24; the cost is \$895.

"A Journey in Mission: Following Christ in Cambodia," Cambodia Methodist Mission, Phnom Penh, Nov. 4 through 14; the cost is \$1,975.

For more information or to register for these and other Primetimer events, contact (877) 882-4724 or primetimers@gbgm-umc.org, or visit the web site at www.primetimers.info.

Classifieds

Skye Farm Camp Caretaker

Skye Farm Camp and Retreat Center seeks a caretaker for its facility in Warrensburg, N.Y. Applicant must possess basic mechanical, electrical, plumbing and carpentry skills and must be experienced in the proper use of dump trucks, tractors and truck mounted snow removal equipment. The applicant should be friendly, hospitable and able to model a Christian lifestyle. He/she will be required to provide hospitality for groups using the facility, work with various boards and agencies associated with the camp and insure that the facilities are ready to use at all times. The position is currently based on a four day work week with one day on stand-by and can be designed with some "seasonal flexibility".

Interested parties should send their resumes to Dennis Spilman, Chair-Site Managers, 370 Maple Ave., Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866, denspilman@aol.com



Biblical Valentine greetings

Rather than an original column this month, I'm sending you Valentine greetings from Bible passages. Consider reflecting on those passages that resonate with you.

Spiritual Formation

By Evie Doyon

You should know that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Cor.3: 3)

The Lord does not look at things that people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. (1 Sam. 16:7)

All the believers were one in heart and mind. (Acts 4:32a)

Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. (Proverbs 3:3)

Search me O God, and know my heart. (Psalm 139:23)

Create in me a new heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10)

I run in the paths of your commands, for you have set my heart free. (Psalm 119:32)

I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart. (Jeremiah 24:7)

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33)

Love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)

The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart that you might obey it. (Deut. 30:14)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Mt. 5:8)

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. (Eph. 3:16-17a)



A nearly lost chapter in the life of George S. Brown

By Pat Thompson

Here is one final note on the saga of the Rev. George S. Brown. This past July, on our way to the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of the United Methodist Church, held this year at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell, S.D., my husband Vernon and I made a stop at the Ella Sharp Museum in Jackson, Mi. This museum was the former home of Ella Sharp and her parents, Dwight and Mary Merriman. In the January 2008 Connection, I wrote about Dwight Merriman, the gentleman who hired George S. Brown to build a stone wall around his property in 1863.

Merriman had negotiated with Brown through his father-in-law, Abraham Wing III, who lived in Glens Falls, N.Y., and was familiar with the stone walls Brown had built. Correspondence preserved at the museum indicated that in 1859, after two years of waiting for Brown's health to be restored, Merriman told his father-in-law that he was unwilling to meet Brown's terms which were transportation from New York to Michigan, \$1.50 a day plus board, and the agreement that he would not lay stone on stormy days. Apparently, however, Merriman changed his mind when he was unable to locate anyone else to build his wall, and in 1863 he agreed to Brown's terms. He also paid \$18 a month to the men and their families Brown brought with him.

The wall was about a mile long and took about two years to build. In 1869 the Michigan Agricultural Society gave Dwight Merriman a medal for the artistic and engineering design of the wall.

When Vernon and I arrived at the museum, we were met by Lynne Loftis, the former Executive Director of the Museum. She showed us the medal Merriman had received from

the Michigan Agricultural Society in 1869 in recognition for the artistic and engineering design of the wall. She also presented us with copies of the original correspondence between Wing and Merriman about hiring Brown and a history of the property, which she had written.

Loftis then took us on a tour of the property so we could see the wall and the historic plaque, placed in 1967 by the Ella Sharp Museum Association and neighbors of the wall.

Sadly, neither the medal nor the



plaque mention George S. Brown, nor is he mentioned in the 1865 Jackson Daily Citizen article on Merriman's Hillside Farm. An article appearing in the Jackson Citizen Patriot in 1936 only refers to the wall as having been built by a "colored man." Once again, Brown becomes the victim of white privilege.

It is not until an article appeared in the Sept. 17, 1967, Jackson Citizen Patriot at the time the historic site marker was placed on the wall that the story of George S. Brown's role in building the stone wall is actually made public. If Merriman's daughter, Ella Sharp hadn't preserved the correspondence between her father and her grandfather and bequeathed the property to the city of Jackson, and Loftis hadn't found the correspondence which discussed Brown's terms, it is likely that this piece of Brown's life would have been lost.

For more information about the museum, visit ellasharp.org.

PreConference materials due March 3

The deadline for submitting materials and reports for the Preconference Journal is March 3. Send materials to the Conference Secretary, the Rev. Greg Smith, at RevGASmith@worldnet.att.net, (802) 985-2388.

Registration fees for Annual Conference Session set

This year's Annual Conference Session will be held June 10 through 13 at the Saratoga City Center in New York. The charge for a full-time commuter, including all meals, will be \$200. Part time commuters registering for daily meals is \$91 for Thursday and another \$91 on Friday, and \$21 on Saturday; full-time commuter including all meals \$200; part-time commuters who do not sign up for meals will be charged a \$30 daily registration and facilities fee.

Part-time commuters are responsible for arranging their own lodging.

The fee for registration, meals and double room occupancy is \$425, and \$650 for those registering for single room occupancy.

This year, meal tickets will be issued and will be required for each meal.

Registration packets to clergy, lay members, board and agency chairs, and surviving spouses will be mailed in early March. The deadline for registration is April 15; an additional \$50 will be charged for registrations received after that date.

Lay speakers attend Nashville gathering

By Vivian Melin, Conference Director of Lay Speakers

As I write this and send it off, I am on my way to the Convocation of the Association of Conference Directors of Lay Speaking Ministries in Nashville, Tn. Three of our district directors will also be in attendance, as well our Conference Lay Leader Ilah Sisson Walser.

This year a new basic course is being introduced. The emphasis on the preaching aspect of the Lay Speaking Ministries Program is not going to be paramount in this course. Instead, we will be focusing on caring, leading, communicating and going into the world. It will also cover "who and why we are."

We have a course scheduled at the Westport Federated Church in Westport, N.Y., beginning on Feb. 8. The information is on the Conference website at www.troyac.org>Ministries..

Lay Speaking Ministries

As the main part of the Convocation this year, we will pilot a new course for re-certification, "Leading for Christian Transformation." This course has been written by Steve Bryant, publisher of *The Upper Room*, who will present the 10-hour course to us in its entirety.

It sounds like an exciting and spirit-filled weekend, and I will have more to tell you about it next month.

Annual Report forms due

Please remember to get the Annual Report Forms filled in, approved at your church/charge conference, signed and returned as directed on the bottom of the form. As we look to the formation of a new Conference in 2010 it becomes even more important that the information we have on our Lay Speakers -- Certified and Local -- is up-to-date and accurate.

I will add some frequently asked questions to the Conference website, so you may be able to get an answer to any questions you may have. If you still have questions, send me an e-mail at vmelin@aol.com. Not only will I respond to you, but I will also post it in case others have the same questions.

If you have any concerns regarding the Lay Speaking Ministries program of Troy Annual Conference, don't hesitate to get in touch with your district director or the Conference Director.

Conference Director: Vivian Melin, (518) 563-1242, home; (518) 441-2305, voicemail; or Vmelin@aol.com.

Adirondack District: Maxine Willis, (518) 499-1564 or maxcarol2002@yahoo.com.

Albany District: Jerry Oliver, (518) 861-5062 or bud7231993@yahoo.com.

Embury District: Darlene Suto, (518) 279-1149 or dvi1151@aol.com.

Green Mountain District: Marie MacDougall, (802) 461-4452 or macdome@juno.com.

Upcoming Lay Speaking courses:

Adirondack District

A Basic Lay Speaking Course, led by Vivian Melin, the Conference Director of Lay Speaking Ministries, will be held on Sundays, Feb. 8, 15, 22, March 1 and 8 from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the Westport Federated Church, 6486 Main Street, Westport, N.Y. 12993. For more information or to register, contact Maxine Willis, 312 Co Route 10, Whitehall, N.Y. 12887; (518) 499-1565; maxcarol2002@yahoo.com.

Green Mountain District:

"Storytelling: Dancing with Words," an advanced lay speaking course led by Pastor Kirk Thompson will be offered on Saturdays, Feb. 7, 21, March 7, 21 and April 4 beginning at 9:30 a.m. at Grace United Methodist Church, 130 Maple Ave., Essex Junction, Vt. The cost is \$32.

A five week Basic Lay Speaking Course beginning Sunday, Feb. 15 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. will be held at Binghamville United Methodist Church in Fletcher, Vt. The course will be led by Ellen Ravelin. The cost is \$15.

To register for any of these classes, send a completed application, available on-line at www.troyac.org>Resources>Forms, signed by your pastor along with a check to Marie MacDougall, Green Mountain Director of Lay Speaking Ministry, 19 Eastern Ave., Apt. 1, Barre, Vt. 05641. For more information, contact MacDougall at (802) 461-4452 or (518) 588-4705.



Telling our stories at Annual Conference

The theme for this year's Annual Conference Session, June 10 through 13 in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., is God is still Creating (Us).

We want to tell your stories relating to this theme when we gather in June. Lay and clergy persons throughout Troy Conference are invited to submit a short essay expressing where you have seen or experienced God at work creating. Those interested are invited to answer the question "When or where have you seen God creating in Troy Conference—in you, in community, or in ministry?" All submissions will be compiled into a book chronicling the work of God among us; some submissions will be selected for use at Annual Conference in Saratoga in June.

Guidelines for submissions are listed below. Submission deadline is April 1. For more information contact Meredith Vanderminden at meredith@vanderminden.com. All are invited to witness to God at work creating among us.

A Creating God Essay Submission Guidelines

Essay submission deadline is April 1, 2009. You will receive confirmation of your submission within two days of its receipt.

Please answer the question "When or where have you seen God creating in Troy Conference—in you, in community, or in ministry?" clearly and concisely in your essay.

Please limit your essay to 350-500 words, or about three minutes when read aloud at your natural speaking pace.

All essays should include your name, church, and contact information, including e-mail address and telephone number, when available. Please place this information at the top of your essay for easy reference.

Submissions should be sent electronically to meredith@vanderminden.com. If this is not possible, submissions may be mailed to Rev. Meredith Vanderminden, 8 Jacqueline Dr., Queensbury, N.Y. 12804.

All essays will be reviewed and prepared for publication in book format. Some essays will be selected for use at Annual Conference 2009. If your essay is selected, you will be contacted no later than May 1 and asked to video tape the reading of your essay for Annual Conference Session. If you wish to submit an essay for the book but do not want it presented at Annual Conference, please indicate that on the top of your essay.



Faithful Leadership for a Diverse and Changing World

A weekend workshop on responding to God's call in building community beyond lines of race and culture



Our program leader will be **Eric Law**, with associates from the Kaleidoscope Institute. Eric Law is an author, a photographer, a playwright, a composer of church music, an Episcopal/Anglican priest, and an internationally known consultant on building diverse community.

When? Friday April 17th at 7:00 PM through Sunday April 19th midafternoon
Where? Dominican Retreat Center
1945 Union St, Niskayuna, NY 12309

Commuters are encouraged to attend.

Who? This retreat is open to all lay and clergy members of Troy, upstate New York and New England Conferences, hungering and thirsting for justice.

Registration donation of \$50. The event sponsor: *Troy Conference Commission on Religion and Race encourages people not to refrain from registration because of cost.*

Registration and Questions? Contact Ilah Walser, registrar, Troy Conference Office, 396 Loudon Rd., Saratoga Springs NY 12866
518-584-8214 X11; iwalser@troyac.org

New programs are available from the Conference Resource Center

By Wally Davis

The following new programs are available from the Conference Resource Center:

The Jesus Creed—Early Christians didn't sing in the choir or go to weekly Bible studies. Yet they matured inwardly in relationship with God as well as outwardly in their relationship with each other. How and why? See how the great Shema of the Old Testament transformed by our Lord into the focal point for spiritual maturity. According to the Jesus Creed, loving God and loving others are the greatest commandments. Includes Scot McKnight's book of the same name and a leader's guide. The DVD is 47 minutes long and is divided into seven sessions.

Black Methodism: Legacy of Faith—Revival—A history of black United Methodists. Celebrate the 40th anniversary of several related and pivotal events in the life and history of our denomination. The end of the racially segregated Central Jurisdiction in 1967. The founding of Black Methodists for Church Renewal in 1967. The birth, through merger, of the UMC in 1968. The establishment of the General Commission on Religion and Race in 1968. The original "Legacy of Faith" was first broadcast in 1994 on "Catch the Spirit" the popular UM television program. An updated introduction and ending have been added, but the rest of the program remains intact. We hope this program will benefit you and other viewers in ways that revive your spiritual faith and your commitment to ministry through the UMC.

Paul: An Appealing or Appalling Apostle—In this 50 minute introduction to Paul, John Dominic Crossan addresses challenges to understanding Paul. Paul's character and theology, and gender balance and imbalance in the New Testament. Explore Paul's character and theology.

Victory and Peace or Justice and Peace? A study for progressive Christians. Four lectures by preeminent historical Jesus scholar John Dominic Crossan. Justice and the World: What is the Character of your God?, History and Jesus: What is the content of your faith, Worship and Violence: What is the purpose of your prayer?, Resurrection and Community: What is the function of your church? Bonus Sermon: Justice as Love. Four hours of DVD content together with a discussion guide. Can be conducted in four, eight, or 12 weeks.

UMCOR Sager Brown: Depot of Hope—Visit the UMCOR Sager Brown Depot and campus in Baldwin LA, where mission has been taking place for more than 140 years. See how gifts of hope are assembled and dispatched to those who need them most. Learn how you can be part of the life and ministry of UMCOR Sager Brown. The DVD contains a 6 minute movie on the work and ministry of Sager Brown. Two three-minute instructional movies for health, school, and layette kits. Printable instruction sheets for assembling bedding kits, flood buckets, health kits, layette kits, school kits, and sewing kits. Sewing patterns for school bags and layette items. Volunteer guide. Bulletin insert to print and share.

Who's Got the Power?—Focuses on Global Warming. From the coal-scarred hills of Appalachia to the sun drenched suburbs of Los Angeles, Ca., to three category five hurricanes within three months in 2005 in the Southeast, eight days of non-stop rain in the Northeast, record breaking heat globally. People are becoming increasingly vocal about the hazards of global warming. They are demanding practical and achievable solutions, in particular championing the development and use of renewable energy resources to safeguard the earth for future generations.

Countering Pharaoh's Production-Consumption Society Today—A small group DVD study that can be conducted over four or five one-hour sessions. The program includes a DVD with two hours of content and a CD-Rom containing reproducible written materials. Warm-up question video clips are included for use in each session. Presented by Walter Brueggemann, the sessions include: The Way Out, The Decalogue, Countering Caesar, An Act of Imagination, and On Not Doing God Any Favors.

There is only one copy of each of these and they are circulated on a first come first served basis. The usual time period for circulation is 30 days. Programs which cover eight or ten weeks require longer durations.

To check out any of these new programs or for more information, contact Wally Davis at the Conference Resource Center in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., (518) 584-8214, ext. 10 or (800) 684-9377, ext. 10; wallyd@troyac.org.

Young clergy from new conference area to meet at Casowasco Retreat Center

Join young clergy from under 40 in North Central New York, Western New York, Troy, and Wyoming Conferences for an overnight at Casowasco Camp and Retreat Center, Moravia, N.Y. in Moravia, N.Y., on Feb. 16 and 17.

The gathering will give participants time to worship and relax together, talk

about ministry as young clergy and the role young clergy will play in the new conference that is taking shape.

The cost is \$86 for one overnight, and three meals.

For more information, contact Beth Quick at bethquick@gmail.com.

Mid-career change led to ministry *from page 4*

"I was looking for something new to do with the skills and passions I had, and behold, the church came up," she said.

She had been an active member of the White River Junction United Methodist Church, serving on the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the Long Range Planning Team and Administrative Council. She chaired the Council on Ministries and served as Superintendent and teacher for the Sunday school program.

When she felt the call to ministry, she enrolled in and graduated with a Masters of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York. In the summer of 1997, she completed work in Clinical Pastoral Education at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, and served as a seminary intern at Riverside Church in New York City, developing programs for 18-to-24-year-olds.

She was ordained an elder in 2001 and has served the Saranac and Lyon Mountain United Methodist Churches in New York, and Grace United Methodist Church in Essex Junction, Vt., and Grace United Methodist Church in Bradford, Vt. While in Essex Junction, she was a community chaplain at Fletcher Allen Healthcare in Burlington, Vt.

Farrell has also received training in family systems theory through the Tending the Fire program; "Put on Your Own Oxygen Mask First" with Bill Easum and Jeff Patton; spiritual director training, for which she is a small group leader for the current trainees; General Church training for Boards of Ordained Ministry; seminars on pastoral care for the dying, for returning vets and their

families, and for those suffering from addiction and their families.

In Troy Annual Conference, she has served on the Covenant Council, the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, the Conference Sessions Committee, as well as the District Committee on finance, and conference transition and implementation teams at the time the current vision and structure were being implemented. Currently she is secretary for the conference Board of Ordained Ministry and chair of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry, and also a participant in the boundaries transition committee with New England Conference.

Building community

Farrell has a passion for drama and has been part of a group called Christmas Revels, which stages at least two productions at year—one in winter and one in summer.

"It's a group which uses traditional liturgy and dance to build community among the actors, dancers and singers—and with the audience as well," she said. "There's a lot of audience participation. They come to share the traditional rituals and if you leave one out, the audience will perform it themselves.

"I've learned about worship through them," she said.

Having worked with the group for 25 years, she has "seen how different groups, using some new things and some old, build community."

Farrell enjoys helping build community. "In education, I called it building community through drama," she said. "In church, it's building community through worship."

4WORD '09

When the World says "this way",
We say "Yaweh"

WHAT? The fifth Annual event for the youth in Grades 7-12 of North Central NY, Troy, Western NY, and Wyoming Conferences! Bring your youth group to praise God And form new friendships!

WHERE? Holiday Inn, Liverpool, NY (Syracuse)

WHEN? April 24-26, 2009

SPEAKERS: Youth . . . from each conference

WORKSHOPS: Everything from faith issues to fun times
Youth Service Fund, Bible Trivia, Volleyball, New Games, Mission of Peace, Adult Leader Workshops, and Open Mic! And MORE!



Registration Deadline Postmarked: April 9, 2009

We cannot guarantee room reservations at the Conference Hotel for any registrations postmarked after April 9, 2009

Send registration and payment (registration must include payment) to:
RoseMarie Schlock, Wyoming Annual Conference, P O Box 58, Endicott, NY
13760 **Make checks payable to:** Wyoming Annual Conference

Registration questions contact—Tony & Judy Hipes at tandj3905@hotmail or
Event questions contact—Ted Anderson at geneseevalleyumc@crcls.edu

SEE YOU THERE !

Church's presence on the web is critical to its being relevant *from page 1*

and what it might mean.

In addition to my blog, I have a profile on the popular social networking site, Facebook (but stay well clear of its more spam-laden cousin, MySpace), where I can read about how members of my family, former classmates, and no small number of lay and clergy folk from Troy Conference are doing. I frequently check on the web home of one of the two churches I serve, and make changes to a page there designed to help folks worship with us when they can't be in the sanctuary. I read the reflections of other colleagues on their blogs, including *Questing Parson* (written by a retired United Methodist elder who shares stories—some humorous, some poignant—of his adventures in ministry) and *Hacking Christianity* (one of my favorite blogs, written by a seminary friend of mine, who blogs about the places where his love of technology and his passion for ministry overlap—really, check out his series on 'what the church can learn from Wikipedia!').

I am involved in these online ministries—and I do consider them ministries—for many reasons. Some are personal. I am after all an extrovert, and the more places I have to express myself and talk (or write) out my thoughts, the happier I am. I did get myself into a profession that will move me around a lot, and so I have loved ones I miss that I want to keep in contact with.

Some of my reasons are ministerial. There are many members of my congregations who will talk to me in person

about something they read in my blog, or who will thank me for the note of encouragement or birthday wish I sent them on Facebook. There are colleagues I can coordinate with and from whose wisdom I can benefit, regardless of the distances between us.

Some of my reasons are missional. I honestly believe that there is a whole world of people out there who may love God but don't seek out a church building. I also think that there are a great many people who misjudge the church for the shortcomings or caricatures they see in movies or on television, and I want to offer another voice.

I know I'm not alone in using the technology at hand for the practice of ministry. Cheryl Hemmerle, Technical Training Specialist for United Methodist Communications responded to my questions about the importance of Internet connectivity for the United Methodist Church—by email, of course.

"I believe the church's presence on the Web is critical to its being relevant, timely and engaged in the lives of people around the world who want to maintain a dynamic faith in the midst of everyday life," she says.

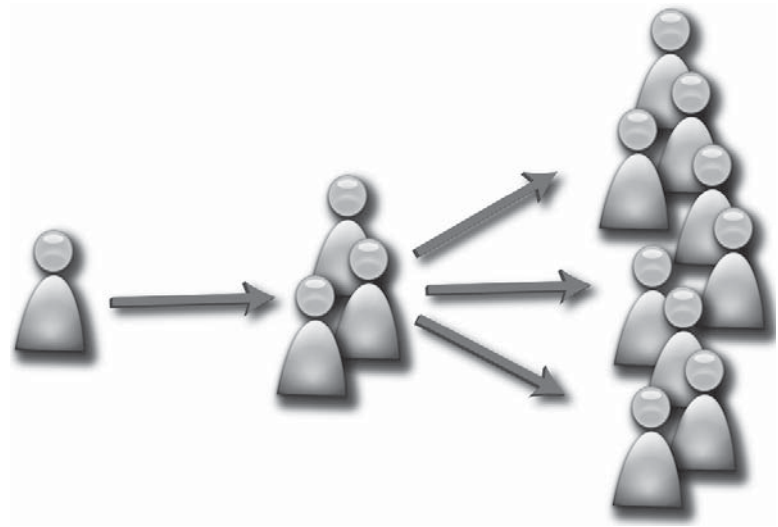
Hemmerle lifts up several examples of ways the United Methodist Church is using the internet. There are numerous groups on Facebook, some organized by United Methodist Communications and many more started by individuals and small groups. There's a United Methodist TV channel on YouTube, and a social networking and discussion site at 7Villages.com (which this user—yes, I post there too—recommends only to those who enjoy some rousing debate, as it is a place where the vast theological and socio-political diversity of the UMC is displayed with levels of respect and tolerance that vary from person to person and post to post).

Michelle Bogue-Trost, pastor of the Newtonville United Methodist Church, N.Y., discussed the ways a local church might use Internet technology. Newtonville maintains a website and two Facebook groups (one for the general church and one started by the youth group), and has a computer lab where congregants of all ages can safely interact online. Bogue-Trost is also working on a project with the Board of Ordained Ministry using online chats and discussion forums to explore the BOM's role in a church struggling to engage a digital culture.

"The use of technology," she says, "tells those inside and outside the church that the message we offer, the good news we share, is not for a past time, but for every time, every situation, every culture—even ours."

Just down the hall from Michelle, Albany District Superintendent Jim Fenimore finds websites, Facebook, email, and Adobe Connect (a program that allows for online meetings using text, phone calls, or video cameras) integral parts of his ministry. Since he often finds himself responding to questions late at night or from places where there is not a phone available, Fenimore is able to use technology to streamline his work.

It goes further than that, though. "Digital forms of communication are simply the primary form of communication for many people in this culture," Fenimore says. "What is clear is that these people do not make up the majority of those who go to our churches. To



Online social networking can be dynamic. One person connects with another, and that leads to a connection with 12 other people, and so on. The instantaneous and 'wildfire' nature of web-based networking can be a largely untapped mission field, according to Cheryl Hemmerle, Technical Training Specialist for United Methodist Communications

ignore these technologies is to ignore these generations."

In fact, a recent Pew/Internet study found that 75 percent of adults ages 18-24 who use the internet have a social networking profile. 57 percent of online adults ages 25-34 use social networking, and 30 percent of those ages 35-44. Cheryl Hemmerle adds, "With more than 75 percent of U.S. adults using the Web in their daily lives, the church cannot afford to stay in the background of this largely untapped mission field."

While it is obvious that the instantaneous and 'wildfire' nature of web-based communication are significant benefits, there are some drawbacks that may prevent many folks from fully embracing this medium. Fenimore points out the potential for being misunderstood since one cannot see a person's body language, facial expression or other visual cues when communicating online. Clearly, there are concerns for safety and appropriateness of content as well, which is why the Newtonville United Methodist Church has safeguards to protect users who are on the Internet in their lab.

These reasons for caution, however, are by no means reasons to disregard the medium altogether. Hemmerle reminds us, "It's an age-old concern whenever a new technology is introduced. Similar 'dangers' or 'fears' were espoused with the printing press (circa 1450), but the church turned those 'dangers' and 'fears' into the bestselling book of all time: the Bible." I would add that there were a couple of brothers who used the format of the familiar bar tune to write catchy songs conveying the love of God, many of which are now our most beloved hymns. "I believe that similar dangers and fears can be transformed into powerful messages of God's love through the Internet," Hemmerle says.

Certainly there are more pressing dangers in not communicating in the language of emerging generations. Fenimore cautions, "Ignoring or refusing to use these technologies will ultimately lead to an inability to communicate

with people." Hemmerle adds, "If the church does not engage these resources for the present, let alone the future, I believe we are in danger of becoming extinct as a physical institution."

And we are missing an opportunity to find God in new ways.

"God is already present in any and every connection we church folks make with others, regardless of physicality," Hemmerle insists. "The litmus test of how real virtual connections can be is the authenticity of the people making the connections, not the medium they choose."

Bogue-Trost wholeheartedly agrees. "There is no such thing as virtual connection. Connection is connection—the medium doesn't matter, and God is in every connection."

So that's why I'm updating my Facebook status, because this may be the moment I see God between the pixels, the instant where the ever-present God reminds me how grace and love speak in any language.

Resources

Weaving a Web of Connection: Using Internet Technology for Effective Ministry, a training event offered by United Methodist Communications, will be hosted by Troy Annual Conference on Nov. 7. Satellite trainings will be offered in the North Central New York, Western New York and Wyoming annual conferences, and all four locations will be linked via the Internet. To learn more about the course, visit <http://web.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=12494>.

United Methodist Communications is also offering a free, ongoing online course, "**What is Web Ministry**." Learn more at <http://moodle.umcom.org/moodle/>.

Congregations interested in starting or expanding a web ministry can contact the Troy Conference Director of Communications, Sandra Brands, at (800) 684-9377 or (518) 584-8214, ext. 15, or sbrands@troyac.org to arrange for training.



The Rev. Becca Clark, pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Montpelier, Vt., and Plainfield United Methodist Church, Vt., is a faithful user of Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites. Her blog can be read at <http://www.pastorbecca.com/>.

UMs plan media campaign to 'Rethink Church'

By Susan Passi-Klaus, UMNS

What if church wasn't just a place where people spend an hour on Sundays? What if there wasn't just one door into the church but 10,000? And what if "church" was a verb instead of a noun?

The United Methodist Church is going to pose those questions and others when it rolls out a new media campaign in late April aimed at getting people to "Rethink Church."

"In the next few years, we will seek to encourage a global spiritual dialogue," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, top staff executive of United Methodist Communications. "It will ask us to rethink church. We will ask, 'What if church were a verb and not a noun?'"

"What we're going to try and get across is the idea that 'church' doesn't just happen on Sundays, and 'church' isn't just a building," said Kerry Graham, president of Nashville-based Bohan Advertising/Marketing, which developed the "Rethink Church" campaign.

Attracting more people

The campaign is designed to redefine church as a 365-days-a-year experience where people seeking a church community can become involved at various levels—many of them non-traditional—such as volunteering with groups outside the church building and even through making online connections.

Graham suggests that the church population, institution and hierarchy will need to understand and embrace the idea that it is OK for "church" to start out as day care, a youth-group ski trip, a men's basketball league or something that solves a secular need, such as Habitat for Humanity.

"Whatever entry point is comfortable for someone who may find the idea of entering church daunting, an act of courage or a moment of high vulnerability—that's what church needs to be," he said.

United Methodists are working to bring three generations into the life

The new United Methodist Church's awareness/public relations campaign will use cutting-edge communication tools such as iTunes, text messaging, social networks such as Facebook, and YouTube.

of the church: baby boomers, post-moderns (also known as Gen X) and millennials (Mosaic or Gen Y). The target audience for the new focus will be 18- to 34-year-olds. With issues related to church relevance, negative impressions of Christians and opportunities for involving young people, these generations have been difficult to engage in mainline church involvement. Church officials expect the campaign to have a positive impact with other age groups as well.

Hollon said the church's mission statement, to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," is the foundation for United Methodist Communications' work. He also noted that the new campaign will use language that resonates with the life concerns of people who aren't familiar with the church.

Competing for 'mind space'

Rethinking church and denominational marketing calls for an ability to tell the church's stories in "many, many different ways, through many media and with different audiences," Hollon said.

Although traditional marketing expressions such as television commercials, magazine advertisements and billboards will anchor the campaign, the "Rethink Church" message also will be delivered in other ways. Cutting-edge communication tools will include everything from social network groups such as Facebook, United Methodist iTunes and text messaging to YouTube Methodist channels



Bishop Sally Dyck, president of the Commission on Communication

and bumper stickers. The question for campaign architects becomes, "How do we communicate faith in a complex, media-saturated world?"

"We face a multiplicity of media and competition for 'mind space,'" Hollon said. "We are living through changes in lifestyle and values in post-modern, post-Christian culture—changes that are continuous and require adaptation and the ability to turn on a dime."

"Rethink Church" will serve as a creative addendum to the campaign "Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors." The church has carried out the campaign on television, radio, billboards and other media for the past eight years.

General Conference, the legislative assembly of The United Methodist Church, approved approximately \$20 million in funding for United Methodist Communications for advertising and media campaign work for the next four years. The "Rethink Church" campaign's cost is not yet known, and some funding for it may come from other United Methodist Communications funds.

Challenging the church

Bishop Sally Dyck, the Commission on Communication president, has supported the campaign for "Open hearts, open minds, open doors," from the beginning. The bishop, who leads the The United Methodist Church's Minnesota Area said she likes the fact that it offers churches training in radical hospitality, which is important to revitalizing congregations and starting new ones, she said. The campaign needs to continue, she said.

"Rethink Church, I think, really bumps it up to another level, and it's actually a level that I have wanted our denomination to work on," Dyck said. "...Rethink Church is going to challenge every local church to think

about what the meaning and purpose of church is."

A lot of churches define their meaning and purpose in terms of fellowship and have "sacrificed evangelism on the altar of fellowship," she said.

"Rethink Church" will also challenge members to think about how they live out church every day, in all aspects of life. "It really goes from just receiving the gospel in kind of a passive way to ...living that gospel out in the world," the bishop said. "It's a challenge to not only believe but to act and to live."

The campaign will have a "wonderful challenge and opportunity for the existing church," but it will also invite people who have been disappointed with the church or even hurt by it to rethink and reconsider what church is really about, she said.

Raising awareness

"Rethink Church" is envisioned as more than just a media campaign or awareness campaign, developers say. The goal is for it to become a movement, with results measured in terms of lives touched and transformed, according to United Methodist Communications staff. Those measures are being developed, but traffic on a future web site for the campaign will be one indicator.

The original campaign, launched in September 2001, raised U.S. awareness of the church from 14 percent to 30 percent, according to Hollon. He said 96 percent of those surveyed by Gallup last March now have a positive or neutral view of The United Methodist Church.

What doors will you open?

What doors will your congregation open? How will you 'Rethink Church'?

Let us know. Share your ideas and stories by sending them to Sandra Brands, Director of Communication, Troy Annual Conference, 396 Loudon Rd., Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866; (518) 584-8214 or (800) 684-9877, ext. 15; sbrands@troyac.org.



We will publish these stories in *The Connection* and at www.troyac.org.

Contact the Communications Office if you would like:

To become a Welcoming Congregation

Want to arrange for Igniting Ministry/Welcoming training

To apply for a matching grant for advertising funds

Connect with United Methodist Communications for resources and ideas

Get ready for the
Rethink Church
Launch

Order
Rethink
Church
Doorhangers

from the
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To order:

Contact the
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Offices (518) 584-8214, ext. 15 or
(800) 684-9377, ext. 15, sbrands@
troyac.org.

Specify the number of
doorhangers needed.

RETHINK

First United Methodist Church of Oneonta, N.Y., in the **Wyoming Annual Conference**, initiated a gathering of **Reconciling Ministry Network** congregations and their supporters in the new annual conference area of upstate New York. The network of upstate New York RCM congregations has launched a website at unyrmn.org and a Facebook group, **Upstate New York Reconciling Ministries Network**.

There is now a **Troy Conference Facebook** group as well as the group **Upper NYS United Methodists** and **Troy Conference Methodist for Social Action**.

Kristen Dart, a member of **Christ United Methodist Church** in Troy, N.Y., was among the thousands of people attending the inauguration of **President Barack Obama**. Dart accompanied her grandfather, **Col. Clarence Dart**, who had been a pilot in the legendary **Tuskegee Airmen**, the nation's first black military squadron. Obama credited the World War II Air Corps with helping to break racial barriers, fighting bravely for their country despite bitter discrimination. The example of the Tuskegee Airmen inspired **President Harry Truman** to integrate the military.

Col. Dart was one of 330 surviving Airmen invited by Obama's inauguration staff to attend the celebrations with one guest.

While in the capitol the Darts and other members of the family met with **U.S. Rep.**, now **Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand**, who had met Col. Dart at the Congressional Medal of Honor ceremony for the Tuskegee Airman in 2007.

Linda and Lynn VanTassell will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the **South Glens Falls United Methodist Church**, N.Y., fundraiser, the **Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper**. Inspired by the **International Pancake Race**, a competition between the towns of Olney, England, and Liberal, Kansas held every Shrove Tuesday, the race grew out of an older race, which began in the mid-1400s when, according to

News Notes

News from Troy Conference churches and people



Pastor Dave Martin of Hope United Methodist Church in Troy, N.Y., plunged into Lake George on New Year's Day to raise money for Habitat for Humanity and Emmaus United Methodist Church in Albany, N.Y.

some legends, a woman in the midst of cooking pancakes heard the church bells ring and, unwilling to let the pancakes burn, raced to the nearby Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul with her skillet in hand.

As part of the dinner at the church, the VanTassells hand out Mardi Gras beads and masks for the children. Money raised is used to provide scholarships for **Skye Farm Camp** in Warrensburg, N.Y. The church tries to pay the \$100 camp registration fee for as many youth as possible. Because this is the last year the VanTassells will organize the event, the church is looking for someone to continue the fundraiser.

Mooers United Methodist Church in New York hosted a day-long "Happy Birthday, Jesus," party on the Sunday before Christmas. Following a family-

friendly worship geared to children, the congregation walked to Mooers Senior Housing where youth and others entertained residents. Some members of the church helped pack gifts at the elementary school for needy children. At lunch, birthday cake was served and the meal was followed by a movie for children, a brief mission trip for teenagers, and caroling. The day ended with a Love Feast, sponsored by the youth.

First United Methodist Church in Saranac Lake, N.Y., has served dinner on Wednesday evenings for about a year. **The Rev. Maggie McCarey** told a reporter from the *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* that the number of people coming has increased from the 50 or 60 regulars who came for meals last winter. McCarey said some of the older attendees have started to bring dates, and some of the younger, single men take to-go containers of leftovers home later. She said one of the regulars is expecting a child soon, and the others have been bringing in baby clothes for the child. "It's what a community should be," she told the newspaper. "It's what a community used to be."

Todd and Tricia Andrews of Hudson Falls United Methodist Church in New York recently graduated from candidate orientation with the **World Evangelization for Christ (WEC)** and will soon leave for Western Asia to engage in a ministry that shares the Gospel through public events such as mimes, unicyclists and other groups. Todd, who has a music degree in vocal performance, will work as a sound man and travel with the performers to do the audio. Tricia will take a variety of roles, "from helping hospitality for

the performance groups we bring in, to helping to coordinate follow-up with seekers.

The couple have four children, who will travel with them overseas, and three of the children will need to be home schooled. WEC is a nondenominational, multi-national organization with 2,000 missionaries all over the world, about 200 of whom are from the United States.

On New Year's Day, **Pastor Dave Martin of Hope United Methodist Church** in Troy, N.Y., took the "Polar Plunge", a swim in Lake George's 33-degree water. Martin took the plunge after losing a challenge that the congregation couldn't collect \$2,000 by Dec. 31. With church attendance down because of the severe storms for two weeks in December, it was looking like Martin would stay warm and cozy on New Year's Day. But at the last minute, the congregation exceeded the \$2,000 goal, and Martin kept his part of the bargain, running into the frigid water with hundreds of other hardy participants. The donations were given to **Habitat for Humanity** and the refugee program at **Emmaus United Methodist Church**, Albany, N.Y.

E. Clayton Burgess, Jr., a retired Elder in Troy Annual Conference has published *To Ring Like A Bell That Has No Flaw: A Celebration of Faith*. The book is an examination of spiritual issues such as knowing God in a high-tech world, defining Jesus, understanding the Bible and the meaning of prayer, and what to do when lost in the darkness while feeling out of touch with God. The book is available for purchase on-line at Amazon.com or [Borders](http://Borders.com).



Troy Conference youth and adult leaders took part in "Building Community in a Diverse and Changing World," held Dec. 12 through 14 at Pine Grove United Methodist Church in Albany, N.Y. The event leader was the Rev. Eric Law, author, photographer, playwright and composer and an Episcopal priest.

New conference selected as campaign test market



The Rev. Larry Hollon, top staff executive of United Methodist Communications, and his staff spent the fall introducing United Methodist leaders to the “Rethink Church” awareness campaign. A UMNS photo by Ronny Perry.

The late April launch of United Methodist Communications’ (UMCom) “Rethink Church” campaign, the Igniting Ministry advertising and public awareness campaign for the 2009 through 2012 quadrennium, in late April will have special significance for the churches of North Central New York, Troy, Western New York and Wyoming annual conferences.

The future upstate New York conference has been selected as one of the test markets for the new advertising/public relations campaign, a campaign that will use text messaging, YouTube, iTunes and other digital media in addition to traditional media such as billboards, magazines, radio and television advertising.

One of six conference areas selected by the denomination’s communication agency as a test market, the Upper New York Area will benefit from the additional resources and training offered by the general agency to help equip local churches for the welcoming and mission-oriented ministry. Because the new conference will not come into existence until July 1, 2010, the initial work will be done with the four current conferences.

While the test markets will include media markets within New York state, over the next 18 months, all churches in the four conferences can take advantage of the resources provided by the General Commission on United Methodist Communications. Those resources include training, coordinated activities, matching grants incentives and free invitation tools.

“Having been selected a test market area by United Methodist Communications will help increase awareness of our commitment to moving out of our buildings and into the community,” said Susan W. Hassinger, bishop of the Albany Area Episcopal area and leader of the Troy and Wyoming annual conferences.

“As we shape the vision for the new conference in upstate New York, one that echoes the idea of ‘church’ as a verb, the awareness campaign will spread the word, both to our current members and to the community beyond, that the United Methodist church is working dynamically in the world even as we transform into new conference configurations,” she said.

The creation of a new conference in upstate New York is one of the reasons behind United Methodist Communications selecting the area as a test market for the next quadrennium.

“When we were looking at the markets to track,

we wondered if the new campaign would help the new conference area,” said the Rev. Larry Hollon, UCom’s executive director. “Rethink Church perfectly defines the vision the leadership of the new area—what if we left our buildings and went out to where the seekers are, Monday through Sunday?”

Being a test market has been very good for the Western Pennsylvania Conference, said Mark Rehn, Director of Communications. “We’ve benefitted in many, many ways. Each of our churches have benefitted from the real resources as well as the personal relationships they’ve built with United Methodist Communications.

“They are part of a real connectional system, and that becomes real to them in a way that hadn’t previously been available,” he said. “Everyone has access to Igniting Ministry, but until you’re asked to take part in [the campaign], it isn’t personal.”

The Pittsburgh area in the Western Pennsylvania Conference was a test market for the 2005 through 2008 quadrennium. While the Rethink Church campaign is a national effort, United Methodist Communications selects two medium, two large and two small media markets, covering all five jurisdictions, every quadrennium. In addition to Western Pennsylvania, other conferences targeted have included North Carolina, Baltimore-Washington, Alabama-West Florida, California-Nevada and Missouri.

For the next quadrennium, the agency will track selected churches in the Louisiana, Rocky Mountain, Western North Carolina, Kansas West and West Ohio annual conferences as well as the new, as yet unnamed conference in Upstate New York.

By selecting six conference markets each quadrennium, UCom is able to focus on how successful the awareness campaign is in an area and how local churches respond. Tracking churches will report statistical information such as weekly worship attendance and first-time visitors to Barna Research Group, an independent research firm. The information gathered will be used to determine whether or not the campaign was successful in meeting the agency’s goals and justifies the spending of apportionment funds.

Tracking or test group churches will have access to Igniting Ministry tools and training, and will be asked to become certified Welcoming Congregations. A second group of churches, a control group, which do not use Igniting Ministry resources, will also be tracked over the next four years.

“The response to the campaign helps us decide how the advertising is working in certain areas,” Hollon said. “We look at hard data like worship attendance and visitors and extrapolate information from that data.”

The Rethink Church campaign targets the 18- to 34-year-old seekers. The agency has identified this

audience’s spiritual concerns and needs, and its goal is to discover and address their deeper needs and to offer The United Methodist Church as a community in which they can experience nurture and connection in the body of Christ.

Churches throughout the four conferences are encouraged to think of ways to “Rethink Church.” Many United Methodist Churches are already reinventing church experiences. For example:

◆ Centenary United Methodist Church, Richmond, Va., has a feeding and foot-washing ministry for homeless people.

◆ Flowing Grace United Methodist Church, outside of Chicago, created a portable house of worship.

◆ Pets are welcome and ushers collect the offering in minnow buckets for a floating, boating congregation at Warwick (Ga.) United Methodist Church.

◆ Paul’s Restaurant, operated by Oakland United Methodist Church, Charleston, W.Va., offers two kinds of soul food: home-cooked meals and spiritual nourishment.

Levin Van Sant, chairperson for evangelism and outreach in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference, saw a United Methodist News Service story about the upcoming campaign and was quick to get on the Rethink Church bandwagon.

“It’s the perfect platform for us to show people that church can be fun and flexible,” Van Sant said. “And to show United Methodists aren’t stuffy—that we do things for others. We’re a very missions-minded people, and for us, church isn’t just a noun. We are

RETHINK CHURCH

Read about the new United Methodist advertising/public awareness campaign

a verb.”

“Rethink Church is ultimately an invitation to missional Christianity,” Hollon said. “It’s about being transformed, doing those things that transform us individually and transform the world. If we rethink church, our spiritual yearning and our desire for change become integrated. We focus on faith as life lived in mission, because we are called by God to be people who serve.”

The Communications teams of the four conferences will help identify tracking and control churches. Congregations interested in learning more about becoming a tracking or control church should contact their conference’s director of communications:

North Central New York Annual Conference: Marilyn Kasperek at (315) 699-8715, ext. 318 or (716) 564-2316; MarilynKasperek@ncnyumc.org or mjkaspek@aol.com.

Western New York Annual Conference: Marilyn Kasperek at (315) 699-8715, ext. 318 or (716) 564-2316; MarilynKasperek@ncnyumc.org or mjkaspek@aol.com.

Wyoming Annual Conference: Don Perry at (607) 757-0608, dperry@wyomingconference.org.

Troy Annual Conference: Sandra Brands at (518) 584-8214, ext. 15 or (800) 684-9377, ext. 15, sbrands@troyac.org.

Vision and purpose vital to success of our work together

By Bill Gottschalk-Fielding

"Hello again, Bill. Glad to see you back," the clerk said with a smile as I pulled out a twenty to pay for my purchase. Normally, I would have welcomed this friendliness, but in that moment I found the clerk's familiarity a little irritating. It meant I'd been in his hardware store so many times that day (six times by then, I think), that my face was as familiar as the photos of the wife and kids he kept in his wallet.

I'd been working on a plumbing project at home and I'd not done a good job of figuring out exactly what needed to be done. I'd made a number of poor assumptions, failed to identify the tools and supplies I'd need, attempted a couple of tasks I really didn't know how to do, waited too long to ask for help, and had to start over at least twice before things came together. I was a living, breathing (and often complaining) embodiment of the adage, "Failure to plan is a plan to fail". Hence the six trips to my local hardware store.

I realize fixing the kitchen sink and developing a new annual conference aren't the same tasks, but I share my amateur plumbing experiences as a way to explain where we are in the new conference design process and why we are where we are.

To quote another familiar but truthful adage, we are seeking to "begin with the end in mind." The "end" for you and me as future members our new conference is the picture we hold in our minds and hearts of a future of vibrant Methodism in upper New York. This picture of the future is our vision, which answers the question "what are we seeking?" Tightly linked to this question of vision is our understanding of our new conference's purpose. "How do we (members of an upper New York conference) work together to help God turn vision into reality?" Designing an annual conference without a clear sense of vision and purpose makes as little sense as attempting to fix a kitchen sink with no clue as to what the cook needs, where the leaks are or where the hot water hook-up can be found.

At our last New A.C.T. meeting (New Area and Conference Team) held Saturday, Jan. 10 in Cicero, N.Y., our focus was on articulating the guiding vision and the primary purpose of our new conference. The resource material we used to formulate these understandings included 601 of the Discipline on the purpose of an annual conference, the request made to the Northeast Jurisdictional Conference in July of last year to create the new conference, the work done in early fall with New A.C.T. around the question "what do we long to be different about us in five-to-eight years," feedback drawn from a November meeting of over 100 key leaders from all four upstate New York conferences, and a recent discussion by New A.C.T. around the question "who is the primary clientele of our new conference?"

The emerging sense of God's vision for us includes a deep concern that our new conference be focused on "bringing the church into the Neighborhood and the Neighborhood into the church," as well as providing resources to nurture and equip lay and clergy leaders to engage in this ministry. New A.C.T. has asked two of our members (along with our conference communicators) to further develop these thoughts into a working vision and purpose statement to be reviewed and affirmed at our February meeting.

With that statement in hand, you and I will be in a better position to tackle all we need to do over the next 12 months as we build our new conference. It's still going to involve a lot of work, but at least we'll know we're moving together in a productive direction.

Do you have some thoughts and feelings about any of this? I'd like to hear from you. My email address is pastor32@twcny.rr.com. Please be in touch.

Gottschalk-Fielding is the convener for the New Area Conference Team (New ACT)



Gottschalk-Fielding

On Becoming New

Stories from the New Area Conference Team (New ACT) and

The Vermont-New England Transitional Team

Change expected to be mutual *from page 1*

This sentiment was echoed by Troy Conference Faith Development Coordinator Evie Doyon who said, "If there's something you folks would like to try differently, try it in Vermont!"

The atmosphere for the day-long gathering was optimistic, friendly, and prayerful, with Bishop Peter D. Weaver of the Boston Episcopal Area and Susan W. Hassinger of the Albany Episcopal Area opening and closing the meeting with worshipful reflection.

The bishops' insights helped frame the transition by celebrating the progress already being made as teams meet to focus on specific issues such as pensions and insurance. The bishops' also celebrated the connections already being made as churches in Vermont and in the New England Annual Conference begin to share resources and ideas, and new relationships are forged in gatherings of youth and United Methodist Women.

"That's what we want people to know," Bishop Hassinger said, "that this transition is already underway!"

A key challenge in the transition to a 'new and improved' conference, the team determined, is that while some folks may feel this transition keenly, others may be largely unaware of the change or the impact that it may have on the local church. In the months ahead, the team hopes to strengthen the

connection within the forming conference by building awareness between churches as a way to practice hospitality with one another.

Knowing one another is a central part of feeling included and welcomed in a radical way, a lesson New England Annual Conference has been learning since its re-formation in 1996.

"Most of us here in this room and many of us in leadership in New England Annual Conference didn't start out in Southern New England," pointed out Jim McPhee, Assistant to Bishop Weaver. "There was room for new people and other gifts brought to the table as the Conference came together."

"We don't want to assimilate you," said Alex Wood, New England Conference's Communications Director. "We expect to be changed as well."

In the midst of the changes underway, the transition team plans to offer itself as a resource for folks who have questions about the process, and communicate and celebrate the connections that have been made. The team also hopes to continue to lift up the vision of an inclusive new conference, engaging in new and exciting ministries together in all of New England.

"The question is," Bishop Weaver said, "can we model radical community in the world?"

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(Letters and mementos may also be sent to Judy Palmer or brought to the gathering)

Keep up with news on the emerging conferences at www.newconferences.info

New ACT forms sub teams for 'nuts and bolts' work *from page 1*

Secretary and business manager of the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA). He has served in eight conferences and is a certified financial planner. "It was a pleasure and delight to experience John," Bishop Matthews said. "Our journey began yesterday. He is one of the persons we will enjoy having work with us over the next several months—welcome."

Goolsbey will be the primary New ACT contact to GCFA. GCFA has agreed to provide assistance in the formation of the new conference configurations including legal, software, financial issues, interpretation of the Book of Discipline, etc.

The Administration, Property and Finance Task Force met for the first time on Jan. 9. Attending were five representatives from all six of the conferences involved in the creation of the three new conference configurations. Members include the Chancellors, Treasurers, and representatives of the Boards of Trustees, Finance and Camps, Conferences and Retreat centers.

This Task Force is responsible for assets that are not pension related. North Central New York Chancellor, Scott DelConte drafted a document listing the areas from which information and materials need to be gathered: corporate, operations, employee, contracts, litigation, environmental, financial due diligence, taxes, non-pension funds, affiliated organizations, accounting, administration.

One person from each conference was designated to collect documents: Pat Curtin, North Central New York, Barb Gasiewicz, Western New York, Robert Heron, Troy, and Don Schmitt, Wyoming.

Dr. Rene Wilbur of the Troy Conference was affirmed as Convener of the Administration, Property and Finance Task Force. A layperson, Dr. Wilbur is a former Deputy General Secretary of the Board of Global Ministries.

Director of Connectional Ministry Western New York Conference Rev. Larry Lundgren will serve as resource person and collector and distributor of these records.

Four subgroups of the Administration, Property and Finance Task Force and conveners for each were set up: Finance—Robert Sherburne; Trustees—Tom Clemow, II; Legal—Scott DelConte; and Administration—Debbie Byers. Conveners will organize the first meetings of the subgroups where processes will be identified and tasks delegated. Nominations for subgroup members will come from the persons responsible in each conference for compiling the checklist information.

Subgroups will meet every 30 days with the larger Task Force coming together every 60 days.

The Joint Distribution Team organized on Jan. 21. It will be responsible for allocating pension responsibility and distributing equitably permanent fund and other pension assets. Director of Connectional Ministries in North Central New York Conference Rev. Stephen Deckard will serve as resource person to the Joint Distribution Team.

Scott DelConte was affirmed as key Chancellor to coordinate various legal proceedings of the six-conference group. The Chancellor's specific compensation plan will come before a future New ACT meeting.

Barbara Gasiewicz was affirmed as New ACT Treasurer. With that appointment the Northeastern Jurisdiction Treasurer will release funds for use in creation of the new conference. Gasiewicz has served as treasurer in the Western New York Conference for sixteen years and has been handling the New ACT expenses.

Inclusiveness

Questions were raised on diversity on the various teams, with a member of New ACT noting a key piece of

the creation of the new conference is ensuring that people of color feel part of every aspect, and recognition is made that we have done a poor job in the past. Much of current representation is by virtue of office. Care will be taken to seek diversity on the sub teams.

Bishop Susan Hassinger and Bishop Matthews lifted up possible ways to address inclusiveness. Bishop Matthews suggested that one or two persons could come up with a way New ACT can monitor itself.

Sub teams

Steve Deckard, George Nicholas, Jan Rothfuss, and Evie Doyan will develop a sub team recruitment process, so that as sub teams are needed to do the work they can be quickly developed with a defined purpose of team, and reporting procedure.

A budget sub team with Larry Lundgren, Barbara Gasiewicz and Mark Marino was formed. They will prepare a revised budget showing what funds the team has and what funds and expenses are anticipated.

A sub team to develop a glossary of terms providing a common language will be convened.

Primary Clientele

New ACT members had circulated their answers to the question, "Who is our primary clientele?" prior to coming together in January.

Convener the Reverend Bill Gottschalk-Fielding shared an overview of those responses. "What emerged from contributions is that the Upper New York Area will be primarily directed to reach out to our neighbors in Upstate New York while at the same time providing nurture and support to church members who will be engaged in reaching neighbors," Rev. Gottschalk-Fielding shared. "We are here to serve others and that is the way we serve God."

The group broke into small groups for discussion around those statements. That discussion led to an emerging consensus that rather than being membership centered, we need to be outward focused.

Vision and purpose

Darryl Barrow and Kristin Dart were designated to write a vision and purpose statement of no more than six or seven lines to be sent to the entire New ACT for feedback. Communicators from Troy, Wyoming, North Central and Western New York will work with the vision once it is drafted.

When a question arises in the creation of the new Upper New York conference it will be laid up against the vision and purpose statement.

The only body that can finalize that vision and purpose statement is the new Annual Conference. It will be used as a blueprint or model around which New ACT will guide its work and will be brought before the new Annual Conference for their determination as to whether to keep it or develop a new one.

Bishop Matthews called on all to keep the vision and purpose in their daily prayers as well as Darryl and Kristin as they draft those statements.

Sources of information

Work is underway on the New ACT website which should be launched in February. Updates on New ACT and opportunities for United Methodists in Upper New York to be part of the process will be shared on the Upper New York website and in all communication tools available within the conferences.

Next meeting

The next New ACT meeting is Feb. 21 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Cicero, N.Y., at the North Central New York Conference Center.

Albany area extended cabinets meet to discuss boundary changes

On Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 15 and 16, the Albany Area Extended Cabinet, which includes the Wyoming and Troy conferences district superintendents, treasurers, lay leaders and director of connectional ministry or conference minister, met in retreat at the Rensselaerville Institute in Rensselaerville, N.Y. The cabinet spent time in discussing the upcoming boundary changes and considering how to work together in a larger configuration across conference lines in the new Upper New York Area Conference.

Bishop Hassinger outlined four purposes for the retreat:

To continue to reflect on our "adaptive challenge," particularly as it relates to the development and deployment of clergy and lay leadership in the Albany Episcopal Area.

To reflect on where God has been

seen at work in the conferences/districts/areas of responsibility.

To engage in superintending and leadership in our larger configuration.

To identify next steps that grow out of the above conversations.

She posed three questions to frame the "adaptive challenge" which the two conferences need to address:

◆ What is the mission of Christ in our region in the 21st century?

◆ What does an annual conference look like that seeks to fulfill that mission, and that is grounded in scripture and tradition?

◆ How can we move toward that mission, that image, given our current realities?

The retreat was conducted in the context of worship. Members of the two conferences met together as one body, conferred in small groups and shared by

areas of responsibility, *i.e.*, district superintendents, laity, ordained ministry.

Always before them were the questions: What is our purpose? What are our desired outcomes? What do we need to pay attention to in order to

move toward those desired outcomes?

Following the retreat, Bishop Hassinger and the district superintendents remained to engage in another two days of joint discussions on the coming year's appointment needs.

RCM offers 'Called to Witness' training

"Called to Witness: All Means All," a training event featuring a representative from the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) will be offered Saturday, Feb. 21, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at First United Methodist Church of Schenectady in N.Y.

The training is designed to help people learn how to share stories with those who will vote on a constitutional

amendment at Annual Conference Session in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., June 10 through 13.

For more information or to register, contact Clunn at (518) 878-6737 or sclunn@yahoo.com or visit the Upper New York Reconciling Ministries Network web site at www.unyrmn.org. Registration is limited to 50.

Congregation re-vamps traditional way of operating

By Cynthia Lovely

It was definitely one of those days. You were late for work because your kids missed their school bus. Your boss gave you two new projects with tight deadlines and you just realized you had a business dinner the next evening. While attempting to multi-task, you spilled coffee on an important contract and addressed a CEO by the wrong name. As the day drew to a close, you couldn't wait to escape the office and head home. You checked your emails one last time and let out a groan. "Important church meeting tonight at 7:15 p.m. All ministry leaders need to attend."

Sound familiar? In our time-starved society it can be difficult to carve out a slot for church responsibilities and activities. The spiritual longing is present within us but the reality of juggling busy careers and family duties tends to silence the impulse to become involved in yet one more area. Often our spiritual lives and church involvement are relegated to the back burner.

Voorheesville United Methodist Church recognized this conflict and made a decision to re-vamp their traditional mode of church planning. Holly Cargill-Cramer, chair of the church council, offered some suggestions when she assumed the position. In reviewing their typical planning she said, "We had about 10 team meetings throughout the month. It's a wonder we could keep any of them going at that rate. Most people don't get out of work till 5 p.m. and rarely get home before 6 p.m. Then you have to throw together a meal, gulp it down, and break the speed limit to get to the meeting on time."

The solution: establish one meeting night per month for all committees and boards. Along with the attraction of a single meeting they added the

'Staffing our church school with college students has injected the energy of youth into our Christian Ed. Program.'

Pastor Brian Gould

lure of a dinner served at the church before the meeting. A food service team preps the meals; attendees need only show up between 6 and 6:50 p.m. Many members now avail themselves of this convenience--someone else is cooking!--and have enjoyed the meals along with the added benefit of community fellowship.

The time frame for the evening is well-organized and split into proper segments. At 6:50 p.m., the group separates into their specific teams. The team with the most members present gains the bonus of using the most comfortable meeting room that evening. Once in their different rooms, the teams discuss their agendas and activities for that month. Precisely at 8 p.m. they regroup for the main council meeting.

"I work very hard to make sure that the council meetings are snappy," Cargill-Cramer said. "Anyone who wishes to speak or give a report has the opportunity. I try to end the meeting by 9 or 9:15 p.m. The group has become very good at giving me the high sign if we're pushing the hour!"

Topics discussed at the council meeting include budget, appointments, elections, team reports and three long-term objectives for the future. Participation in the meetings has increased since this new plan has been put into effect. Normal attendance now runs about 25, compared to 12 prior to the new format, with as many as 60 people at one particular dinner. Since childcare is another appealing addition to this new

set up, participation of parents with young children has increased.

Brian Gould, pastor at Voorheesville UMC, is pleased with the success of the program.

"The monthly meeting night has added a delightful synergy to our ministries here in Voorheesville," he said. "Because ministry teams meet on the same evening as the church council, news of a team's activities reaches the council immediately rather than days or weeks later. Everything is fresh! Church council attendance is also improved. Perhaps best of all, the shared meal that begins the evening brings church members together who have not interacted before. The number of evening commitments for our church leaders is reduced, hopefully averting burnout."

The congregation has also found a new approach to Sunday school. While struggling to find volunteers to teach the children, they found members were hesitant to add more duties to their hectic schedules.

People were unwilling to sacrifice their own worship time in exchange for more duties. In response, the church reached out to the college community for assistance, linking with college ministries on campus. The end result brought two new teachers to the church. The main requirements were that the student volunteers would be people of faith and that they would agree to follow the established curriculum.

Cassie Cramer and Cassie Muth fit those requirements. Also known as Miss

Cassie I and Miss Cassie II, both of the students have had previous experience teaching in a church setting. Cramer, a student at Sage College of Albany, teaches the Pre-K through third grade weekly. Muth, from State University of New York, Albany, teaches fourth grade and up. The students follow the Whole People of God curriculum which is very similar to the adult lectionary themes.

"It is an enriching experience to work with the students every Sunday," said Cramer, a member at Voorheesville UMC. "Last year our project was to raise \$120 to buy a Basket of Hope from Heifer International. We not only met our goal, we doubled it. For 2009, our year long project is to raise \$5,000 for an Ark from Heifer, through various fundraising activities."

The students are a welcome addition to the church community and they in turn, receive the benefit of a close church fellowship.

"Staffing our church school with college students has injected the energy of youth into our Christian Ed. Program," said Gould.

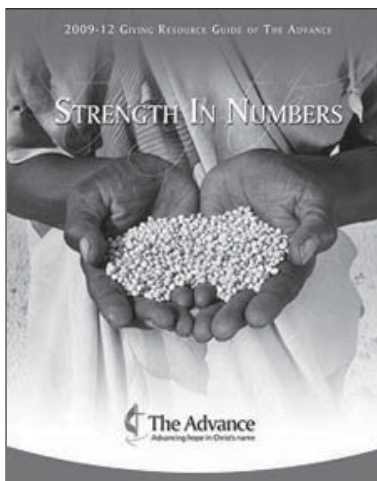
To encourage their studies, the student volunteers also receive an "educational award" from the church.

The success of both of these new ideas—college student teachers in Sunday school and a one evening/month planning meeting--has been evident in the church body. Older members who have already put in years of volunteer duties are able to support the new student teachers and enjoy a welcome respite. Newer members from two-income families or busy single parents are able to fulfill their personal responsibilities and still be involved in church planning without being overwhelmed with weekly meetings.

The changes, Gould said, have created a "win-win situation."

Advance issues new resource guide

Almost a thousand projects and programs in 100 countries are included in the new Giving Resource Guide from The Advance, the United Methodist designated mission giving channel. Subtitled Strength in Numbers, the 111-page guide, a magazine-style catalogue, lists approved recipients



"second-mile" mission giving, the "first mile" being mission support included in World Service apportionments to congregations. Copies of the guide were mailed in January to all bishops, pastors, associate pastors, diaconal ministers, and a wide range of annual conference officers and staff members.

Other mailings are planned. Persons needing the print guide for their work on congregation, conference, or institutional levels may obtain single copies on-line at <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/> or by calling Cokesbury at (800) 672-1789.

for the quadrennium, or four-year period, from 2009-2012. It also contains other information on mission support, such as how congregations can enter into Covenant Relationships with missionaries. The Advance represents

AUMS (Albany United Methodist Society)

50th Anniversary Celebration & Fundraiser

Friday, April 3, 6 p.m.

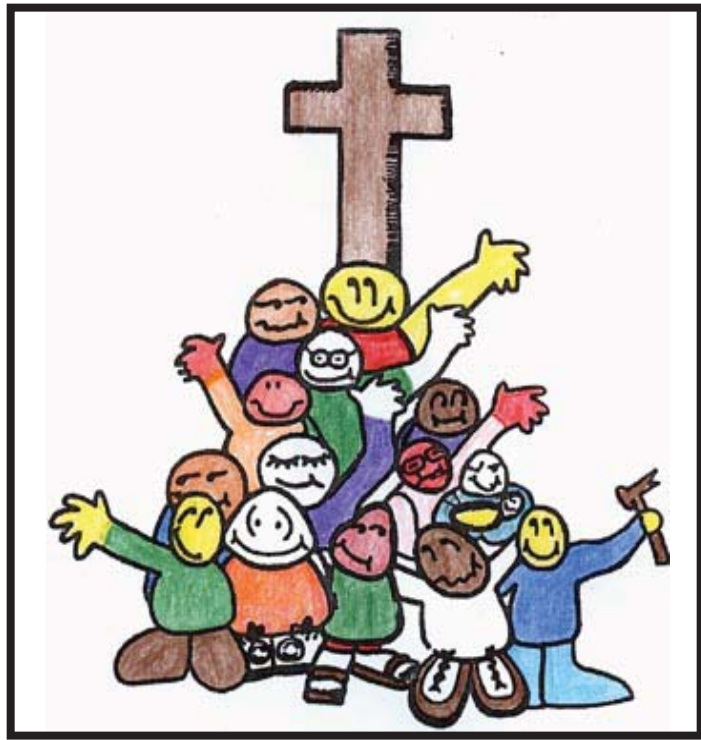
First Presbyterian Church,
362 State St., Albany, N.Y.

Keynote Speaker:

REV. RANDY NUGENT
former Executive Director of AUMS

Reservations: (518) 432-0818

Tickets: \$35



CAMPING NEWS

NEWS FROM TROY ANNUAL CONFERENCE'S
VERMONT CONFERENCE CAMPING PROGRAM
COVENANT HILLS CHRISTIAN CAMP
SKYE FARM CAMP

HANDLE WITH CARE

Harold Shippey and the theme "Handle With Care" seem to be made for each other. In his many roles, Harold has embodied the concepts of **Handle With Care** for all of us. Handle with care.....



...every camper, as the family's most precious gift to share with us.

...all volunteer and professional staff.

...the deep theological issues and concerns of the Christian faith.

...all matters of prejudice and injustice.

...the needs for environmental and ecological concern and planning.

...the volumes of governmental regulations, permits, etc.

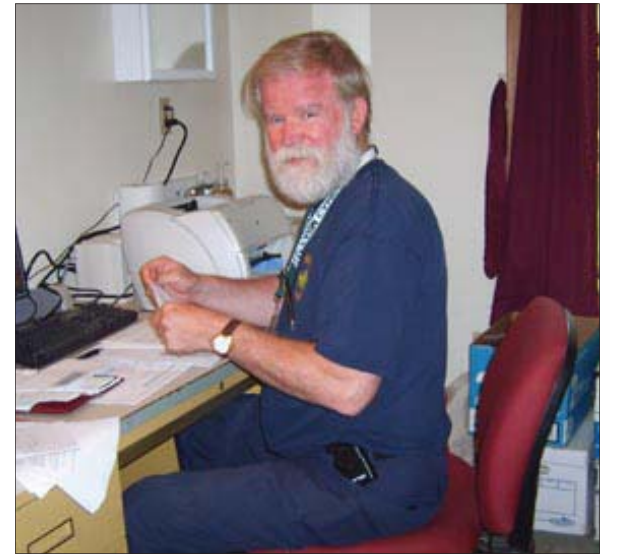
...the business and financial needs of a major camp operation.

...building and property maintenance and care.

...emergency medical needs of the camp and surrounding community.

...visioning and planning into the future.

...the primary needs of "health and safety" for everyone who used our property.



Thank you, Harold!
Enjoy your retirement!



We are proud.....

THE FRIENDSHIP FUND

Each week campers at Covenant Hills and Skye Farm have an opportunity to give to the Friendship Fund. **THANK YOU CAMPERS!**

2008 Friendship Fund Giving

Covenant Hills raised \$500 to support camper scholarships for 2009. In addition "Animal Crackers Campers" collected and donated money to support Heifer International.

Skye Farm raised \$912.39 for Heifer International which provides animals and training in caring for the animals in this country and around the world.



During the past three years the staff at Covenant Hills has been working with the American Camp Association to become an accredited camp. During the 2007 summer we had our site visit and in the fall we found out that we had passed and were an accredited camp.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ACCREDITED BY THE AMERICAN CAMP ASSOCIATION?

For Covenant Hills the ACA prescribes nearly 300 standards that a camp must maintain in order to be accredited. The standards run the entire gamut of a camp's operation, from how staff are hired and trained to proper health center practices and procedures—from appropriate safety to how food is stored and prepared. Covenant Hills is involved with ACA in order to maintain a high level of camp operation. Every three years a site visit will be conducted to look over all the paperwork and see camp in action in order to renew our accreditation. For more information about the ACA please visit their website at: www.acacamps.org

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT CAMP?

Covenant Hills Summer 2008

By Summer Staff

This summer was filled with many new faces and many returning ones. The camper season started with a group of counselors-in-training coming up to camp for leadership orientation. We then welcomed the CITs back as they returned to camp as volunteer mentors to our campers. The animals returned to camp this summer for Animal Crackers and the campers had a great time caring for them and learning about Heifer Internationals and how they help people around the world. Games, games, and more games spent days learning and playing all types of games, including water games. Splash Rascals kept the waterfront staff nice and busy during their stay at camp. The campers enjoyed being able to throw water balloons at their counselors and having a beach campfire. Our first coastal camp was so popular that we decided to offer another one and both were a huge success. The campers enjoyed spending time at the beach and trying local seafood. Camp Nation was a success with campers having lots of input on how they would spend their days and what they would do. We then finished our traditional camping season with Music, Arts, Dance and Drama and Rock Band Camp both giving an amazing Camp and Rock Band both giving an amazing Saturday performance.



Soulfood Camp

By Lauri Chipman

Soulfood Camp was a new offering at Skye Farm in 2008. We all fed our souls with music throughout the week. There was an older elementary group and a junior high group. Both met together for morning watch and heard the scripture verse for the day that went with the daily theme from the curriculum. We read the words to a song, listened to the music on CD or we all sang it and discussed its meaning. Again, each afternoon, we got together and listened to modern Christian songs that related to the scripture verse and story. Campers were encouraged to bring a CD with a song that they would like to share. We heard from one cabin group each day sharing the CDs brought by the campers. A wide spectrum of modern Christian music was shared. All enjoyed our time together singing and praising the Lord with our music.

Soulfood campers still got to enjoy all that Skye Farm has to offer with swimming, canoeing the lake in the peace canoe, hiking to the castle, sharing camp fires, sleeping in the cabin with no electricity, dancing in Kessler hall, eating wonderful food and being in the Adirondacks with great counselors.

On Friday we put together our Soulfood song books and decorated them. We ended our week with an all camp gathering in Kessler Hall to share our experiences with the other campers.

Many thanks to the counselors and all the summer staff that helped make our week so enjoyable. I look forward to seeing you all again next summer for another week of Soulfood!



Geocaching at Skye Farm

By Nancy Lott, Director of Geocaching Camp

Have you ever tried to get a kid to go hiking or for a walk with you only to get the response "that's boring" because they don't want to leave their movies and computer games? Try adding the adventure of a treasure hunt and the elements of computers and technology into the mix and you will get a completely different response (here is a secret...it works on grown-ups too)—that is what the heart of "geocaching" is all about. Geocaching camp at **Skye Farm** was designed to introduce campers to the high-tech treasure hunt game that is being played all over the world by thousands of players. It uses GPS (global positioning system) devices to get the latitude and longitude in order to hide and find "caches". At minimum they contain a logbook but they can also include small items such as toys, magnets or puzzles.

Our camp started on Monday and Tuesday by showing the campers a presentation of the computer aspects of geocaching (www.geocaching.com). That included the history, how to find the coordinates of a cache and the guidelines for hiding a cache. Then, they learned how to use the GPS devices to mark waypoints and practiced hiding and finding items around camp. We also managed to work in the traditional camp fun of community arts, nature and of course swim time. On Wednesday we were ready to try our skills and we took a trip to Up Yonda Farm Environmental Education Center (www.upyondafarm.com) in Bolton Landing where we quickly found two real caches -- "Log It In" (GCWF5G) and "Yonda Cache" (GCKEEX). We also got a great view of Lake George and enjoyed the free museum while learning something about water conservation.

On Thursday we made our own geocache and hid it just off camp property. We also included a trackable travel bug named "Elliot" (2DZP7F). It is a dog tag attached to a Skye Farm post card. Trackable items are items that geocachers move from cache to cache. The campers will be able to watch Elliot's travels online throughout the year. His goal is to come back to Skye Farm every Summer. On Friday we found two more geocaches on Thomas Mountain -- "Hootyhoo Made Me Do It" (GC175B5) and "Thomas Mountain" (GC10VKM). The second one contained a travel bug called "I'm in hog heaven" which we took to move along.

It was fun watching the kids following the GPS directions and exciting for the campers when they could see that they were close to the caches and they could start looking with their eyes. They liked seeing what was in the boxes (you are supposed to take something, leave something) and signing the log. They learned also that part of the purpose of this game is to see things that you might not normally see. On top of Thomas Mountain we found a blueberry patch with ripe blueberries and enjoyed a great view while we ate our lunch. Geocaching's practice of "Cache-in, Trash-out" fit in perfectly with this year's theme of "Handle with Care". In each of our hikes we made sure we carried a trash bag and picked up any garbage we found to carry out with us.

It was so rewarding to hear more than one camper say that they wanted to try geocaching with their families when they got home. As director I hope that the camp will spark an interest in getting outdoors and enjoying a walk with the family, not only with the campers, but also with the people that they talk to about what they did at camp this year. I also hope that they came away with an appreciation for our one earth and a desire to conserve all that God created for us.



Covenant Hills to celebrate 20 years of camping

Do you have any pictures or stories from camp over the years?

If so, we would love to hear from you. We are looking to put together people's memories for the twenty year celebration happening this summer. Whether as a camper, volunteer or parent reliving camper memories, email us at chccdiretor@gmail.com and share your pictures or stories.

Store

The Covenant Hills store has T-shirts, sweatshirts and flannel pj pants available for you to buy throughout the year. These make great gifts for any special occasion. Please contact Vivian at chccdiretor@gmail.com to place an order. Cost:

T-shirts \$10

Sweatshirts \$25

Flannel pj pants \$15

An additional \$2 will be charged for shipping.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

We want to thank those listed here and many others who have contributed time and energy as well as donations of money and useful items to make the camping program a success. We are sorry if we have omitted any names that should be here.

Covenant Hills 2008 Volunteers

Agape Team and Volunteers
 Kelley Alderman, Richford VT
 Jean Backhaus, Richford VT
 Trevor Banister,
 Heather Benton,
 David Blanshine, Charlotte VT
 Rachel Bower, Montpelier VT
 Jerry Breen,
 Bonnie Chase, Waterville VT
 Church Groups
 Paige Cleary, Waterbury Ctr VT
 Closing Team
 Bar Connelly, Lower Waterford VT
 Paul Connelly, Lower Waterford VT
 Katie Curler, N. Ferrisburg VT
 Lynn Elwood, Highgate Ctr. VT
 Betsey Erwin, Granitville VT
 Skip Flanders,
 Kristen Fowler, Barre VT
 Becci Geary, Hardwick VT
 Emily Hazard,
 Charlene Helman, Barre VT
 Rachel Helman, Barre VT
 Sarah Helman, Barre VT
 Scott Helman, Barre VT

Kassie Howe, Rutland VT
 Lisa Kaija, Reading VT
 Wanda Locke, Waterville VT
 Doug MacDonald, Enosburg VT
 Dave MacGowan, Waterbury VT
 Becky Mackin, Barre VT
 Elizabeth Mackin, Barre VT
 Vivian Marlow, Richford VT
 Sondra Masse, Richford VT
 Ellen Moore, E. Haven VT
 Michael Moore, E. Haven VT
 Megan O'Daniel,
 Opening Team
 Lori Polhemus, Bondville VT
 Kyle Reardon, Rutland VT
 Sandi Reardon, Rutland VT
 Tim Reardon, Rutland VT
 Curtiss Rude,
 Jeremiah Schuyler, Fairfax VT
 John Schuyler, Frankfort NY
 Site Committee
 Diana Skiles,
 Benjamin Taylor, Claryville NY
 Katie Taylor, Claryville NY
 Youth and Church Groups **Volunteers**



Sandy Reardon, Volunteer Director of Teddy Bear Camp works with campers making duck pillows.

New adult lodge at Skye Farm nearing completion

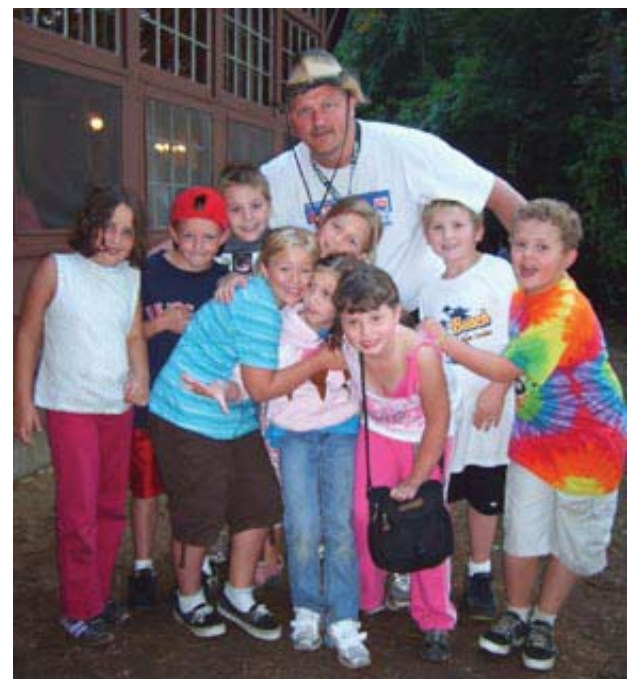
The new Adult lodge at Skye Farm is in the final stages of being furnished and ready for occupancy. It is possible to use it in conjunction with Ogden Lodge as a comfortable adult sleeping facility with four private rooms each with their own bathroom. It is equipped with a small refrigerator, a microwave, coffee maker and some dishes making it ideal to be used separately for a small group of folks who want to bring their own food to prepare a continental breakfast, light lunch and go to an area restaurant for their main meal. If you are interested in using this building in either way please call Skye Farm at 518-494-7170 for more information and to inquire about booking.



Photo by Harold Shippey

Skye Farm 2008 Volunteers

Debbie Acker-Cole, Albany, NY
 Amy Alberts, Peru NY
 Becky Albrecht, Hudson Falls, NY
 Carol Ames, Newcomb NY
 Fred Anderson, Schaghticoke
 Jill Anderson, Schaghticoke NY
 Catherine Armani-Munn, Plattsburgh
 Caroline Ashton, Cambridge NY
 Bob Atkinson, Clifton Park NY
 Regina Ballard, Granville NY
 Debra Barnes
 Bonnie Bates, Schuylerville NY
 Nancy Beberwyck, Schenectady, NY
 Fran Berger, Castleton, NY
 Steve Berger, Castleton, NY
 Robert Bour, Niskayuna NY
 Cindy Ann Bowers, Niskayuna NY
 Elizabeth Bradley, Troy NY
 Tom Breitenbach, Altamont NY
 Penny Brink, Caroga Lake NY
 Forrest Burnetter, Ballston Spa NY
 Julie Burnetter, Ballston Spa NY
 Steve Butler, Sar. Springs NY
 Joan Butler, Sar. Springs NY
 Alan Cederstrom, Queensbury
 David Cederstrom, Queensbury
 Harriet Cederstrom, Queensbury
 Wil Chamberlin, Sar. Springs NY
 Laurie Chipman, Jericho VT
 Kay Cipperly, Troy NY
 Steve Clunn, Schenectady NY
 Ed Cole, Albany NY
 Krystal Cole, Albany NY
 Moriyima Cole, Altamont NY
 Ian Collier, Hudson Falls NY
 Mark Collier, Hudson Falls NY
 Shelley Collier, Hudson Falls NY
 Brenda Collins, Hudson Falls NY
 Marty Connor, Ellenburg Depot NY
 Steve Connor, Ellenburg Depot NY
 Kelly Corby, Fountainville PA
 Carl Davis, Shaftsbury VT
 Mike Davis, West Sand Lake NY
 Sherry DeCastro, Mechanicville NY
 Lisa Delano, Ballston Spa NY
 Rick Dellio, Valley Falls NY
 Mark DeVit, S. Glens Falls NY
 Kevin Doherty, Revere MA
 Ann-Lorrie Doherty, Revere MA
 Cathie Dunkleberger, Rexford NY
 Jay Dunkleberger, Rexford NY
 Ronald Durfee, Ballston Lake NY
 Debbie Earthowl, Salem NY
 Deb Elliott, Scotia NY
 Peter Elmendorf, Saratoga Springs
 Bill Face
 Nicloe Ferrante, New Paltz NY
 Jillian Ferron, Malta, NY
 David Fifield, Clifton Park NY
 Len Finke, E. Greenbush NY
 Tracy Fortin
 Amanda Gaige,
 Roberta Gallerie, Albany NY
 Bo Geel, Schenectady NY
 Russ Gettig, Averill Park NY
 Tim Gow, Bolton Ldg. NY
 Bob Gifford, Troy NY
 Bob Glennon, Brattleboro VT
 Jennifer Glode, Wevertown, NY
 Bruce Goldsmith, Granville NY
 Penny Goldsmith, Granville NY
 Pete Gradoni, Guilderland NY
 Val Gray, Averill Park NY
 Rebecca Grugan,
 Sheryll Hagy, Gansevoort NY
 Arthur F. Hagy, Jr., Troy NY
 Alisa Harris, Scotia NY
 Paul Harris, Scotia NY
 Pat Hassel, Altamont NY
 Todd Hassel, Altamont NY
 Stan Hatch, Cadyville NY
 David Haverly, Berne NY
 Christine Hazard, Sar. Springs NY
 George Herrick, E. Greenbush NY
 Liz Hill, Johnsonville, NY
 Susan Hill, Valley Falls
 Cindy Hoard, Sebago ME
 Debbie Hyde, Latham NY
 Bud Jameson, Queensbury NY
 Andrew Jewell, Albany NY
 Ryan Johnson, Ft. Edward NY



Ed Kersmanc, Volunteer Counselor, enjoys his young campers in the Animal Crackers Camp.

Edward Kersmanc, Albany NY
 Amy King, Clifton Park NY
 Dawn Kirby, Friendswood TX
 Cory Knight, Peru NY
 Gabrielle Knight, Peru NY
 George Knight, Peru NY
 Lana Knight, Peru NY
 Bill Kohler, Clifton Park NY
 Patti Krekeler, Albany NY
 Paul Krekeler, Albany NY
 Linda LaCasse, Broadalbin NY
 Taylor LaCasse, Broadalbin NY
 Bill Lasher, Galway NY
 Emily Lasher, Cobleskill NY
 Hannah Lasher, Cobleskill NY
 Joanna Lasher, Galway NY
 Lori Lasher, Cobleskill NY
 Samuel Lasher, Cobleskill NY
 Terry Lasher, Cobleskill NY
 Alex Latham, Troy NY
 Mark Lawson, E. Syracuse NY
 Charry Lawson, E. Syracuse NY
 Katie LeCours, Gansevoort NY
 Lynn Lehman, Round Lake NY
 Darcianne Leizer, Guilderland NY
 David Little, Troy NY
 Bob Long, Schenectady NY
 Robert Longhurst, Chestertown NY
 Steve Lott, Niskayuna NY
 Judy Lott, Schenectady NY
 Nancy Lott, Albany NY
 Ed Lyon, Salem NY
 Cathy Mackey, Watervliet NY
 Diane Marino, Schuylerville NY
 Jackie Marino, Valley Falls NY
 Ralph Marino, Valley Falls NY
 Stephen Marino, Schuylerville NY
 Amanda Markessinis, Albany NY
 Donna Markessinis, Albany NY
 Betty Marschner, Albany NY
 Linda Marschner, E. Greenbush
 David Martin, Troy NY
 Damian Martinez, Newark NJ
 Susan Mason, Glens Falls NY
 Jennifer McMinn, Ballston Spa NY
 Elizabeth Meehan, Ballston Spa NY
 Ernie Melin, Saratoga Springs NY
 Erica Miller, Saratoga Springs NY
 Mark Miller,
 Diane Mosher, Berlin NY
 Keith Mueller, Peru NY
 Susan Mueller, Peru NY
 Eileen Murphy, Stephentown NY
 Maureen Musto, Albany NY
 Lauri Nair, Clifton Park, NY
 Richard Nason, Glens Falls NY
 Todd Nemece, Guilderland NY
 Jana Neitzel, Altamont NY
 Jessie Neitzel, Altamont NY
 Mary Neitzel, Altamont NY
 Oakley Neitzel, Altamont NY
 David Orr, Schenectady NY
 Joan Orton, Clifton Park NY
 John Orton, Clifton Park NY

Carol Osterhout, Schaghticoke
 David Osterhout, Schaghticoke
 Ed Osterhout, Schaghticoke NY
 Joshua Palmer, Cl. Park NY
 Judy Palmer, Schaghticoke NY
 Richard Palmer Schaghticoke NY
 Marianne Passarelli, Clintondale
 Charles Pemburn, Latham, NY
 Valerie Perrins, Troy NY
 Nikki Polcyn, Guilderland NY
 Tim Preddice, Gloversville NY
 Tom Risse, Troy NY
 Erica Rock, Troy NY
 James Rock, Peru NY
 Roxy Rock, Peru NY
 Tim Rock, Peru NY
 Lane Schermerhorn, Corinth NY
 Holly Schmidt, Delmar NY
 Chris Schmitt, Niskayuna NY
 Chuck Schmitt, Niskayuna NY
 Jane Schweikert, Albany NY
 Paul Scoville, Albany NY
 Corky Scranton, Esperance NY
 Lona Scranton, Esperance NY
 Elliott Sharrow, Stephentown NY
 Sarajeon Shepardson, Essex Jct. VT
 Carol Shippey, Warrensburg NY
 David Smith, Shaftsbury NY
 Louise Sobing, Cambridge NY
 Jill Sobon, Schuylerville NY
 Dennis Spilman, Sar. Springs NY
 Kimberly Stevens, Colonie NY
 Bill Stewart, Indian Lake NY
 B.J. Stewart, Indian Lake NY
 Angela Stott, Guilderland NY
 Cal Thayer, Clifton Park NY
 Mike Thomas, Ballston Spa NY
 Pat Thomas, Ballston Spa NY
 Judy Tomisman, Niskayuna NY
 Ed Troiano, Watervliet NY
 Sue Ellen Trumbell, Ctr. Rutland VT
 Melanie Tuxbury, Green Isl. NY
 Scott Tyler, Ticonderoga NY
 John Underwood, Salem NY
 Peg Underwood, Salem NY
 Harold Vance, Gansevoort NY
 Kristi VanPatten, Clifton Prk NY
 Dave VanSchaick, Rexford NY
 Carl VanTine, Clifton Park NY
 Marianne Verzi, Fishkill NY
 Bonnie Veysey, Selkirk NY
 Wayne Wales, Clifton Park NY
 Kelly Warner, S. Glens Falls NY
 Ben Werblow, Queensbury NY
 Barb Wiley, Johnsonville NY
 Paul Wiley, Johnsonville NY
 Amy Williams, Ballston Spa NY
 Beverly Williams, Gloversville NY
 Amy Williams, Ballston Spa NY
 Dee Williams, Ballston Spa NY
 Don Williams, Gloversville NY
 Kelly Williams, Ballston Spa NY
 Stuart Williams, Ballston Spa NY
 Nancy Wyant, N. Creek NY
 Rick Zutterling, Grnf. Ctr., NY

Volunteers Needed

Christian Camping is a mission and volunteerism is at the heart of mission work. We need you to be part of our program. Opportunities available for weekly directors, counselors, maintenance crew, babysitter, or share a gift of yours. Make camping your mission ... Volunteer! Names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses can be found on the back page under if you want to reach us...

LONESOME CAMPERS

By Art Hagy, *Granfather in Residence*

In preparation for camp, one of the major concerns of campers and parents alike is "Getting Homesick". As one of the Skye Farm staff members that deals with this, let me offer a bit of advice.

First of all, it is a lot more accurate to speak of "Getting Lonesome". All campers and parents get lonesome but very, very few actually get homesick. My experience has been that less than 1% of the campers actually get homesick and need to be picked up before the week ended. Both parents and campers can agree that it is normal to be lonesome. That lonesome feeling gets expressed by campers in a variety of ways. Some get quiet, others talk all the time, some pout while others cover it up with a big grin, and some cry for a while. These are all normal expressions of dealing with a new reality; they are lonesome.

For both parents and campers, being lonesome is a normal expression of love. I tell campers that it is a good sign when they become lonesome; it means they have someone at home who loves them and whom they love in return. Now, what to do about it?

PARENTS: Assure your campers that they are not failures or "sissies" if they are lonesome. It is normal. Assure them also that they will have a good time at camp and that the counselors, directors and staff will help them get through it. Try not to offer to come and get them from camp the minute they feel lonesome. Working their way through it is a normal part of maturation. Usually, with some help, the feeling subsides in about 20—30 minutes. The rest of the day they are having a great time. Your preparation for this will help them the most.

IF YOU WANT TO REACH US.....

Who do you call? For information about camp programs, staff or volunteer positions or contributions to the camping program.....

Executive Director of Skye Farm Camp
David Johnston
1884 E. Schroon River Rd.
Warrensburg, NY 12885
(518) 494-7170
skiefarmed@logical.net

Executive Director of Covenant Hills Christian Camp
Todd Marlow
96 Center St., Richford, VT 05476
(802) 848-9932
vt_marlow@hotmail.com

Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ
(802) 362-2930

Troy Annual Conference Board of Camping and Retreat Ministries
Stuart Williams, Chairperson
(518) 885-2785
sdwilliams56@aol.com

Conference Camping Office
Judy Palmer
(518) 584-8214 x14
campsecretary@troyac.org

CAMPERS: When you feel lonesome, talk to your counselor or director about it. No need to hide it. This is a normal feeling. Usually such lonesome feelings come early in the week. I find it is a good idea not to think about being away from home for a whole week, (which seems like a long time) but rather to think about just getting through to the next meal, or until tomorrow morning, or until the next swim period, etc. Break the week up into small segments. It will help. You will find that as you make friends with your cabin mates, the lonesome feelings get less and less until by the end of the week you really don't want to leave. Be patient, look forward to the next good event, and you will be surprised and pleased at the way you can handle the new feelings of being lonesome.

EVERYBODY: The rejoicing comes at the end of the week when parents are happy that they were able to deal with their separation and lonesomeness; campers were all smiles to see their family (often including the family dog) while they excitedly tell about their new friends at camp; camp staff says "YES" as they watch the results of an extra measure of TLC. Camp is a wonderful growing experience for everyone.

See you next summer.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIFTS AND DONATIONS

Covenant Hills

Lindsay/Marcheta Townsend
Vigne Memorial Gifts
David Blanshine
Carol Cole
Pawlett UCC
Rupert Ucc
Duckworth Foundation
Williamstown Federated
Hale Ritchie
Waterville UCC
Michael/Ellen Moore
Robert Mackin Family
UCC-Scholarship/Taylor's Barn
David MacGowan Family
Hornung Foundation

Stowe Community UCC
Scott Cousino
David Murphy
Gerine Piper
Randolph Ctr. UCC
Rutland UCC
Middlebury UCC
Schuyler Family
Helman Family
Richford High School
Marlow Family
Klofach Family
Desrosiers Family
Robert Gist
Hedding UMC

Skye Farm

Anonymous
Kate Archambault
Mike Booth
Cindy Bowers
Burnt Hills UMC
Joan/Steve Butler
Cambridge UMC
Center Brunswick UMC
Will Chamberlin
Cobleskill UMC
Corinth UMC Sunday School
Michael/Tracey Delaney
Doris Dunkleberger Fund
Emmanuel UMC, (Bolton Landing)

Henrietta Crisp Fund
Joy Fisher
Fonda/Fultonville UMC
Fortsville UMC
Gradon Taylor Fund
Arthur F. Hagy, Jr.
Hardwick UMC
Hazel Pierce Family
Margaret Hems
Hudson Falls UM Sunday School
Jericho UMC
Jimmy Halligan Fund
John Chase Fund
Judith Johnson
Stefan Karoly
Paul/Patricia Krekeler
Bill/Jo Lasher
Laurson Family
Steven Lott
Mary Maiellaro
Ralph/Jackie Marino
Diane/Stephen Marino
Keith Mueller
Lauri Nair
Richard Nason
Newtonville UMC
Northbush UMC
North Country Mission of Hope
Ed/Carol Osterhout
Pittstown UMC
Pownal UMC
RW Johnsbury UMC
Leon Steves
Troy Conference Staff
Troy Conference UMM
William/Natalie True
Albert Tucker
John/Peg Underwood
Valley Falls UMW
Waterford UMC
Ed Watson
Bev/Don Williams
Harold Williams

Our Camp Wish Lists 2009

Your contributions of any of the following items or services on our wish list will help us to continue to improve our facilities and support our staff and campers! *Thank You!*

SKYE FARM

- "Life jackets" PFDs—kayak style
- "No Smoking" and "First Aid/Choking" posters
- Buddy Bands—wrist bands for waterfront swimmer classification (blue, yellow, red)
- Cereal bowls, large quantity to fit dish rack
- Commercial dishwasher racks
- Electric griddles
- Front end loader for farm tractor
- Golf cart or "Gator"
- GPS units
- Kayak helmets
- Kick balls
- heavy duty volleyball nets
- playground equipment
- Kitchen convection oven rehab
- Kitchen scale
- Kitchen slicer rehab
- Oven Mitts—Commercial grade
- Paint brushes—new—2", 3", & 4"
- Photocopier
- Powered plumbing snake
- Rescue tubes
- Scrapers

- Snow shoes
- Soil discs for farm tractor
- Sunfish sails
- Walk-in Cooler—6' x 8'

COVENANT HILLS

- Beach Umbrellas
- Shade screen house
- Zero radius turn mower 60" deck
- Garden tools
- Flash lights
- Soccer balls
- Energy efficient washer and dryer
- 15 passenger mini bus
- Individual windows for faith lodge
- Work truck
- Waffle maker
- Life jackets
- Kayaks
- Floor hockey sticks
- Scholarship funds
- Laminator
- TV and DVD player

Palmer to retire as Skye Farm Camp Caretaker

By Dennis Spilman

After nearly 30 years on staff at Skye Farm Camp, Dick Palmer retired on Dec. 31.

Palmer began working at Skye Farm near Warrensburg, N.Y., in the summer of 1975 as Summer Maintenance Supervisor. In 1977 he became the Offsite Provisioner/Coordinator, a position he was well suited for due to his vast knowledge of the Adirondacks and his experience as a Boy Scout leader.

After a brief stint as Trading Post Supervisor in 1978, Palmer returned to the offsite position and remained there until he "retired" from Skye Farm in 1996. Since 2000, when the Rev. Har-

old Shippey became Executive Director of the camp, and the Director of Troy Conference's Camping and Retreat Ministry, Palmer became the year-round caretaker, shifting over to Offsite Coordinator for each summer camping season and then back to caretaker for the remainder of the year.

Palmer will remain on staff as summer Offsite Coordinator. He has brought a level of professionalism along with organizational skills that have enabled Skye Farm to function on a daily basis and grow in its mission to provide a meaningful Christian camping experience for thousands of children.



Palmer



A VIM team from Burnt Hills United Methodist Church, N.Y., take a break outside of Joe Ford's Rensselaer, N.Y., home. The house was seriously damaged during a flood last August, and Ford was in despair. The team knocked on his door and over the next few weeks restored his home—and his hope.

Flood victim gives thanks for VIM 'angels, friends'

The excerpts below are from a testimony Joe Ford, a resident of Rensselaer, N.Y., delivered to the people of Burnt Hills United Methodist Church in New York. Ford's home was devastated in a flood on Aug. 11, and he expresses his gratitude for the help he received from Troy Conference Volunteers-in-Mission teams led by Jack Hill and Hank Coghill, both members of the Burnt Hills church.

I was in my home as the water rose. It happened so quickly that I only had time to save my dog and two cats, and to quickly throw my pills into a plastic bag before getting into a boat with my pets through my porch window.

During the course of that evening and the following morning, the water subsided, and the following day I walked through mud and puddles of water on the street and into my home. My heart sank when I saw mud and puddles of water in my home as well.

Everything up to approximately three feet was covered in a layer of thick mud. I didn't know where I could possibly even start to clean and remove everything that was destroyed. I called a cleaning company which performs that work only to learn that it would cost me \$20,000 to remove the debris and another \$50,000 to repair my home. I didn't have the money so I knew that was never going to happen and that I had lost my home and most everything I owned.

I was overwhelmed by what had happened, and I fell into a very deep despair and remained in that very dark frame of mind until I received a phone call from a man who told me he was John Hill, and a member of the Methodist church's Volunteers in Mission. He told me that he and other volunteers were coming to my home to help me.

Shortly thereafter, John Hill and volunteers of this church [Burnt Hills UMC] and other Methodist churches from the Capital District came to my home and began working on it. They removed all the remaining water, all the mud, and all the debris which had been my possessions. Then they began taking on the now-rotting floors and walls and started to replace them.

All through this time I found it hard to believe that these wonderful people were doing this for me—someone they didn't even know. To me it was, and still is, a miracle.

When people ask me about all of you and why you're doing this for me, I tell them that you are angels, because to me that is what you really are. I came here today to thank all of you for the kind and wonderful people that you are. But I have come to realize that I am just one of the many, many people you've helped here in America, and other countries as well. I know that if every one of these people in their gratitude could travel the many miles to you to be here to thank you themselves, they would. Because they can't, I thank you today for them too.

I want you to know that members of the Methodist church, John and Susan Hill, came to my synagogue—Temple Israel in Albany—on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year. On that day, I got up before my congregation of about 600 people and told them all that you've done for me. I asked John and Susan to stand up, and my whole congregation applauded them and all of you. For Jews to clap their hands in applause in the sanctuary of the temple -- and especially on Yom Kippur -- happens rarely, as we're not supposed to do it. But after hearing all about you wonderful people and what you're doing for me, they couldn't help it.

Rev. [Ed] Hackett, Hank, all members of this congregation, I thank you for inviting me here today. The Hebrew words *Toda rabas* mean thank you very much. *Toda rabas* for all of you being my angels and for becoming my friends.

VIM rally planned for early November

Save the dates of Friday and Saturday, Nov. 6 and 7 at Shenendehowa United Methodist Church in Clifton Park, N.Y., for a Troy Conference Volunteers-in-Mission (VIM) Rally celebrating Troy Conference mission teams. Plans are being made to hold an Early Response Team training on Friday, Nov. 6, with some additional VIM training on Saturday.

Openings on VIM teams

McCurdy School in Espanola, N.M., April 26 to May 2. Jay and Cathie Dunkleberger will be taking a team to do both construction and other hands-on assistance needed by this school and its students. The school is operated by the Methodist Church for Hispanic and Pueblo Indian children in an economically challenged region of New Mexico. Costs are expected to be \$400 plus transportation. Contact

Volunteers-in-Mission

the Dunklebergers at (518) 371-7071 or jdunkleb@nycap.rr.com.

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

Contact Pete Huston at hustonjp@sprynet.com or (518) 399-0919 if you are able to help on any of the several local projects at Emmaus United Methodist Church in Albany, N.Y.. If interested in other short term projects or leading a team, contact Jay Dunkleberger at (518) 371-7071 or jdunkleb@nycap.rr.com.

Teams are going many places from the other three Upper New York conferences. Now is a good time to start making connections. Contact the Dunklebergers to find out about forming or being part of a multi-conference team.

More VIM opportunities are listed on the Northeast Jurisdiction websites at www.gbgm-umc.org/umvim-nej.

Nomads On a Mission In Divine Service

Nomads are usually retired or close to retirement, usually with an RV, looking for a purpose and personal mission, want to share their faith, and enjoy using their skills to help others. They work for three weeks, four days a week at various sites. If you are interested, contact them at (800) 406-6237, or get more information at www.nomadsumc.org, or contact Ernie and Vivian Melin, who have participated in Nomads for a number of years at eamelin@aol.com.

GBGM Primetimers events:

Primetimers is an educational and mission service experience for adults over 50 organized by the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). Primetimer events scheduled include:

"The Life and Spirit of Appalachia, Henderson Settlement, Frakes, Ky., April 19 through 25; the cost is \$505.

"Discovering Alaska," Eagle River United Methodist Camp, Auke Bay/Juneau, Ala.; the cost is \$940.

"Creating Community with the City's Poor," Denver Urban Ministries, Co., May 31 through June 6; the cost is \$740.

"Life on the Bayour Teche: History, Culture and UMCOR Sager Brown," Baldwin, La., Oct. 18 through 24; the cost is \$570.

"Living Witnesses: Learning from Native Americans of the Northwest," Wal-lowa Lake Camp, Portland, Or., July 17 through 24; the cost is \$895.

"A Journey in Mission: Following Christ in Cambodia," Cambodia Methodist Mission, Phnom Penh, Nov. 4 through 14; the cost is \$1,975.

For more information or to register for these and other Primetimer events, contact (877) 882-4724 or primetimers@gbgm-umc.org, or visit the web site at www.primetimers.info.

Classifieds

Skye Farm Camp Caretaker

Skye Farm Camp and Retreat Center seeks a caretaker for its facility in Warrensburg, N.Y. Applicant must possess basic mechanical, electrical, plumbing and carpentry skills and must be experienced in the proper use of dump trucks, tractors and truck mounted snow removal equipment. The applicant should be friendly, hospitable and able to model a Christian lifestyle. He/she will be required to provide hospitality for groups using the facility, work with various boards and agencies associated with the camp and insure that the facilities are ready to use at all times. The position is currently based on a four day work week with one day on stand-by and can be designed with some "seasonal flexibility".

Interested parties should send their resumes to Dennis Spilman, Chair-Site Managers, 370 Maple Ave., Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866, denspilman@aol.com



Biblical Valentine greetings

Rather than an original column this month, I'm sending you Valentine greetings from Bible passages. Consider reflecting on those passages that resonate with you.

Spiritual Formation

By Evie Doyon

You should know that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Cor.3: 3)

The Lord does not look at things that people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. (1 Sam. 16:7)

All the believers were one in heart and mind. (Acts 4:32a)

Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. (Proverbs 3:3)

Search me O God, and know my heart. (Psalm 139:23)

Create in me a new heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10)

I run in the paths of your commands, for you have set my heart free. (Psalm 119:32)

I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart. (Jeremiah 24:7)

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33)

Love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)

The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart that you might obey it. (Deut. 30:14)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Mt. 5:8)

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. (Eph. 3:16-17a)



A nearly lost chapter in the life of George S. Brown

By Pat Thompson

Here is one final note on the saga of the Rev. George S. Brown. This past July, on our way to the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of the United Methodist Church, held this year at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell, S.D., my husband Vernon and I made a stop at the Ella Sharp Museum in Jackson, Mi. This museum was the former home of Ella Sharp and her parents, Dwight and Mary Merriman. In the January 2008 Connection, I wrote about Dwight Merriman, the gentleman who hired George S. Brown to build a stone wall around his property in 1863.

Merriman had negotiated with Brown through his father-in-law, Abraham Wing III, who lived in Glens Falls, N.Y., and was familiar with the stone walls Brown had built. Correspondence preserved at the museum indicated that in 1859, after two years of waiting for Brown's health to be restored, Merriman told his father-in-law that he was unwilling to meet Brown's terms which were transportation from New York to Michigan, \$1.50 a day plus board, and the agreement that he would not lay stone on stormy days. Apparently, however, Merriman changed his mind when he was unable to locate anyone else to build his wall, and in 1863 he agreed to Brown's terms. He also paid \$18 a month to the men and their families Brown brought with him.

The wall was about a mile long and took about two years to build. In 1869 the Michigan Agricultural Society gave Dwight Merriman a medal for the artistic and engineering design of the wall.

When Vernon and I arrived at the museum, we were met by Lynne Loftis, the former Executive Director of the Museum. She showed us the medal Merriman had received from

the Michigan Agricultural Society in 1869 in recognition for the artistic and engineering design of the wall. She also presented us with copies of the original correspondence between Wing and Merriman about hiring Brown and a history of the property, which she had written.

Loftis then took us on a tour of the property so we could see the wall and the historic plaque, placed in 1967 by the Ella Sharp Museum Association and neighbors of the wall.

Sadly, neither the medal nor the



plaque mention George S. Brown, nor is he mentioned in the 1865 Jackson Daily Citizen article on Merriman's Hillside Farm. An article appearing in the Jackson Citizen Patriot in 1936 only refers to the wall as having been built by a "colored man." Once again, Brown becomes the victim of white privilege.

It is not until an article appeared in the Sept. 17, 1967, Jackson Citizen Patriot at the time the historic site marker was placed on the wall that the story of George S. Brown's role in building the stone wall is actually made public. If Merriman's daughter, Ella Sharp hadn't preserved the correspondence between her father and her grandfather and bequeathed the property to the city of Jackson, and Loftis hadn't found the correspondence which discussed Brown's terms, it is likely that this piece of Brown's life would have been lost.

For more information about the museum, visit ellasharp.org.

PreConference materials due March 3

The deadline for submitting materials and reports for the Preconference Journal is March 3. Send materials to the Conference Secretary, the Rev. Greg Smith, at RevGASmith@worldnet.att.net, (802) 985-2388.

Registration fees for Annual Conference Session set

This year's Annual Conference Session will be held June 10 through 13 at the Saratoga City Center in New York. The charge for a full-time commuter, including all meals, will be \$200. Part time commuters registering for daily meals is \$91 for Thursday and another \$91 on Friday, and \$21 on Saturday; full-time commuter including all meals \$200; part-time commuters who do not sign up for meals will be charged a \$30 daily registration and facilities fee.

Part-time commuters are responsible for arranging their own lodging.

The fee for registration, meals and double room occupancy is \$425, and \$650 for those registering for single room occupancy.

This year, meal tickets will be issued and will be required for each meal.

Registration packets to clergy, lay members, board and agency chairs, and surviving spouses will be mailed in early March. The deadline for registration is April 15; an additional \$50 will be charged for registrations received after that date.

Lay speakers attend Nashville gathering

By Vivian Melin, Conference Director of Lay Speakers

As I write this and send it off, I am on my way to the Convocation of the Association of Conference Directors of Lay Speaking Ministries in Nashville, Tn. Three of our district directors will also be in attendance, as well our Conference Lay Leader Ilah Sisson Walser.

This year a new basic course is being introduced. The emphasis on the preaching aspect of the Lay Speaking Ministries Program is not going to be paramount in this course. Instead, we will be focusing on caring, leading, communicating and going into the world. It will also cover "who and why we are."

We have a course scheduled at the Westport Federated Church in Westport, N.Y., beginning on Feb. 8. The information is on the Conference website at www.troyac.org>Ministries..

Lay Speaking Ministries

As the main part of the Convocation this year, we will pilot a new course for re-certification, "Leading for Christian Transformation." This course has been written by Steve Bryant, publisher of *The Upper Room*, who will present the 10-hour course to us in its entirety.

It sounds like an exciting and spirit-filled weekend, and I will have more to tell you about it next month.

Annual Report forms due

Please remember to get the Annual Report Forms filled in, approved at your church/charge conference, signed and returned as directed on the bottom of the form. As we look to the formation of a new Conference in 2010 it becomes even more important that the information we have on our Lay Speakers -- Certified and Local -- is up-to-date and accurate.

I will add some frequently asked questions to the Conference website, so you may be able to get an answer to any questions you may have. If you still have questions, send me an e-mail at vmelin@aol.com. Not only will I respond to you, but I will also post it in case others have the same questions.

If you have any concerns regarding the Lay Speaking Ministries program of Troy Annual Conference, don't hesitate to get in touch with your district director or the Conference Director.

Conference Director: Vivian Melin, (518) 563-1242, home; (518) 441-2305, voicemail; or Vmelin@aol.com.

Adirondack District: Maxine Willis, (518) 499-1564 or maxcarol2002@yahoo.com.

Albany District: Jerry Oliver, (518) 861-5062 or bud7231993@yahoo.com.

Embury District: Darlene Suto, (518) 279-1149 or dvi1151@aol.com.

Green Mountain District: Marie MacDougall, (802) 461-4452 or macdome@juno.com.

Upcoming Lay Speaking courses:

Adirondack District

A Basic Lay Speaking Course, led by Vivian Melin, the Conference Director of Lay Speaking Ministries, will be held on Sundays, Feb. 8, 15, 22, March 1 and 8 from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the Westport Federated Church, 6486 Main Street, Westport, N.Y. 12993. For more information or to register, contact Maxine Willis, 312 Co Route 10, Whitehall, N.Y. 12887; (518) 499-1565; maxcarol2002@yahoo.com.

Green Mountain District:

"Storytelling: Dancing with Words," an advanced lay speaking course led by Pastor Kirk Thompson will be offered on Saturdays, Feb. 7, 21, March 7, 21 and April 4 beginning at 9:30 a.m. at Grace United Methodist Church, 130 Maple Ave., Essex Junction, Vt. The cost is \$32.

A five week Basic Lay Speaking Course beginning Sunday, Feb. 15 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. will be held at Binghamville United Methodist Church in Fletcher, Vt. The course will be led by Ellen Ravelin. The cost is \$15.

To register for any of these classes, send a completed application, available on-line at www.troyac.org>Resources>Forms, signed by your pastor along with a check to Marie MacDougall, Green Mountain Director of Lay Speaking Ministry, 19 Eastern Ave., Apt. 1, Barre, Vt. 05641. For more information, contact MacDougall at (802) 461-4452 or (518) 588-4705.



Telling our stories at Annual Conference

The theme for this year's Annual Conference Session, June 10 through 13 in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., is God is still Creating (Us).

We want to tell your stories relating to this theme when we gather in June. Lay and clergy persons throughout Troy Conference are invited to submit a short essay expressing where you have seen or experienced God at work creating. Those interested are invited to answer the question "When or where have you seen God creating in Troy Conference—in you, in community, or in ministry?" All submissions will be compiled into a book chronicling the work of God among us; some submissions will be selected for use at Annual Conference in Saratoga in June.

Guidelines for submissions are listed below. Submission deadline is April 1. For more information contact Meredith Vanderminden at meredith@vanderminden.com. All are invited to witness to God at work creating among us.

A Creating God Essay Submission Guidelines

Essay submission deadline is April 1, 2009. You will receive confirmation of your submission within two days of its receipt.

Please answer the question "When or where have you seen God creating in Troy Conference—in you, in community, or in ministry?" clearly and concisely in your essay.

Please limit your essay to 350-500 words, or about three minutes when read aloud at your natural speaking pace.

All essays should include your name, church, and contact information, including e-mail address and telephone number, when available. Please place this information at the top of your essay for easy reference.

Submissions should be sent electronically to meredith@vanderminden.com. If this is not possible, submissions may be mailed to Rev. Meredith Vanderminden, 8 Jacqueline Dr., Queensbury, N.Y. 12804.

All essays will be reviewed and prepared for publication in book format. Some essays will be selected for use at Annual Conference 2009. If your essay is selected, you will be contacted no later than May 1 and asked to video tape the reading of your essay for Annual Conference Session. If you wish to submit an essay for the book but do not want it presented at Annual Conference, please indicate that on the top of your essay.



Faithful Leadership for a Diverse and Changing World

A weekend workshop on responding to God's call in building community beyond lines of race and culture



Our program leader will be **Eric Law**, with associates from the Kaleidoscope Institute. Eric Law is an author, a photographer, a playwright, a composer of church music, an Episcopal/Anglican priest, and an internationally known consultant on building diverse community.

When? Friday April 17th at 7:00 PM through Sunday April 19th midafternoon
Where? Dominican Retreat Center
1945 Union St, Niskayuna, NY 12309

Commuters are encouraged to attend.

Who? This retreat is open to all lay and clergy members of Troy, upstate New York and New England Conferences, hungering and thirsting for justice.

Registration donation of \$50. The event sponsor: *Troy Conference Commission on Religion and Race encourages people not to refrain from registration because of cost.*

Registration and Questions? Contact Ilah Walser, registrar, Troy Conference Office, 396 Loudon Rd., Saratoga Springs NY 12866
518-584-8214 X11; iwalser@troyac.org

New programs are available from the Conference Resource Center

By Wally Davis

The following new programs are available from the Conference Resource Center:

The Jesus Creed—Early Christians didn't sing in the choir or go to weekly Bible studies. Yet they matured inwardly in relationship with God as well as outwardly in their relationship with each other. How and why? See how the great Shema of the Old Testament transformed by our Lord into the focal point for spiritual maturity. According to the Jesus Creed, loving God and loving others are the greatest commandments. Includes Scot McKnight's book of the same name and a leader's guide. The DVD is 47 minutes long and is divided into seven sessions.

Black Methodism: Legacy of Faith—Revival—A history of black United Methodists. Celebrate the 40th anniversary of several related and pivotal events in the life and history of our denomination. The end of the racially segregated Central Jurisdiction in 1967. The founding of Black Methodists for Church Renewal in 1967. The birth, through merger, of the UMC in 1968. The establishment of the General Commission on Religion and Race in 1968. The original "Legacy of Faith" was first broadcast in 1994 on "Catch the Spirit" the popular UM television program. An updated introduction and ending have been added, but the rest of the program remains intact. We hope this program will benefit you and other viewers in ways that revive your spiritual faith and your commitment to ministry through the UMC.

Paul: An Appealing or Appalling Apostle—In this 50 minute introduction to Paul, John Dominic Crossan addresses challenges to understanding Paul. Paul's character and theology, and gender balance and imbalance in the New Testament. Explore Paul's character and theology.

Victory and Peace or Justice and Peace? A study for progressive Christians. Four lectures by preeminent historical Jesus scholar John Dominic Crossan. Justice and the World: What is the Character of your God?, History and Jesus: What is the content of your faith, Worship and Violence: What is the purpose of your prayer?, Resurrection and Community: What is the function of your church? Bonus Sermon: Justice as Love. Four hours of DVD content together with a discussion guide. Can be conducted in four, eight, or 12 weeks.

UMCOR Sager Brown: Depot of Hope—Visit the UMCOR Sager Brown Depot and campus in Baldwin LA, where mission has been taking place for more than 140 years. See how gifts of hope are assembled and dispatched to those who need them most. Learn how you can be part of the life and ministry of UMCOR Sager Brown. The DVD contains a 6 minute movie on the work and ministry of Sager Brown. Two three-minute instructional movies for health, school, and layette kits. Printable instruction sheets for assembling bedding kits, flood buckets, health kits, layette kits, school kits, and sewing kits. Sewing patterns for school bags and layette items. Volunteer guide. Bulletin insert to print and share.

Who's Got the Power?—Focuses on Global Warming. From the coal-scarred hills of Appalachia to the sun drenched suburbs of Los Angeles, Ca., to three category five hurricanes within three months in 2005 in the Southeast, eight days of non-stop rain in the Northeast, record breaking heat globally. People are becoming increasingly vocal about the hazards of global warming. They are demanding practical and achievable solutions, in particular championing the development and use of renewable energy resources to safeguard the earth for future generations.

Countering Pharaoh's Production-Consumption Society Today—A small group DVD study that can be conducted over four or five one-hour sessions. The program includes a DVD with two hours of content and a CD-Rom containing reproducible written materials. Warm-up question video clips are included for use in each session. Presented by Walter Brueggemann, the sessions include: The Way Out, The Decalogue, Countering Caesar, An Act of Imagination, and On Not Doing God Any Favors.

There is only one copy of each of these and they are circulated on a first come first served basis. The usual time period for circulation is 30 days. Programs which cover eight or ten weeks require longer durations.

To check out any of these new programs or for more information, contact Wally Davis at the Conference Resource Center in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., (518) 584-8214, ext. 10 or (800) 684-9377, ext. 10; wallyd@troyac.org.

Young clergy from new conference area to meet at Casowasco Retreat Center

Join young clergy from under 40 in North Central New York, Western New York, Troy, and Wyoming Conferences for an overnight at Casowasco Camp and Retreat Center, Moravia, N.Y. in Moravia, N.Y., on Feb. 16 and 17.

The gathering will give participants time to worship and relax together, talk

about ministry as young clergy and the role young clergy will play in the new conference that is taking shape.

The cost is \$86 for one overnight, and three meals.

For more information, contact Beth Quick at bethquick@gmail.com.

Mid-career change led to ministry *from page 4*

"I was looking for something new to do with the skills and passions I had, and behold, the church came up," she said.

She had been an active member of the White River Junction United Methodist Church, serving on the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the Long Range Planning Team and Administrative Council. She chaired the Council on Ministries and served as Superintendent and teacher for the Sunday school program.

When she felt the call to ministry, she enrolled in and graduated with a Masters of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York. In the summer of 1997, she completed work in Clinical Pastoral Education at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, and served as a seminary intern at Riverside Church in New York City, developing programs for 18-to-24-year-olds.

She was ordained an elder in 2001 and has served the Saranac and Lyon Mountain United Methodist Churches in New York, and Grace United Methodist Church in Essex Junction, Vt., and Grace United Methodist Church in Bradford, Vt. While in Essex Junction, she was a community chaplain at Fletcher Allen Healthcare in Burlington, Vt.

Farrell has also received training in family systems theory through the Tending the Fire program; "Put on Your Own Oxygen Mask First" with Bill Easum and Jeff Patton; spiritual director training, for which she is a small group leader for the current trainees; General Church training for Boards of Ordained Ministry; seminars on pastoral care for the dying, for returning vets and their

families, and for those suffering from addiction and their families.

In Troy Annual Conference, she has served on the Covenant Council, the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, the Conference Sessions Committee, as well as the District Committee on finance, and conference transition and implementation teams at the time the current vision and structure were being implemented. Currently she is secretary for the conference Board of Ordained Ministry and chair of the District Committee on Ordained Ministry, and also a participant in the boundaries transition committee with New England Conference.

Building community

Farrell has a passion for drama and has been part of a group called Christmas Revels, which stages at least two productions at year—one in winter and one in summer.

"It's a group which uses traditional liturgy and dance to build community among the actors, dancers and singers—and with the audience as well," she said. "There's a lot of audience participation. They come to share the traditional rituals and if you leave one out, the audience will perform it themselves.

"I've learned about worship through them," she said.

Having worked with the group for 25 years, she has "seen how different groups, using some new things and some old, build community."

Farrell enjoys helping build community. "In education, I called it building community through drama," she said. "In church, it's building community through worship."

4WORD '09

When the World says "this way",
We say "Yaweh"

WHAT? The fifth Annual event for the youth in Grades 7-12 of North Central NY, Troy, Western NY, and Wyoming Conferences! Bring your youth group to praise God And form new friendships!

WHERE? Holiday Inn, Liverpool, NY (Syracuse)

WHEN? April 24-26, 2009

SPEAKERS: Youth . . . from each conference



WORKSHOPS: Everything from faith issues to fun times
Youth Service Fund, Bible Trivia, Volleyball, New Games, Mission of Peace, Adult Leader Workshops, and Open Mic! And MORE!

Registration Deadline Postmarked: April 9, 2009
We cannot guarantee room reservations at the Conference Hotel for any registrations postmarked after April 9, 2009

Send registration and payment (registration must include payment) to:
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Make checks payable to: Wyoming Annual Conference

Registration questions contact—Tony & Judy Hipes at tandj3905@hotmail.com
Event questions contact—Ted Anderson at geneseevalleyumc@crcls.edu

SEE YOU THERE !

Church's presence on the web is critical to its being relevant *from page 1*

and what it might mean.

In addition to my blog, I have a profile on the popular social networking site, Facebook (but stay well clear of its more spam-laden cousin, MySpace), where I can read about how members of my family, former classmates, and no small number of lay and clergy folk from Troy Conference are doing. I frequently check on the web home of one of the two churches I serve, and make changes to a page there designed to help folks worship with us when they can't be in the sanctuary. I read the reflections of other colleagues on their blogs, including *Questing Parson* (written by a retired United Methodist elder who shares stories—some humorous, some poignant—of his adventures in ministry) and *Hacking Christianity* (one of my favorite blogs, written by a seminary friend of mine, who blogs about the places where his love of technology and his passion for ministry overlap—really, check out his series on 'what the church can learn from Wikipedia!').

I am involved in these online ministries—and I do consider them ministries—for many reasons. Some are personal. I am after all an extrovert, and the more places I have to express myself and talk (or write) out my thoughts, the happier I am. I did get myself into a profession that will move me around a lot, and so I have loved ones I miss that I want to keep in contact with.

Some of my reasons are ministerial. There are many members of my congregations who will talk to me in person

about something they read in my blog, or who will thank me for the note of encouragement or birthday wish I sent them on Facebook. There are colleagues I can coordinate with and from whose wisdom I can benefit, regardless of the distances between us.

Some of my reasons are missional. I honestly believe that there is a whole world of people out there who may love God but don't seek out a church building. I also think that there are a great many people who misjudge the church for the shortcomings or caricatures they see in movies or on television, and I want to offer another voice.

I know I'm not alone in using the technology at hand for the practice of ministry. Cheryl Hemmerle, Technical Training Specialist for United Methodist Communications responded to my questions about the importance of Internet connectivity for the United Methodist Church—by email, of course.

"I believe the church's presence on the Web is critical to its being relevant, timely and engaged in the lives of people around the world who want to maintain a dynamic faith in the midst of everyday life," she says.

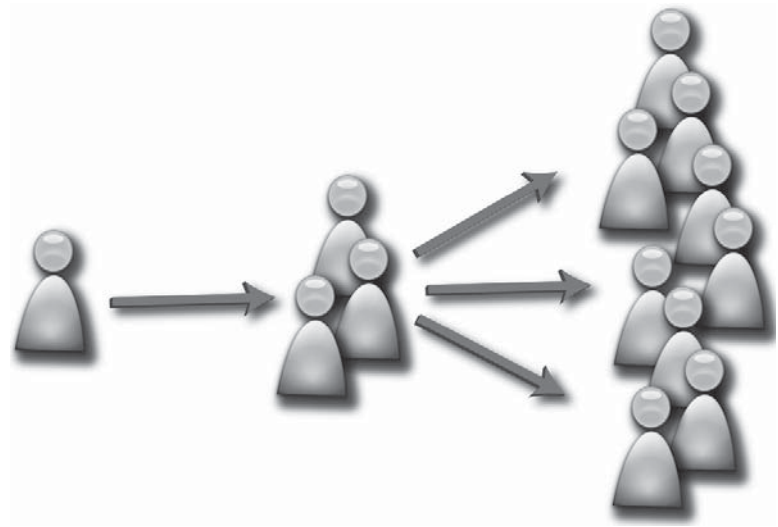
Hemmerle lifts up several examples of ways the United Methodist Church is using the internet. There are numerous groups on Facebook, some organized by United Methodist Communications and many more started by individuals and small groups. There's a United Methodist TV channel on YouTube, and a social networking and discussion site at 7Villages.com (which this user—yes, I post there too—recommends only to those who enjoy some rousing debate, as it is a place where the vast theological and socio-political diversity of the UMC is displayed with levels of respect and tolerance that vary from person to person and post to post).

Michelle Bogue-Trost, pastor of the Newtonville United Methodist Church, N.Y., discussed the ways a local church might use Internet technology. Newtonville maintains a website and two Facebook groups (one for the general church and one started by the youth group), and has a computer lab where congregants of all ages can safely interact online. Bogue-Trost is also working on a project with the Board of Ordained Ministry using online chats and discussion forums to explore the BOM's role in a church struggling to engage a digital culture.

"The use of technology," she says, "tells those inside and outside the church that the message we offer, the good news we share, is not for a past time, but for every time, every situation, every culture—even ours."

Just down the hall from Michelle, Albany District Superintendent Jim Fenimore finds websites, Facebook, email, and Adobe Connect (a program that allows for online meetings using text, phone calls, or video cameras) integral parts of his ministry. Since he often finds himself responding to questions late at night or from places where there is not a phone available, Fenimore is able to use technology to streamline his work.

It goes further than that, though. "Digital forms of communication are simply the primary form of communication for many people in this culture," Fenimore says. "What is clear is that these people do not make up the majority of those who go to our churches. To



Online social networking can be dynamic. One person connects with another, and that leads to a connection with 12 other people, and so on. The instantaneous and 'wildfire' nature of web-based networking can be a largely untapped mission field, according to Cheryl Hemmerle, Technical Training Specialist for United Methodist Communications

ignore these technologies is to ignore these generations."

In fact, a recent Pew/Internet study found that 75 percent of adults ages 18-24 who use the internet have a social networking profile. 57 percent of online adults ages 25-34 use social networking, and 30 percent of those ages 35-44. Cheryl Hemmerle adds, "With more than 75 percent of U.S. adults using the Web in their daily lives, the church cannot afford to stay in the background of this largely untapped mission field."

While it is obvious that the instantaneous and 'wildfire' nature of web-based communication are significant benefits, there are some drawbacks that may prevent many folks from fully embracing this medium. Fenimore points out the potential for being misunderstood since one cannot see a person's body language, facial expression or other visual cues when communicating online. Clearly, there are concerns for safety and appropriateness of content as well, which is why the Newtonville United Methodist Church has safeguards to protect users who are on the Internet in their lab.

These reasons for caution, however, are by no means reasons to disregard the medium altogether. Hemmerle reminds us, "It's an age-old concern whenever a new technology is introduced. Similar 'dangers' or 'fears' were espoused with the printing press (circa 1450), but the church turned those 'dangers' and 'fears' into the bestselling book of all time: the Bible." I would add that there were a couple of brothers who used the format of the familiar bar tune to write catchy songs conveying the love of God, many of which are now our most beloved hymns. "I believe that similar dangers and fears can be transformed into powerful messages of God's love through the Internet," Hemmerle says.

Certainly there are more pressing dangers in not communicating in the language of emerging generations. Fenimore cautions, "Ignoring or refusing to use these technologies will ultimately lead to an inability to communicate

with people." Hemmerle adds, "If the church does not engage these resources for the present, let alone the future, I believe we are in danger of becoming extinct as a physical institution."

And we are missing an opportunity to find God in new ways.

"God is already present in any and every connection we church folks make with others, regardless of physicality," Hemmerle insists. "The litmus test of how real virtual connections can be is the authenticity of the people making the connections, not the medium they choose."

Bogue-Trost wholeheartedly agrees. "There is no such thing as virtual connection. Connection is connection—the medium doesn't matter, and God is in every connection."

So that's why I'm updating my Facebook status, because this may be the moment I see God between the pixels, the instant where the ever-present God reminds me how grace and love speak in any language.

Resources

Weaving a Web of Connection: Using Internet Technology for Effective Ministry, a training event offered by United Methodist Communications, will be hosted by Troy Annual Conference on Nov. 7. Satellite trainings will be offered in the North Central New York, Western New York and Wyoming annual conferences, and all four locations will be linked via the Internet. To learn more about the course, visit <http://web.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=12494>.

United Methodist Communications is also offering a free, ongoing online course, "**What is Web Ministry**." Learn more at <http://moodle.umcom.org/moodle/>.

Congregations interested in starting or expanding a web ministry can contact the Troy Conference Director of Communications, Sandra Brands, at (800) 684-9377 or (518) 584-8214, ext. 15, or sbrands@troyac.org to arrange for training.



The Rev. Becca Clark, pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Montpelier, Vt., and Plainfield United Methodist Church, Vt., is a faithful user of Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites. Her blog can be read at <http://www.pastorbecca.com/>.

UMs plan media campaign to 'Rethink Church'

By Susan Passi-Klaus, UMNS

What if church wasn't just a place where people spend an hour on Sundays? What if there wasn't just one door into the church but 10,000? And what if "church" was a verb instead of a noun?

The United Methodist Church is going to pose those questions and others when it rolls out a new media campaign in late April aimed at getting people to "Rethink Church."

"In the next few years, we will seek to encourage a global spiritual dialogue," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, top staff executive of United Methodist Communications. "It will ask us to rethink church. We will ask, 'What if church were a verb and not a noun?'"

"What we're going to try and get across is the idea that 'church' doesn't just happen on Sundays, and 'church' isn't just a building," said Kerry Graham, president of Nashville-based Bohan Advertising/Marketing, which developed the "Rethink Church" campaign.

Attracting more people

The campaign is designed to redefine church as a 365-days-a-year experience where people seeking a church community can become involved at various levels—many of them non-traditional—such as volunteering with groups outside the church building and even through making online connections.

Graham suggests that the church population, institution and hierarchy will need to understand and embrace the idea that it is OK for "church" to start out as day care, a youth-group ski trip, a men's basketball league or something that solves a secular need, such as Habitat for Humanity.

"Whatever entry point is comfortable for someone who may find the idea of entering church daunting, an act of courage or a moment of high vulnerability—that's what church needs to be," he said.

United Methodists are working to bring three generations into the life

The new United Methodist Church's awareness/public relations campaign will use cutting-edge communication tools such as iTunes, text messaging, social networks such as Facebook, and YouTube.

of the church: baby boomers, post-moderns (also known as Gen X) and millennials (Mosaic or Gen Y). The target audience for the new focus will be 18- to 34-year-olds. With issues related to church relevance, negative impressions of Christians and opportunities for involving young people, these generations have been difficult to engage in mainline church involvement. Church officials expect the campaign to have a positive impact with other age groups as well.

Hollon said the church's mission statement, to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," is the foundation for United Methodist Communications' work. He also noted that the new campaign will use language that resonates with the life concerns of people who aren't familiar with the church.

Competing for 'mind space'

Rethinking church and denominational marketing calls for an ability to tell the church's stories in "many, many different ways, through many media and with different audiences," Hollon said.

Although traditional marketing expressions such as television commercials, magazine advertisements and billboards will anchor the campaign, the "Rethink Church" message also will be delivered in other ways. Cutting-edge communication tools will include everything from social network groups such as Facebook, United Methodist iTunes and text messaging to YouTube Methodist channels



Bishop Sally Dyck, president of the Commission on Communication

and bumper stickers. The question for campaign architects becomes, "How do we communicate faith in a complex, media-saturated world?"

"We face a multiplicity of media and competition for 'mind space,'" Hollon said. "We are living through changes in lifestyle and values in post-modern, post-Christian culture—changes that are continuous and require adaptation and the ability to turn on a dime."

"Rethink Church" will serve as a creative addendum to the campaign "Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors." The church has carried out the campaign on television, radio, billboards and other media for the past eight years.

General Conference, the legislative assembly of The United Methodist Church, approved approximately \$20 million in funding for United Methodist Communications for advertising and media campaign work for the next four years. The "Rethink Church" campaign's cost is not yet known, and some funding for it may come from other United Methodist Communications funds.

Challenging the church

Bishop Sally Dyck, the Commission on Communication president, has supported the campaign for "Open hearts, open minds, open doors," from the beginning. The bishop, who leads the The United Methodist Church's Minnesota Area said she likes the fact that it offers churches training in radical hospitality, which is important to revitalizing congregations and starting new ones, she said. The campaign needs to continue, she said.

"Rethink Church, I think, really bumps it up to another level, and it's actually a level that I have wanted our denomination to work on," Dyck said. "...Rethink Church is going to challenge every local church to think

about what the meaning and purpose of church is."

A lot of churches define their meaning and purpose in terms of fellowship and have "sacrificed evangelism on the altar of fellowship," she said.

"Rethink Church" will also challenge members to think about how they live out church every day, in all aspects of life. "It really goes from just receiving the gospel in kind of a passive way to ...living that gospel out in the world," the bishop said. "It's a challenge to not only believe but to act and to live."

The campaign will have a "wonderful challenge and opportunity for the existing church," but it will also invite people who have been disappointed with the church or even hurt by it to rethink and reconsider what church is really about, she said.

Raising awareness

"Rethink Church" is envisioned as more than just a media campaign or awareness campaign, developers say. The goal is for it to become a movement, with results measured in terms of lives touched and transformed, according to United Methodist Communications staff. Those measures are being developed, but traffic on a future web site for the campaign will be one indicator.

The original campaign, launched in September 2001, raised U.S. awareness of the church from 14 percent to 30 percent, according to Hollon. He said 96 percent of those surveyed by Gallup last March now have a positive or neutral view of The United Methodist Church.

What doors will you open?

What doors will your congregation open? How will you 'Rethink Church'?

Let us know. Share your ideas and stories by sending them to Sandra Brands, Director of Communication, Troy Annual Conference, 396 Loudon Rd., Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866; (518) 584-8214 or (800) 684-9877, ext. 15; sbrands@troyac.org.



We will publish these stories in *The Connection* and at www.troyac.org.

Contact the Communications Office if you would like:

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Want to arrange for Igniting Ministry/Welcoming training

To apply for a matching grant for advertising funds

Connect with United Methodist Communications for resources and ideas

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(800) 684-9377, ext. 15, sbrands@
troyac.org.

Specify the number of
doorhangers needed.

RETHINK

First United Methodist Church of Oneonta, N.Y., in the **Wyoming Annual Conference**, initiated a gathering of **Reconciling Ministry Network** congregations and their supporters in the new annual conference area of upstate New York. The network of upstate New York RCM congregations has launched a website at unyrmn.org and a Facebook group, **Upstate New York Reconciling Ministries Network**.

There is now a **Troy Conference Facebook** group as well as the group **Upper NYS United Methodists** and **Troy Conference Methodist for Social Action**.

Kristen Dart, a member of **Christ United Methodist Church** in Troy, N.Y., was among the thousands of people attending the inauguration of **President Barack Obama**. Dart accompanied her grandfather, **Col. Clarence Dart**, who had been a pilot in the legendary **Tuskegee Airmen**, the nation's first black military squadron. Obama credited the World War II Air Corps with helping to break racial barriers, fighting bravely for their country despite bitter discrimination. The example of the Tuskegee Airmen inspired **President Harry Truman** to integrate the military.

Col. Dart was one of 330 surviving Airmen invited by Obama's inauguration staff to attend the celebrations with one guest.

While in the capitol the Darts and other members of the family met with **U.S. Rep.**, now **Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand**, who had met Col. Dart at the Congressional Medal of Honor ceremony for the Tuskegee Airman in 2007.

Linda and Lynn VanTassell will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the **South Glens Falls United Methodist Church**, N.Y., fundraiser, the **Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper**. Inspired by the **International Pancake Race**, a competition between the towns of Olney, England, and Liberal, Kansas held every Shrove Tuesday, the race grew out of an older race, which began in the mid-1400s when, according to

News Notes

News from Troy Conference churches and people



Pastor Dave Martin of Hope United Methodist Church in Troy, N.Y., plunged into Lake George on New Year's Day to raise money for Habitat for Humanity and Emmaus United Methodist Church in Albany, N.Y.

some legends, a woman in the midst of cooking pancakes heard the church bells ring and, unwilling to let the pancakes burn, raced to the nearby Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul with her skillet in hand.

As part of the dinner at the church, the VanTassells hand out Mardi Gras beads and masks for the children. Money raised is used to provide scholarships for **Skye Farm Camp** in Warrensburg, N.Y. The church tries to pay the \$100 camp registration fee for as many youth as possible. Because this is the last year the VanTassells will organize the event, the church is looking for someone to continue the fundraiser.

Mooers United Methodist Church in New York hosted a day-long "Happy Birthday, Jesus," party on the Sunday before Christmas. Following a family-

friendly worship geared to children, the congregation walked to Mooers Senior Housing where youth and others entertained residents. Some members of the church helped pack gifts at the elementary school for needy children. At lunch, birthday cake was served and the meal was followed by a movie for children, a brief mission trip for teenagers, and caroling. The day ended with a Love Feast, sponsored by the youth.

First United Methodist Church in Saranac Lake, N.Y., has served dinner on Wednesday evenings for about a year. **The Rev. Maggie McCarey** told a reporter from the *Adirondack Daily Enterprise* that the number of people coming has increased from the 50 or 60 regulars who came for meals last winter. McCarey said some of the older attendees have started to bring dates, and some of the younger, single men take to-go containers of leftovers home later. She said one of the regulars is expecting a child soon, and the others have been bringing in baby clothes for the child. "It's what a community should be," she told the newspaper. "It's what a community used to be."

Todd and Tricia Andrews of Hudson Falls United Methodist Church in New York recently graduated from candidate orientation with the **World Evangelization for Christ (WEC)** and will soon leave for Western Asia to engage in a ministry that shares the Gospel through public events such as mimes, unicyclists and other groups. Todd, who has a music degree in vocal performance, will work as a sound man and travel with the performers to do the audio. Tricia will take a variety of roles, "from helping hospitality for

the performance groups we bring in, to helping to coordinate follow-up with seekers.

The couple have four children, who will travel with them overseas, and three of the children will need to be home schooled. WEC is a nondenominational, multi-national organization with 2,000 missionaries all over the world, about 200 of whom are from the United States.

On New Year's Day, **Pastor Dave Martin of Hope United Methodist Church** in Troy, N.Y., took the "Polar Plunge", a swim in Lake George's 33-degree water. Martin took the plunge after losing a challenge that the congregation couldn't collect \$2,000 by Dec. 31. With church attendance down because of the severe storms for two weeks in December, it was looking like Martin would stay warm and cozy on New Year's Day. But at the last minute, the congregation exceeded the \$2,000 goal, and Martin kept his part of the bargain, running into the frigid water with hundreds of other hardy participants. The donations were given to **Habitat for Humanity** and the refugee program at **Emmaus United Methodist Church**, Albany, N.Y.

E. Clayton Burgess, Jr., a retired Elder in Troy Annual Conference has published *To Ring Like A Bell That Has No Flaw: A Celebration of Faith*. The book is an examination of spiritual issues such as knowing God in a high-tech world, defining Jesus, understanding the Bible and the meaning of prayer, and what to do when lost in the darkness while feeling out of touch with God. The book is available for purchase on-line at Amazon.com or [Borders](http://Borders.com).



Troy Conference youth and adult leaders took part in "Building Community in a Diverse and Changing World," held Dec. 12 through 14 at Pine Grove United Methodist Church in Albany, N.Y. The event leader was the Rev. Eric Law, author, photographer, playwright and composer and an Episcopal priest.

New conference selected as campaign test market



The Rev. Larry Hollon, top staff executive of United Methodist Communications, and his staff spent the fall introducing United Methodists leaders to the “Rethink Church” awareness campaign. A UMNS photo by Ronny Perry.

The late April launch of United Methodist Communications’ (UMCom) “Rethink Church” campaign, the Igniting Ministry advertising and public awareness campaign for the 2009 through 2012 quadrennium, in late April will have special significance for the churches of North Central New York, Troy, Western New York and Wyoming annual conferences.

The future upstate New York conference has been selected as one of the test markets for the new advertising/public relations campaign, a campaign that will use text messaging, YouTube, iTunes and other digital media in addition to traditional media such as billboards, magazines, radio and television advertising.

One of six conference areas selected by the denomination’s communication agency as a test market, the Upper New York Area will benefit from the additional resources and training offered by the general agency to help equip local churches for the welcoming and mission-oriented ministry. Because the new conference will not come into existence until July 1, 2010, the initial work will be done with the four current conferences.

While the test markets will include media markets within New York state, over the next 18 months, all churches in the four conferences can take advantage of the resources provided by the General Commission on United Methodist Communications. Those resources include training, coordinated activities, matching grants incentives and free invitation tools.

“Having been selected a test market area by United Methodist Communications will help increase awareness of our commitment to moving out of our buildings and into the community,” said Susan W. Hassinger, bishop of the Albany Area Episcopal area and leader of the Troy and Wyoming annual conferences.

“As we shape the vision for the new conference in upstate New York, one that echoes the idea of ‘church’ as a verb, the awareness campaign will spread the word, both to our current members and to the community beyond, that the United Methodist church is working dynamically in the world even as we transform into new conference configurations,” she said.

The creation of a new conference in upstate New York is one of the reasons behind United Methodist Communications selecting the area as a test market for the next quadrennium.

“When we were looking at the markets to track,

we wondered if the new campaign would help the new conference area,” said the Rev. Larry Hollon, UMCom’s executive director. “Rethink Church perfectly defines the vision the leadership of the new area—what if we left our buildings and went out to where the seekers are, Monday through Sunday?”

Being a test market has been very good for the Western Pennsylvania Conference, said Mark Rehn, Director of Communications. “We’ve benefitted in many, many ways. Each of our churches have benefitted from the real resources as well as the personal relationships they’ve built with United Methodist Communications.

“They are part of a real connectional system, and that becomes real to them in a way that hadn’t previously been available,” he said. “Everyone has access to Igniting Ministry, but until you’re asked to take part in [the campaign], it isn’t personal.”

The Pittsburgh area in the Western Pennsylvania Conference was a test market for the 2005 through 2008 quadrennium. While the Rethink Church campaign is a national effort, United Methodist Communications selects two medium, two large and two small media markets, covering all five jurisdictions, every quadrennium. In addition to Western Pennsylvania, other conferences targeted have included North Carolina, Baltimore-Washington, Alabama-West Florida, California-Nevada and Missouri.

For the next quadrennium, the agency will track selected churches in the Louisiana, Rocky Mountain, Western North Carolina, Kansas West and West Ohio annual conferences as well as the new, as yet unnamed conference in Upstate New York.

By selecting six conference markets each quadrennium, UMCom is able to focus on how successful the awareness campaign is in an area and how local churches respond. Tracking churches will report statistical information such as weekly worship attendance and first-time visitors to Barna Research Group, an independent research firm. The information gathered will be used to determine whether or not the campaign was successful in meeting the agency’s goals and justifies the spending of apportionment funds.

Tracking or test group churches will have access to Igniting Ministry tools and training, and will be asked to become certified Welcoming Congregations. A second group of churches, a control group, which do not use Igniting Ministry resources, will also be tracked over the next four years.

“The response to the campaign helps us decide how the advertising is working in certain areas,” Hollon said. “We look at hard data like worship attendance and visitors and extrapolate information from that data.”

The Rethink Church campaign targets the 18- to 34-year-old seekers. The agency has identified this

audience’s spiritual concerns and needs, and its goal is to discover and address their deeper needs and to offer The United Methodist Church as a community in which they can experience nurture and connection in the body of Christ.

Churches throughout the four conferences are encouraged to think of ways to “Rethink Church.” Many United Methodist Churches are already reinventing church experiences. For example:

◆ Centenary United Methodist Church, Richmond, Va., has a feeding and foot-washing ministry for homeless people.

◆ Flowing Grace United Methodist Church, outside of Chicago, created a portable house of worship.

◆ Pets are welcome and ushers collect the offering in minnow buckets for a floating, boating congregation at Warwick (Ga.) United Methodist Church.

◆ Paul’s Restaurant, operated by Oakland United Methodist Church, Charleston, W.Va., offers two kinds of soul food: home-cooked meals and spiritual nourishment.

Levin Van Sant, chairperson for evangelism and outreach in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference, saw a United Methodist News Service story about the upcoming campaign and was quick to get on the Rethink Church bandwagon.

“It’s the perfect platform for us to show people that church can be fun and flexible,” Van Sant said. “And to show United Methodists aren’t stuffy—that we do things for others. We’re a very missions-minded people, and for us, church isn’t just a noun. We are

RETHINK CHURCH

Read about the new United Methodist advertising/public awareness campaign

a verb.”

“Rethink Church is ultimately an invitation to missional Christianity,” Hollon said. “It’s about being transformed, doing those things that transform us individually and transform the world. If we rethink church, our spiritual yearning and our desire for change become integrated. We focus on faith as life lived in mission, because we are called by God to be people who serve.”

The Communications teams of the four conferences will help identify tracking and control churches. Congregations interested in learning more about becoming a tracking or control church should contact their conference’s director of communications:

North Central New York Annual Conference: Marilyn Kasperek at (315) 699-8715, ext. 318 or (716) 564-2316; MarilynKasperek@ncnyumc.org or mjkaspek@aol.com.

Western New York Annual Conference: Marilyn Kasperek at (315) 699-8715, ext. 318 or (716) 564-2316; MarilynKasperek@ncnyumc.org or mjkaspek@aol.com.

Wyoming Annual Conference: Don Perry at (607) 757-0608, dperry@wyomingconference.org.

Troy Annual Conference: Sandra Brands at (518) 584-8214, ext. 15 or (800) 684-9377, ext. 15, sbrands@troyac.org.