



UPPER NEW YORK UNITED METHODIST ADVOCATE

www.unyumc.org

Being God's love with our neighbors in all places

A PUBLICATION OF THE UPPER NEW YORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Volume 2, Issue 1 - January 2011

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors ... Really? So why aren't our churches filling up to capacity?

By Maidstone Mulenga

A popular commercial shows a father neglecting his son, a woman falling down the stairs, a bride messing up the wedding ceremony; all because they were so focused on their cell phones. Really, is the cell phone that important that we miss out on important relationships?

In the same manner, are we so focused on "Open Hearts, Open Minds and Open Doors" that we forget about the people who are walking through those doors?

On July 1, 2010, when the Upper New York Annual Conference came into existence, members approved the Vision and Purpose of the new Annual Conference, declaring: "To live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places."

The goal is to grow in our relationship with God, being the body of Christ within the world.

•So, as we enter 2011, are we helping in engaging, equipping and empowering local churches to be in ministry with and to our Global Neighborhood?

•Are we encouraging and developing leadership within the laity and clergy that is diverse, yet united by our love for Christ?

•Are we building relationships with our neighbors, particularly with those who have been disenfranchised by mainstream society?

During his recent tour of



As United Methodists in the Upper New York Area, are we keeping our doors open and welcoming our neighbors in our community of faith?

the 12 Districts in the area, Bishop Marcus Matthews challenged all United Methodist churches in the area to develop one new mission. What is your new mission?

On Page 3 of this newspa-

per, there is a story about one congregation in our conference which is being honored for being a welcoming church.

What is your story? Share your stories of ministry.

Send stories and photos of

your mission and ministry to news@unyumc.org.

Celebrate with other churches and mission stations as we embark on the first full year of the Upper New York Annual Conference.

Photo By Maidstone Muenga

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All information for the March 2011 issue of the **ADVOCATE** is due on Feb. 5, 2010

Upper New York to send 16 delegates to 2012 GC

By Maidstone Mulenga

When the 2012 General Conference of the United Methodist Church is called to order in April next year, 16 of the nearly 1000 delegates will be from the Upper New York Area.

The General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church. The 1000-member assembly meets once every four years to consider revisions to church law, as well as

adopt resolutions on current moral, social, public policy and economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for churchwide programs for the next four years. The 2012 meeting will take place April 24 to May 4 in Tampa, Fla.

The secretary of the General Conference, Rev. L. Fitzgerald Reist, announced last month that Upper New York Annual Conference will get 16 delegates for the 2012 General Conference.

The number of delegates per annual conference is calculated based on the requirement for one lay and one clergy delegate for each annual conference, with additional delegates assigned proportionately according to the clergy and lay membership per conference.

In a letter to Upper New York Annual Conference Secretary Jeff Hodge, Reist said the conference session in June should elect eight (8) clergy delegates and

eight (8) lay Delegates.

In accordance with the Constitution of The United Methodist Church, delegates to the jurisdictional conferences are also to be elected. These additional delegates "shall in the order of their election be the reserve delegates to the General Conference."

The Annual Conference will also elect reserve clergy and lay delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference as it may deem desirable.

According to the Constitution, the clergy delegates shall be elected from the clergy members in full connection. The lay delegates shall be elected without regard to age, provided such delegates shall have been professing members of The United Methodist Church for at least two years next preceding their election, and shall have been active participants in the church for at least four years next preceding their election.

How to Reach Us

The Upper New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church was created on July 1, 2010, when the upstate New York churches of four former conferences - North Central New York, Troy, Western New York and Wyoming Conference - united to better serve the ministry needs of the local church and the community.

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Meet the Resident Bishop of Upper New York Area

He usually answers his phone simply as Marcus Matthews. Yet The Rev. Dr. Marcus Matthews is in charge of more than 500 active pastors, more than 185,000 members and more than 930 churches in Upstate New York.

At the 2008 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference, Bishop Marcus Matthews was assigned to serve as the episcopal leader of the New York West Area effective Sept. 1, 2008.

On July 1, 2010, he became the first ever Resident Bishop of the newly formed Upper New York Episcopal Area.

He was elected bishop on July 14, 2004, during the first ballot taken at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference held in Syracuse, New York. He was assigned to serve the Philadelphia Episcopal Area of The United Methodist Church (Eastern Pennsylvania and Peninsula-Delaware Conferences) effective September 1, 2004.

Bishop Matthews is originally from Florence, South Carolina, where his home church, Cumberland UMC, was a pivotal influence in his life. He graduated from South Carolina State College in 1968. In 1969, he was employed by Cumberland UMC as a community developer in the first wave of the Black Community Developers program of the General Board of Global Ministries.



Wesley Theological Seminary in 1971 and served as a student intern at Douglas Memorial UMC for a year. He became an assistant pastor at Asbury UMC in Washington, where he continued as associate for two years after his graduation from Wesley.

From 1976 to 1982, he served as pastor of Jones Memorial UMC in Washington, DC, where he oversaw the building of a new sanctuary and established a community development program. In 1981, he earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from New York Theological Seminary. He was pastor of Epworth Chapel UMC in Baltimore, from 1982 to

In 1970, he was selected by the Ford Foundation's Leadership Development Program to conduct a year-long study of religious institutions such as the Delta Project in Mississippi.

The UMC General Commission on Religion and Race, and a project with juveniles in Syracuse, NY.

He enrolled at Wesley Theological Seminary in 1971 and served as a student intern at Douglas Memorial UMC for a year. He became an assistant pastor at Asbury UMC in Washington, where he continued as associate for two years after his graduation from Wesley.

From 1976 to 1982, he served as pastor of Jones Memorial UMC in Washington, DC, where he oversaw the building of a new sanctuary and established a community development program. In 1981, he earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from New York Theological Seminary. He was pastor of Epworth Chapel UMC in Baltimore, from 1982 to

1986, when, during his pastorate, Epworth received 272 new members. In 1986, he became District Superintendent of the Baltimore East District and in 1991 was named Conference Council Director, a position he held until being named Washington West District Superintendent in 1999.

Bishop Matthews also serves the General Church in various capacities. He is also currently serving as President of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

During his ministry, Bishop Matthews has served on the General Commission on Religion and Race, General Board of Global Ministries, Connection Process Team, General Council on Ministries, Africa University Development Committee, World Methodist Council Executive Committee, and the Northeast Jurisdiction Multi-Ethnic Center Board.

In 2004 he was elected Co-Chair of the Endorsing Committee of The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The UMC. He is a member of Black Methodists for Church Renewal. In 2005, Bishop Matthews was elected to the Board of Directors of Africa University and he is currently serving as Vice Chair of the Africa University Board of Trustees. Bishop Matthews served as President of the Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops from February 2006 to 2007.



**UPPER NEW YORK
UNITED METHODIST
ADVOCATE**
RESIDENT BISHOP Marcus Matthews
EDITOR/PUBLISHER
Maidstone Mulenga
Director of Communications

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Valley Falls church members saluted: ‘They really are a welcoming group’

By Sandra Brands

One thing was clear to the Rev. Michael Asbury during his initial interview with the congregation of Valley Falls United Methodist Church.

“They really are a welcoming group. That’s what I noticed about them even before I knew they were applying for it,” said Asbury, now pastor of the church. Now, they have been officially recognized as a Welcoming Congregation by United Methodist Communications (UMCom).

“Welcoming Congregations” are a select group of United Methodist congregations nationwide that meet criteria including embracing newcomers and providing opportunities in discipleship. The recognition program is part of a larger effort by UMCom, the denomination’s communications agency, to use modern technology and the common language of television to spread the Good News of Christ to a world in need.

To be Welcoming means “we’ve looked at our church very closely and with different eyes than what we normally do,” said member Jocelyn Cole, Rethink Church team leader. “We think about what a new person coming might feel when they enter the church.

“Valley Falls is a just a special little gem,” said Cole. “They’re just welcoming and inviting by their own nature, so it’s just a natural step for them to go the next step ... The core group focused on if I were an outsider how I would feel if I entered. We focused on our entry way, our back door, greeters.

“We tried to prepare our church like we would do to our own homes when company comes over. We started telling people what we were about,” she said.

Visitors receive a Welcoming packet, which not only tells them about Valley Falls United Methodist Church but about the projects and missions the congregation supports and the groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and the Girl Scouts, who use the church building.

Asbury said the congregation had been working on certification since 2009, before he arrived and adopted the vision statement, “A place to call home.”

It has become just that for Cole, a lifelong United Methodist, who became a member of Valley Falls United Methodist Church three years ago. “The whole area — Valley Falls, Schaghticoke — is a very warm community and that’s really reflected in our church. The church has given me a sense of belonging and has made me feel welcoming.”

In gratitude for that welcome and eager to share it with others, Cole wanted to be part of the Rethink Church group so “I could give back to the church as they have given to me.”

For Asbury, the Welcoming Congregations certification is a promise that affirms the presence of a nonjudgmental God. “The unfortunate stereotype is that Christianity is judgmental — and I’ve never sensed that at Valley Falls UMC. I also know stories from their past where they’ve made that very clear — they are very welcoming.”

According to Cole, the congregation has already begun planning for Year Two Certification. “We’re going to do brainstorming ideas,” she said. “Our next step is to be more well known in our community. A lot of people know our church, but we’re



Here are some of the brochures and pamphlets that the Valley Falls United Church uses in its ministry.

Provided images

off the main drag—Route 67. A lot of newer people don’t know there’s a little village church tucked back here.”

Since 2001, “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” has been the theme of the denomination supported with a series of national advertising campaigns, supplemented by regional and local church participation. The overall aim of the effort was to invite people to enter into connection with

the Christian community as they seek meaning and purpose in their lives. The current campaign and movement, Rethink Church, seeks to capitalize on previous efforts, targeting 18-34 year olds and inviting churches to think of the motto as a verb, not just an adjective as in: “Together we can...Open hearts, Open minds and Open doors.”

Sandra Brands is a freelance writer.

Bishops planning to hold major summit in April

By Advocate Reporter

The Council of Bishops — in cooperation with the Connectional Table — is sponsoring a series of conversations about adaptive challenges facing The United Methodist Church and how we will embrace and sustain the needed change.

One key component will be a three-hour global webcast conversation held Wednesday, April 6, 2011.

Annual Conference leadership and other leaders will be invited to participate in the summit.

The event will last about three hours, roughly conceived as 1 hour presentation, 1 hour local conversations and 1 hour feedback with breaks included. The presentation will be archived and available for viewing on the internet for fifteen months after the initial webcast.

The Summit’s purpose is to call together for prayer, discernment and holy conversation a cross-section of leaders invited by the resident bishop and including lay leadership, cabinets, and pastors.

The Summit will provide

shared experience for engaging information and ideas about key initiatives to foster compelling alignment and generate forward momentum for the regeneration of The United Methodist Church.

The Leadership Summit is a venue for leaders to hear first-hand how the Council of Bishops is helping the church clarify and affirm God’s leading through the vision, values and culture of the United Methodist Church.

The Council of Bishops will share how they are blending the findings and construc-

tive work of multiple groups involved in strategic review and planning in behalf of the mission of the UMC, and urging participants to take part in shaping and leading a comprehensive plan of action.

Those taking part in the Summit will pray and worship together as the foundation for our endeavors.

They will hear succinct updates about what has been learned about the UMC’s most critical adaptive challenges along with promises and proposals for launching and sustaining faithful work in

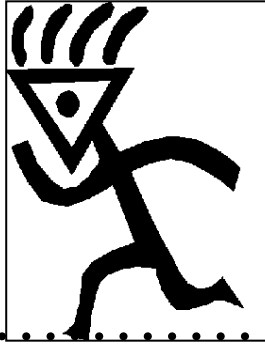
achieving meaningful organizational change. They will discuss implications and questions with their conference peers.

Participants will provide feedback and queries to the Council of Bishops leadership. They will share suggestions and make commitments for proactively aligning work in their own settings in light of shared objectives.

They will receive resources to help them interpret the information and implications from the Summit to others in their annual conferences.

UP!WORD'11

The Youth of the Upper New York Conference Registration info • Theme • Schedule



Calling all youth workers

Philadelphia YS Palooza

Would you like to experience two jam-packed days of seriously ridiculous youth ministry training?

If so, have we got a deal for you. Mark your calendars for March 11-12, 2011 and join us at YS Palooza (Youth Specialties).

The event will be held just outside of Philadelphia, PA, driving distance for most of us. If we register a group by January 17 (five or more) we can lock in a special rate of \$79 per person.

Did we say this was two jam packed days of seriously ridiculous youth ministry training?

Our friends in the Eastern PA Annual Conference are working on some inexpensive overnight accommodations for us at a nearby church.

If you would like more information go to www.yspalooza.com or check out the attached flyer.

To register for this event - send an email to tjhipes2@stny.rr.com with your name and your church telling us you want to go and then you will receive a confirmation email letting you know where to send the money. You may also call Tony Hipes at 607-729-4003 or Sue Petrosino at 518-356-5851.



Youth gatherings offer dynamic speakers such as Dylan Stow, seen here talking about God's grace during the recent Fall Gathering in Rochester. Photo by Maidstone Mulenga

Coming soon to a youth near you...



What would u do if u had 3 minutes of everybody's attention in the whole world?

What would u say to get kids talking about God, life, the universe, & everything?!!!

WWUD???

WWID???

Stay tuned on this channel for more details...

UP!WORD '11

Holiday Inn at Syracuse/Liverpool
April 8-10, 2011

Registration Deadline

Postmarked March 28, 2011

For registration form go to:

www.unyumc.org/pages/detail/1033

Any questions on the registration, please contact Judy Hipes at tandj3905@hotmail.com or 607-624-2145

Any questions on the event itself please contact:
Ted Anderson at ted@crds.edu or 585-340-9525
Tony Hipes at tjhipes2@stny.rr.com or 607-729 5675
Sue Petrosino at suzieym@aol.com or 518-356-5851

UP!WORD '11

Holiday Inn at Syracuse/Liverpool
April 8-10, 2011

Tentative Schedule

Friday, April 8

- 7:00 PM Registration Opens
- 8:45 PM Pre-gathering Time - Convention Center
- 9:30 PM Opening Worship - Convention Center
- 10:30 PM Late Night Options (more details available upon arrival)

Saturday, April 9

- 7-8:30 AM Breakfast (on own) (Restaurant suggestions will be given at registration)
- 8:45 AM Pre-Gathering Time - Convention Center
- 9:30 AM Morning Worship - Convention Center
- 10:45 AM Workshops- Session I (Workshop descriptions available upon arrival)
- 11:45 AM Lunch (on own)
- 1:15 PM Workshops - Session II
- 2:30 PM Workshops - Session III
- 3:45 PM Workshops - Session IV
- 4:45 PM Dinner (on own)
- 7:00 PM Workshops - Session V
- 8:15 PM Pre-Gathering Time - Convention Center
- 9:00 PM Evening Worship - Convention Center
- 10:00 PM Late Nite Options (more details available upon arrival)

Sunday, April 10

- 7-9 AM Breakfast (on own)
- 9:00 AM UP!WORD '11 Sunday Workshops (options will be available upon arrival)
- 10:45 AM Pre-Gathering Time - Convention Center
- 11:00 AM Morning Worship - Convention Center
- 12 Noon Homeward Bound

UP!WORD '11

Holiday Inn at Syracuse/Liverpool

Annual Conference Session to offer time to build relationships, do mission work

By Maidstone Mulenga

Don't expect all talk at the 2011 Upper New York Annual Conference Session.

While the required business such as electing delegates to General Conference and approving budgets will be allotted time, the Session Committee has set aside time for delegates to build relationships and do mission work.

According to the tentative schedule released by the Session Committee, participants at the 2011 Session planned for June in Rochester, NY, will get a chance to meet their fellow members from other regions and go out in the community for ministry during special moments tentatively named 'Table Talk.'

The program for the 2011 Session includes celebrations that will be held a few days before the actual session starts on the morning of June 8.

On Monday, June 6, at 6 p.m. there will be a celebration for district superintendents who will be leaving the Cabinet at the end of this appointment year.

On Tuesday, June 7, there will be a myriad of activities, beginning with an ordination rehearsal in the morning at 11 a.m. There will be a luncheon for those who are serving in Extension Ministry. The Laity and Clergy sessions are scheduled to begin at 1:30 p.m., lasting until 5 p.m. The dinner for clergy who are retiring is set for 5:30 p.m. that evening.

The AC Session opens in earnest on Wednesday, June 8, at 9 a.m. with opening worship. The first ballot for delegates to General Conference may be held that morning together with reports from the Board of Ordained Ministry. Motions on Rules, Budget, Pensions and Nominations are planned for Wednesday afternoon.

On Thursday and Friday, there will be Bible Study, Laity Address and other Holy Conference issues that will be interspersed with Table Talk discussions. The Districting, Superintendents, Special Advance, Equitable Compensation, Clergy Compensation and Trustees reports and motions are also planned for these two days.

A Memorial Service, to remember those who have completed their work on Earth, will be held on Friday evening.

Throughout the sessions, there will be ballots for electing delegates to General Conference until all the delegates and reserves have been elected.

Saturday, June 11, is reserved for receiving newly licensed Local Pastors and appointments announcements before breaking off the Commissioning and Ordination Service.



The Africa University traveling choir performs during the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas

UMC File photo

THE AFRICA UNIVERSITY CHOIR IS COMING!

The Africa University Choir will be giving performances throughout the Upper New York Conference, June 3 through June 18.

COME HEAR THEM SING . . .

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Friday June 3 | Michael Valley UMC, Whitabero |
| Saturday June 4 | Governor UMC, Rochester |
| Sunday June 5 | Jobary First UMC, Rochester (Evening) |
| | Manawa UMC, Buffalo (afternoon/evening) |
| Monday June 6 | Mac-Awara UMC |
| Tuesday June 7 | Brooklyn Trc. Trc. |
| Wednesday June 8 | Albany/Oswego UMC |
| Thursday June 9 | Annual Conference (evening), Rochester |
| Friday June 10 | Annual Conference (morning), Rochester |
| | Oriskany Springs (afternoon/evening) |
| Saturday June 11 | Northwood UMC |
| Sunday June 12 | High Street UMC, Rochester, 10:30 a.m. |
| | Brooklyn UMC, Cheesecake, 7 p.m. |
| Monday June 13 | Trenton/Arce Trc. |
| Tuesday June 14 | Newcomb/Lang Lake UMC |
| Wednesday June 15 | Malaga UMC |
| Thursday June 16 | First UMC, Westtown |
| Friday June 17 | Christ Community UMC, Syracuse |
| Saturday June 18 | Irwin UMC, Syracuse, 7 p.m. |

Watch for more information about the choir's tour of Upper New York Conference in future editions of The Advocate, the Advocate and online at www.ajmnews.org.



Five pre-conference briefing set for April

In preparation for the 2011 Upper New York Annual Conference Session, the Office of Resident Bishop Marcus Matthews has released the locations and times for the pre-conference briefings.

The Annual Conference Session will be held in Rochester, NY, from June 7 through June 11 at the Riverside Convention Center.

The pre-conference briefings will be held in April.

The pre-conference briefings will address the issues that will be presented and voted on during the Session.

Bishop Matthews and members of the Cabinet will answer questions regarding proposals, motions, election of delegates to General Conference, budget etc.

There will be five face-to-face pre-conference briefings and one Internet-based session.

The face-to-face briefings will be as follows:

- April 9 8:30 AM** Sandy Creek United Methodist Church 2031 Harwood Dr., Sandy Creek, NY 13145.
- April 9 2:30 PM** Faith United Methodist Church in Henrietta 174 Pinnacle Rd, Rochester, NY 14623

April 10 2:30 PM Christ United Methodist Church 633 Linwood

Ave, Olean, NY 14760.

April 16 8:30 AM Sarah Jane Johnson United Methodist Church 308 Main Street, Johnson City, NY 13790.

April 16 2:30 PM Saratoga Springs United Methodist Church 175 Fifth Ave, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866.

The date and time for the Internet-based briefing will be announced later.

2010: What a year for United Methodism

By Rich Peck
UMNS Report

United Methodists began 2010 praying, raising funds and recruiting volunteers to help the people of Haiti recover from a catastrophic earthquake.

The year ended with church members trying to digest two massive surveys and five recommendations from the Call to Action team aimed at revitalizing the denomination.

Meeting in Panama, the church's top clergy leaders discussed the proposals and the importance of leading the denomination in change.

"What this means is that whatever goes forward, the Council (of Bishops) is committing itself ... that yes, we are taking a stand and these are the levers to pull the church in the direction in which we feel the Spirit of God is calling us," said Illinois Area Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, the Call to Action steering team co-chair. "And that is toward more congregational vitality."

Bringing relief

The Jan. 12 earthquake that hit Haiti took 300,000 lives, injured an additional 300,000 and left 1 million homeless.

A group of relief workers, including United Methodist officials, were meeting in a Port-au-Prince hotel when the magnitude 7.0 quake trapped them under the rubble. Clint Rabb and Sam Dixon, officials with the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, were pinned under the concrete structure for more than 50 hours. Dixon died of cardiac arrest before rescue workers could free him, and Rabb died a day later in a Florida hospital.

Jean Arnwine, who was working with a United Methodist mission team at an eye clinic in Petit-Goâve, also died as a result of injuries from the quake.

The denomination immediately responded, and the United Methodist Committee on Relief distributed 30,000 health kits. Other United Methodists collected special offerings, performed benefit concerts and sponsored other fundraisers.

In the months since the disaster, UMCOR has assisted survivors and built a foundation for a large-scale, long-term recovery effort. United Methodists have donated more than \$40 million to the relief agency, and 3,000 people registered their inter-



Above, United Methodist volunteer Kathy Ahmad (right) visits with Franckenson Renevil during a break from renovating the Methodist Children's Home orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. On the right, clergy and lay members of the newly created Upper New York Annual Conference vote to approve a motion during the Special Adjourned Session in Albany, NY, in September.

UMNS PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE
UNY PHOTO BY MAIDSTONE MULENGA

est in volunteering to help.

United Methodists helped in the wake of other disasters. UMCOR provided emergency grants to the Methodist Church of Chile following an 8.8 magnitude earthquake — and had already trained workers in Chile before the quake to respond to such an emergency. The agency also provided funds for Church World Service to distribute tents and food after a monsoon flooded a fifth of Pakistan's land area. In addition, UMCOR responded to the destruction caused by Tropical Storm Agatha in Central America.

In the United States, thousands of United Methodist volunteers aided families following floods in several Southern states and tornadoes in Oklahoma and Ohio. Five years after Hurricane Katrina, volunteers also continued rebuilding efforts along the Gulf Coast and responded to new needs caused by the 2010 oil spill.

"We lost church buildings and congregations, but we gained the church," Louisiana Bishop William W. Hutchinson said.

Change the World

United Methodists did not wait for disaster to strike to lend a hand in 2010. In late



April, more than 100,000 people from more than 1,000 churches united for Change the World Weekend. Church members around the world fed the hungry, helped the homeless and visited the lonely. Volunteers stocked food pantries, cleaned school grounds, washed cars and renovated homes.

The church also launched the Imagine No Malaria campaign to raise \$75 million to eradicate malaria deaths in Africa by 2015. The effort was kicked off April 15 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Part of the United Methodist Global Health Initiative, the anti-malaria campaign serves as an entry point to larger health and poverty issues using the church's 250 clinics, hospitals and health-care stations in sub-Saharan Africa.

Membership, finance

The recession continued to affect giving to the denomination, as U.S. church membership declined. United Methodist churches in the 63 annual (regional) conferences of the United States contributed 84 percent of what the denomi-

nation budgeted to support ministries around the world in 2009. The total apportioned was \$150.3 million; \$126.3 million was collected.

U.S. membership dropped 1.01 percent to 7.77 million in 2008, the largest percentage decline since 1974, denominational data showed.

Despite these trends, United Methodist conferences in Africa reported significant gains, outpacing U.S. membership declines. Between 1998 and 2008, overall membership grew by 14 percent to about 11 million professing members.

Call to Action

A "Call to Action" team, created by the Connectional Table and the Council of Bishops, conducted two extensive studies and made five recommendations to increase the number of members and the vitality of churches:

- Beginning in January 2011 and continuing for at least 10 years, concentrate on using the drivers of congregational vitality to build effective practices in local churches.

- Dramatically reform clergy leadership develop-

ment, deployment, evaluation and accountability systems.

- Measure progress in key performance areas using statistical information to learn and adjust approaches to leadership, policies, and use of human and financial resources.

- Reform the Council of Bishops, with active bishops assuming responsibility/accountability for improving results in attendance, professions of faith, baptisms, participation in servant/mission ministries, benevolent giving and lowering the average age of church participants.

- Consolidate program and administrative agencies, align their work and resources with church priorities and the commitment to build vital congregations, and reconstitute them with smaller, competency-based boards of directors.

Changes to structure

The 135 annual conferences around the world rejected constitutional amendments that would have paved the way to make the church in the United States one of several regional bodies throughout the world.

A Study Committee on the Worldwide Nature of Church will continue to explore ways that lead to greater equality between U.S. conferences and churches in Africa, Asia and Europe. The 32-member group will also draft legislation for the 2012 General Conference.

In Northeast

On a local scale, United Methodists drew a new map of U.S. structures following spring annual conference sessions. Clergy and lay members in New York, New England and Pennsylvania conferences said goodbye to Troy, North Central New York, Western New York, Wyoming and Central Pennsylvania conferences and hello to the Upper New York and the Susquehanna conferences.

In memoriam

Five retired United Methodist bishops died in 2010: William Dew, 74, former bishop of the Portland Area and the Phoenix Area; James K. Mathews, 97, former bishop of the New England Area and the Washington (D.C.) Area; Abel T. Muzorewa, 84, former bishop of Zimbabwe and the country's first black prime minister; Raymond H. Owen, 78, former bishop of the San Antonio Area; and James Thomas, 91, former bishop of the Iowa Area and the Ohio East Area.

From the desk of Vicki Putney, Upper New York Benefits Officer

"Caring for those who serve." The goals of the Benefits Office are built around that motto. It goes hand in hand with "Being God's love to our neighbors in all places." These themes speak of relationships ... love, caring, and our relationship with God.

As Benefits Officer of the Upper New York Annual Conference, I am working to build an efficient and effective administrative office for the benefit programs of the Conference. We're not there yet, but our hearts are! We — for now — includes



herself full time to her new responsibilities just yet. That is coming.

As well, by the end of January

myself and Linda Houmiel. Linda has accepted the position of Clergy Care Assistant and has been transitioning away from overall office administration to the benefits office, so she has not been able to devote

I hope to have an Administrative Assistant and a Human Resources Assistant on board. I will share more about those positions when they are in place.

There is a wealth of information available on the health and pension programs sponsored by the Conference. For benefit information and clarification, the best source is the General Board of Pension & Health Benefits.

You can access health or pension information by calling 1-800-851-2201,

option 1 for health benefits and/or option 2 for pension benefits.

A more long-reaching goal of the Benefits Office is to connect with clergy in ways that promote health; physical, financial, emotional and spiritual. I have always believed that healthy clergy enable their congregations to be healthy as well. Holistic health brings with it a renewed optimism. Imagine the possibilities!

Vicki Putney can be reached at 800-699-8715 ext 317 or via email at vicki@unyumc.org

Conference Resource Center finds new home

The Endicott Resource Center has completed the move to its new location. It is now in the First UMC at 53 McKinley Ave in Endicott, just across the street from the prior location.

To enter the Endicott Resource Center, go through the back entrance of the church, down the steps, to the right, through the orange double doors, and straight ahead. You will all be pleasantly surprised with the space that has been created for you. The hours for the Resource Center will Monday-Friday from 9:30am-4:30pm.

The Endicott Resource Center will host an Open House on Saturday Feb. 5 from 10-2pm. You are welcome to visit the new center, preview resources, reserve resources for Lent, and gather ideas for Shake It Up Café VBS. There will be a display and plenty of ideas on how to make this your best VBS ever. Other kits are also available from previous years.

You are able to search the catalogs and order resources online by going to www.unyumc.org, click on Tools & Resources, and then Resource Libraries. Choose which resource catalog you would like to search and completely fill out the online order form. Soon you will find the union catalog available online and you will be able to search both centers through one catalog.

As we look at "Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ and being God's love with our neighbors in all places" one of the most relevant studies out right now is Change The World-Recovering the Message and Mission of Jesus with Mike Slaughter. Mission is not just the task of one committee in the congregation or one line item in the church budget. Mission is our response to Jesus' call to serve the least, last, and lost in his name. In this 4-session DVD, Mike Slaughter guides leaders in visioning for themselves, ways to transform their congregation of believers into a movement of disciples living out Jesus' mission in the world. Together you can lead your congregation to focus its time,



its energy, and its budget to work for real change in a hurting world. The sessions include: *The Call to Mission, Growing People for the Mission, Resourcing the Mission, and Multiplying the Mission*. The original 4 session study is a study for leadership teams and is available to borrow at your Resource Centers. It's not too early to begin thinking about Lenten resources and also don't forget to return the resources that you borrowed for Advent.

Diane Alexander and Sheila Raider, Resource Center coordinators.

Is God Calling You to Ordained Ministry?


United Methodist college and university students will have the opportunity to explore leadership at Student Forum 2011 at the University of Evansville, May 26-29. Student Forum is the national leadership conference of the United Methodist Student Movement, sponsored by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Student leaders from all over the U.S. will gather in Evansville, Ind., to attend the event. The theme of the conference, which is planned and organized by college students, is "God is Calling. . . Will You Answer?" The conference will include leadership training, spiritual formation, and networking. The registration fee to attend is \$75 per person. For more information and to register, visit www.gbhem.org. You can see highlights from last year's event at www.umsm.org/studentforum.

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Major changes afoot in Camp and Retreat Ministries

By Maidstone Mulenga

Important staff transitions are underway with our Camp and Retreat Ministries:

Interviews for the position of Associate Director for Camp and Retreat Ministries were held mid-January in Cicero.

This new Conference staff position will provide strategic and operational executive leadership to the Camp and Retreat Ministries, ensuring the alignment of these ministries with the vision and purpose of the Upper New York Annual Conference and The United Methodist Church.

The Associate Director will work under the supervision and direction of the Director of Connectional Ministries Bill Gottschalk-Fielding.

"Camp and Retreat Ministries is a huge operation, with six sites, dozens of staff and literally millions of dollars involved," observes Gottschalk-Fielding. "It's one of the most effective ways we form disciples and call leaders into ministry, especially among our youth and young adults. This new staff position will help make sure this ministry remains vital, strong and able to adapt to a changing world."

If a suitable candidate is found,



Asbury Manor, above, is likely to see an increase in retreats as Camp Asbury forgoes summer camp programs to focus on its growing retreat ministry.

File photo

Gottschalk-Fielding hopes the new Associate Director would begin work March 1.

Other staff transitions are underway at two of our camp and retreat sites. **Larry Wiliford**, who has served as Asbury Camp and Retreat Center's site director since Septem-

ber 2005, will be leaving his position to return to the local church effective July 1, 2011. Because of this leadership transition, Asbury will not offer summer camp programs during the summer of 2011, focusing instead on its growing retreat ministry offerings.

While the hiring of a new site

director will wait on the arrival of the new Associate Director for Camp and Retreat Ministries, an interim staffing and marketing plan will be in place to facilitate retreat ministries at Asbury through the summer. Churches and groups planning retreats are encouraged to contact Asbury to book a date.

Aliechia Post, who has served as Findley Camp and Retreat Center's summer program director, was recently hired to serve as Findley's interim site director. A board of managers, chaired by the Rev. Jim Pegan, had been overseeing the operations of the site under an agreement with the former Western New York Annual Conference. The board of managers guided Findley through this in-between time faithfully, ensuring quality programs and care for facilities and staff. The hiring of Post relieves the board of these responsibilities and places a competent and trusted leader on site full-time. The interim site director's position will run through the end of the summer.

As in the case of Asbury, the hiring of a permanent site director for Findley will wait on the arrival of the Associate Director.

'My Lord does wonderful things' Retired Upper New York minister still active at 106

THERESA CAMPBELL
Staff Writer
Daily Commercial

LEESBURG -- The city's oldest resident is noted for his joyful spirit, and his love for God and poetry.

"My Lord does wonderful things," John Wesley Annas said on Monday as he reflected on his longevity. The retired minister turned 106 Oct. 1, 2010. He was feted at the Salvation Army, where free weekly meals are hosted by the Bread of Life volunteers from Morrison United Methodist Church.

Open to the public, the meals often draw senior citizens, folks from the neighborhood, and those who are homeless.

"I'm looking forward to being with them," said Annas, who is ready to share cake and ice cream with the community.

He gives his attention to those he meets by lending a listening ear, or sharing words of wisdom he has gleaned over the years.

Annas breaks out reciting a poem from memory -- one that he penned on his 100th birthday:

Yes, there have been valleys dark and deep

And hills to climb that seemed too steep

But never has God failed to keep
His promise to be with and guide his sheep

Annas flashed a wide grin as he broke out rattling another poem about the simple pleasure of eating buttered toast.

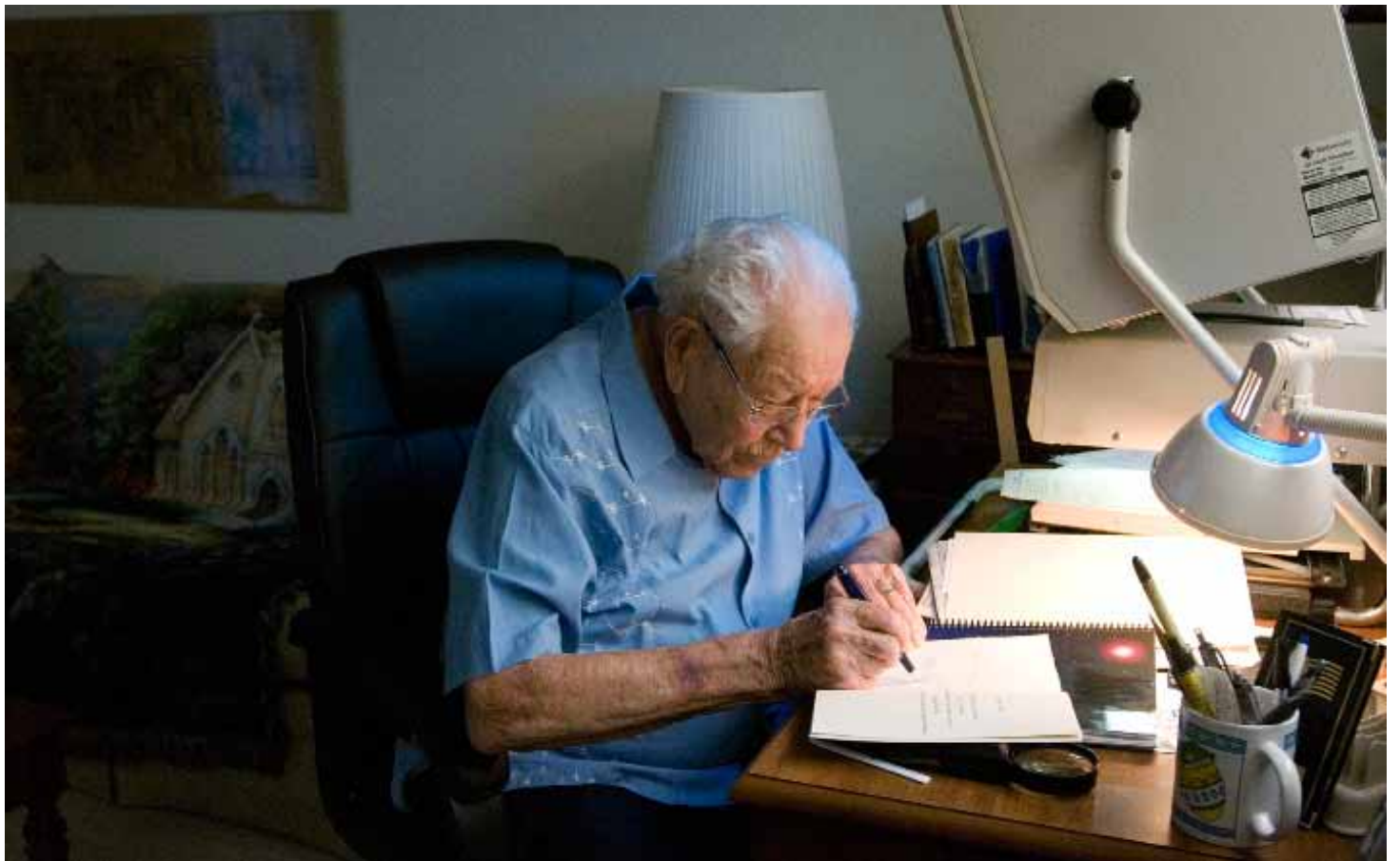
He spends five hours a day devoted to his passion of reading literature and poetry at his apartment at Lake Port Square. He relies on a Telesensory, a screen that magnifies the type of books and written pages.

"His brain keeps working," said Annas' wife, Lenore.

The pair married on Dec. 17, 2007, when the groom was 103.

His first wife had died after 47 years of marriage, and Lenore was a widow after 57 years to her first husband.

The pair bonded over stimulating conversations about God, poetry and



Retired minister Rev. John Annas works at his home in Lake Port Square in Leesburg, Fla.

Photo Courtesy of the Daily Commercial



intellectual books.

"She sure does look after me," Annas said.

He was born on a Massachusetts farm in 1904, and was named after his

father, who also was a pastor.

Annas received his theology degree at Boston University School of Theology, and began his ministry in a little Methodist Church in Middleborough, Mass., near Boston.

He recalled seeing unfair labor conditions at the town mills in 1929, which he reported.

Annas believes he was called by "the good Lord to help improve the conditions," he said. He cites that moment as a fulfillment in his life.

He sees similarities between the Great Depression to the downturn of today's economy.

"Too much trust in wealth," Annas said, citing his belief as to what led to the stock market crash in 1929.

"The answer is doing justly," he said. "We are the product of our environment. Sometimes it is difficult

for us to see the way they ought to be. The greatest need today is greater integrity, to love our fellow man and to love our country and to love our God."

His last church was James Street Methodist in Syracuse, N.Y. (Coincidentally, the church is celebrating its 100th anniversary this month)

He retired after 42 years in the ministry and now attends the Morrison United Methodist Church, where he also has taught and ministered for several years.

Annas is often approached to minister to his peers at Lake Port Square. He spoke there at another birthday party in his honor.

The centenarian has found he never tires sharing God's love with others.

"I like to bring all God's children closer together," he said.