



THE VISION

an edition of The United Methodist Reporter

The Newspaper of the New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

“Write the vision clearly on the tablets, that one may read it on the run.”—Habakkuk

Two Sections—Section A

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INSIDE



A Note of Gratitude

Page 2A



Listening Can Help Calm Fears

Page 7A



School Named to Honor Johnson

Page 8A

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The completed outdoor mural at Golden Hill UMC, Bridgeport, Conn., is a composite of the winning submissions from an open competition expressing “God at Work in the World Today.”

Mural Celebrates ‘God at Work’

The world has gotten a lot more colorful at Golden Hill UMC with the painting of a huge mural outside the Bridgeport, Conn., church. The mural, entitled, “God at Work in the World Today,” was painted by Sergio Escobar and Claire Barber following a design contest sponsored by the church.

Escobar, 18, is a senior at Central High School in Bridgeport, and won \$1,000 in the high school category. Barber, 20, topped the college category and also received \$1,000. She is a student at Central Connecticut State University and a member at Stratford, Conn., UMC. It took the pair 10 days to complete the 48-foot-wide by 12-foot-high mural using acrylics and house paints. They each painted a section of the wall with their winning designs.

During a dedication ceremony in August, Rev. Taka Ishii, senior pastor at the church, said that the church had been considering the mural project for a while. “The members of Golden Hill believe that God is at work in the world today and that our faith in God can inspire everyone who believes in God to carry out that work. This mural is an open and affirmative expression of our faith which we hope will inspire others to seek out their own paths to faith in God.”



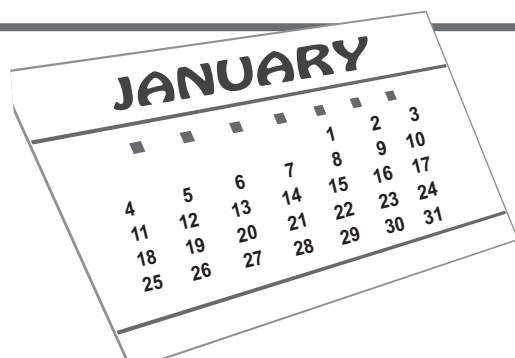
Claire Barber and Sergio Escobar begin work on the 48-by-12-foot mural.



Claire Barber, winner of the college level category, in front of her section of the mural.



Sergio Escobar gives his nearly completed work the thumbs up.



SAVE THE DATE

Leading in the Wesleyan Way

January 6–9, 2009: The Congress on Evangelism's program in Nashville will work to challenge and equip leaders to embrace new behaviors for the making of Christian disciples. Scheduled speakers include Missouri's Bishop Robert Schnase, Rev. Tyrone Gordon, Rev. Mike Slaughter, and Louisiana's Bishop William Hutchinson. Dr. William Abraham, Perkins School of Theology, will give the Denman lecture. For more information, go to the website, www.CongressonEvangelism.org.

Stewardship in Action Seminars

"Financial Planning with a Christian Perspective" with Ed Ruppman and John T. Henderson is a popular seminar offered by two of our laypersons whose ministry is to help folks get on a solid financial ground. There is no sales pitch, nothing to purchase, and no fee. The only thing you need to do is to sign up by calling the conference center at 888-696-6922, ext. 228, or by sending an email to smithell@nyac.com with your name. The scheduled date and location is:

Saturday, Jan. 10, Massapequa UMC, 10 am–2 pm

Worship Arts Workshop

January 13–16, 2009: "The Art and Technique of Sensory-Rich Worship," Jan. 13–16, Zephyr Point Conference Center, Lake Tahoe. Led by Marcia McFee and Mark Miller, co-designers of worship services at the 2008 General Conference. Sessions include liturgy, music, improvisation, design, understanding working styles and more. For details or to register, visit <http://www.marciamcfee.com/elevation.htm>.

Bishop's Convocation

January 20–22, 2009: Reconnecting to Our Heritage and Traditions: Living the United Methodist Way, with Bishop Scott Jones, Kansas Area. Includes new workshops for single pastors and clergy spouses, plus a time for relaxation and renewal. Location is the Hudson Valley Resort and Spa, Kerhonkson, N.Y.

Let's Get Fired Up

January 23–25: IGNITE '09 at the Crowne Plaza, White Plains, N.Y. For all conference youth. Join the IGNITE group on Facebook. Check the youth website: www.umyouth.com, for details.

Black College Luncheon

March 8: The NYAC Black College Fund Committee will host the Black College Luncheon at the Crowne Plaza, White Plains, N.Y.

VIM Trip to Mozambique

July 28–August 11: Volunteers in Mission will travel to Beira, Mozambique, to continue the work the conference has begun there. Please contact either Lydia Smith, 203-497-8277 or Henry McCarter, 845-258-4734, if you are interested. Registration deadline is January 5, 2009. More information and the application form can be found on the NYAC's website, www.nyac.com, underneath Missions / International Missions / Mozambique.

A Note of Gratitude

Dear brothers and sisters:

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I would like to take a few minutes to thank all those who supported me financially and with your prayers as I ran the 5K for Mission at the Hartford Marathon.

The week before the race, my wife Isa and my daughter, Dorlimar, asked me to buy new clothes for the run. When I got to the store, the brand that caught my attention was "Livestrong" from the Lance Armstrong Foundation. Everything you buy from them goes 100 percent to educate cancer survivors, their friends, families and caregivers. So I brought it and I wore it.

After the race, a young man approached me and asked if I was a cancer survivor. I answered no, but told him that I was a pastor and in my church we have many survivors. He gave me his business card and thanked me for representing him and all cancer survivors in Connecticut. This young man was the president of the organization, "Less than 40, survivors support team." What a blessing it is to serve the Lord; God takes our small action and make it greater. Alleluia!


My official time was 28 minutes and, with your help, I raised \$800. Together with others members of the conference we collected \$16,703. Our contribution will help missions in Mozambique, Ghana, Haiti, Bolivia, Costa Rica and China. I know that we have a long way to go, but it is step by step that we will reach the goal.

Thank you for your support in running the race for the sake of Christ, His church, the less unfortunate, and for your faith in our common ministry. Amen!

In the love of Christ,
Rev. Dr. Enrique Lebron




Rev. Enrique Lebron and Bishop Jeremiah Park before the 5K race at the ING Hartford Marathon.



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Get a Physical And Earn \$276

Here's a reminder that active clergy members have less than one month to get a wellness exam and earn \$276 rebate from the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits.

It is easy to do. Simply go to the gbophb.com website, log onto WebMD through the site and create an account if you have not already done so. Your spouse needs a separate account with his or her own Social Security number. Complete the online HQ exam and then submit the score.

Once you've completed the HQ online, you'll need to arrange for a wellness exam or annual physical with your doctor to be eligible for the rebate. Your doctor must submit his/her insurance request as a wellness exam. If you and your spouse (or just you, if you're not married) complete the questionnaire and the annual exam by December 31, the Board of Pensions and Health Benefits will send you a \$276 check in the first quarter of 2009.

One more requirement: Your church must also have paid all your premiums.

Your HQ score, along with an annual physical, will help you to find ways to improve your health. If we are healthier, the conference insurance costs will go down. The Conference Committee on Pensions and Health Benefits wants to reduce future increases by encouraging a common journey toward wellness.

Now, what is the incentive for the laity to encourage their pastors to take better care of themselves? Well, if more of our clergy and their families complete this program, we will be eligible for a rebate from the general board. If 70 percent of all of our active participants took the HQ exam and had an annual wellness physical, we would receive a rebate of more than \$175,000 from the HealthFlex plan which could be used to reduce our future insurance premiums. This could be a 3 to 4 percent reduction in the cost of the health insurance payment that churches make to the annual conference.

There is no doubt that being in shape spiritually is the most important kind of fitness for a Christian. But being in shape mentally and physically is very important as well.

For more information contact Bill Shillady, chairperson of the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, at bshillady@umcitysociety.com or 212-870-3094.

UMCOR Gets OK To Assist Cuba

The United Methodist Committee on Relief has begun relief work in Cuba under new licenses the U.S. government has granted to the General Board of Global Ministries.

Home reconstruction, food, psychosocial assistance, church repair and livelihoods assistance will benefit thousands of Cubans affected by the September hurricanes. Two licenses were granted to GBGM—one for 30 days and a second one that extends until October 2009. The licenses allow for up to \$1.1 million in humanitarian aid. While the license is restricted to specific activities, this opportunity is a lifeline to thousands left in need by the storms.

This is an answer to prayer for many in the United States who have been calling for a response to the hurricanes since Cuba was ravaged more than two months ago. The GBGM's license, along with the licenses of many other denominations and faith-based agencies, were not renewed in 2006 and reapplications have been denied since then.

In September, UMCOR hired a Washington, D.C., law firm with experience in obtaining these kinds of licenses. "Their experience and UMCOR's persistence have come through in the resulting licenses allowing humanitarian assistance to reach our hurting sisters and brothers in Cuba," said Rev. Sam Dixon, UMCOR's top executive.

Nearly 30 percent of churches in Cuba were significantly damaged. The island nation suffered almost \$10 billion in damages from Hurricanes Gustav, Ike and Paloma. About 450,000 homes were damaged or destroyed and 30 percent of Cuba's crops were wiped out.

You may support UMCOR's work in Cuba by giving to Cuba Emergency, UMCOR Advance # 3020821.

Listening Can Help Calm Fears

What are you afraid of? You might have a fear of speaking in public, or perhaps a fear of the dark. Most of us can deal with our fears by simply avoiding those things that cause us to break out in a cold sweat. If you are afraid of the dark, you can purchase a good nightlight. Those who fear flying can take the train or hop on a bus.



Recently, when we asked the residents of the Children's Home, "What are you afraid of?" We got some touching responses.

- A 10-year-old boy said, "I am afraid to go home. My mom is bipolar, and I am never sure which mom is going to greet me at the door. If she is in a good mood, it's fun. But when she is in a bad mood, watch out!"
- A 14-year-old girl confided that she was afraid of being alone. After we talked for a while she said, "You know what I am really afraid of? I am afraid that I am never going to get any better."

Some fears aren't so easy to deal with. The fears of the children above are very real and very powerful. Some fears cannot be dealt with by avoidance, never being alone, or wishing oneself well.

How can you help your children cope with their fears?

- Encourage children to ask questions. Listen to what they say. Provide comfort and assurance that address their specific fears. It's okay to admit you can't answer all of their questions.
- Find out what frightens them. Encourage your children to talk about fears they may have. They may worry that someone will harm them at school or that someone will try to hurt you.
- Talk on their level. Communicate with your children in a way they can understand. Don't get too technical or complicated.
- Focus on the positive. Reinforce the fact that most people are



kind and caring. Remind your child of the heroic actions taken by ordinary people to help victims of tragedy.

- Pay attention. Your children's play and drawings may give you a glimpse into their questions or concerns. Ask them to tell you what is going on in the game or the picture. It's an opportunity to clarify any misconceptions, answer questions, and give reassurance.
- Develop a plan. Establish a family emergency plan for the future, such as a meeting place where everyone should gather if something unexpected happens in your family or neighborhood. It can help you and your children feel safer.

For more information on the Children's Home, call 607-772-6904 (or toll free 800-772-6904), ext. 131, or visit our website at www.chowc.org. To borrow a video or to schedule a presentation about the Children's Home, please contact Rebecca Mebert ext 131. Please feel free to send donations directly, or use our New York Conference advance number 60-0588.

Callie's Birthday Helps Haiti Mission

Newtown UMC in Sandy Hook, Conn., has been a church in mission and ministry with a long history of outreach. Support for Haiti has been a particular focus among many.

Callie Kraushaar recently celebrated her birthday by having friends over for a party, but with a mission twist. Instead of bringing birthday presents, she asked her friends to make a donation to the Haiti Mission. To date, they have collected \$315 for the Haiti mission.

Shortly a medical team will leave for Haiti. Through the organization, Medical Assistance Program, \$450 will purchase a package of prescription medication worth several thousand dollars. So the Connecticut District will add the additional \$135 to the money raised by Callie and her friends to purchase medicine to go with our next VIM team.

Thanks be to God for Callie, her mission spirit and the congregation in which she is being nurtured.



Callie Kraushaar, fourth from left, raised \$315 for the Haiti mission. Joining Callie in celebration are, from left, Senior Pastor Mel Kawakami, Casey Harkins, Deacon Sue Klein, Associate Pastor Dick Yerrington and Haley Harkins.

Heritage Center Seeks Director

The African American Methodist Heritage Center has an immediate opening for the position of executive director. The executive director serves as the primary representative for the AAMHC in all appropriate arenas.

Persons with a special interest in preserving the history of African American Methodists, combined with public relations and fundraising experience are urged to send a resume to AAMHC@aol.com, or contact Bishop Forrest C. Stith by phone at 301-362-2272. The salary is up to \$40,000 with benefits.

The Heritage Center has recently developed a partnership with the United Methodist Archives and History Center in a move that will bring its offices to the facility on the campus of Drew University in Madison, N.J. The Heritage Center's website is <http://www.aamhc-umc.org/>.

UMCom Offers Electronic Calendar

NASHVILLE—United Methodist Communications is offering an electronic version of the 2009 official denominational program calendar as a convenient download.

The UMC E-Calendar can be imported into any calendar application that can read the iCalendar or vCalendar format, which includes Outlook, Microsoft Works, iCal (Mac), and Palm Desktop. It may also be used with online calendars such as Google Calendar or Windows Live Calendar. This information can then be synced with PDAs,

smart phones and other handheld devices for on-the-go use. Having calendar data available in such a convenient format saves space and time, and users can update information and inform others with the click of a button.

The \$19.95 E-Calendar has the same features offered in the print versions: liturgical colors, lectionary readings, and Special Sundays. For more information or to place an order, visit www.umcom.org/calendars or call (888) 346-3862.

Mary Taylor Hosts AIDs Quilt

Mary Taylor Memorial UMC will be hosting two panels of the AIDs Memorial Quilt from December 1-7. The quilt will be displayed during a 7 p.m. Remembrance Service on World AIDs Day, Mon., December 1. A Service of Prayer and Healing will be conducted at 7 p.m. Fri., December 5. The sanctuary at the Milford, Conn., church will be open December 2-4 from 6 to 8 p.m. and during the "Cookie Walk" from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on December 6.

The AIDs Memorial Quilt is a powerful visual reminder of the AIDs pandemic. More than 44,000 individual 3-by-6 foot panels have been created to remember the life of someone who as died of the disease.



Patients' Dignity Needs to be Guarded

BY JIM STINSON

Consultant on Older Adult Ministries

"I'm so angry I could scream!"

It was not the reception I expected when I knocked on the door of one of our residents. Normally she is sweet and pleasant, usually unruffled by life's little annoyances.

"What's going on? Why are you so upset? Can I help somehow?"

"You bet you can! Tell that aide that comes to help me in the morning to stop treating me like a child. Just because my legs don't work, doesn't mean my head doesn't. She makes me so mad!"

My friend spoke volumes in her little outburst. Too often well-meaning caregivers infantilize an older person simply because of an ailment or a disability. Too often those who care make assumptions about older adults. Because our bodies often become frailer than in younger years, and because age often brings cognitive changes, caregivers often assume if one happens, so does the other. This is simply not necessarily so. There are plenty of frail and physically limited people whose minds are intact and deserve to be related to as adults. Moreover, even cognitively altered older adults are still adults and deserve to be treated as such.



I understood my friend. No adult wants to be treated as a child. No one likes being told what to do; no one likes to be without choices. Older adults, with limitations of one kind or another, often feel devalued because of those conditions. Treating them as if that is the truth only makes them feel even more devalued.

So here are some thoughts based on my experience in working extensively with older adults and watching and listening to their responses to such treatment.

- Every person has a name. Use it. Names intended to show endearment are often received as degrading and infantilizing. Refrain from "Sweetie," "Dearie," and "Honey" unless your relationship warrants that kind of intimacy.
- At every step of the way, partner with the one for whom you are caring. Do for him or her only that which they cannot do alone, unless specifically invited to do otherwise.
- Respect the idea that the one being cared for may differ with you as to how something should be done. Don't just assume that the person is being ornery or obstinate because they disagree. You might be missing an insight that she has and you do not.
- Remember everyone is capable of teaching something. Allow yourself to be led by the one for whom you are caring.

School Named To Honor Johnson

Geraldine W. Johnson, former Bridgeport school superintendent, has achieved a rare distinction. She was in attendance at the November 2 dedication of the new school named in her honor. Superintendent of Schools Dr. John Ramos and Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch commended Johnson's dedication to education and community during the ceremony. The children from the school honored her with both song and poetry.



Geraldine W. Johnson

Johnson, 89, was the beneficiary of a recently adopted Board of Education policy allowing new schools to be named after those who are still living. In an interview, she told the Connecticut Post, "I feel so fortunate in seeing it happen. I'm very much honored. It has been a journey."

The state-of-the-art school on Lexington Avenue opened its doors for students at the start of the academic year in August. It can house 750 students in pre-kindergarten through grade eight.

Johnson served as the city's school superintendent from 1976 until she retired in 1981. As the first woman and African-American to hold the post, her appointment was not without some controversy. After doubts were raised about her abilities and an initial no vote, Johnson sued the school board. But several months later, a shakeup on the board led to a new vote and Johnson prevailed. The assistant superintendent took over as superintendent on July 1, 1976.

A native of Bridgeport and a product of the city schools, Johnson began her 37-year career in the system teaching all subjects in middle school and then went on to teach music. She is an accomplished pianist and cellist. Johnson holds degrees from New Haven Teachers College, the University of Bridgeport and New York University.

During Johnson's tenure, she marshaled the schools through a bitter 19-day strike by teachers over wages, a federal school desegregation lawsuit, and the start of preschool programs. Even in retirement, Johnson has stayed busy. She became director of the Council on Adolescent Pregnancy and served as interim superintendent of Fairfield Schools and was an associate dean at Fairfield University.

Johnson is still an active member of the Golden Hill UMC; she first joined Newfield UMC on January 1931. She also spends time with family, including her sisters, her daughter, Adrienne Houel, and three grandchildren, who all live in the Bridgeport area.

Johnson praised those who are working hard in the schools today, but laments the fact that students don't seem to realize the value in education. In an interview with the Connecticut Post, she said, "Parents have got to do what my parents did," she said. "They have to help, and I mean seriously help to increase respect for teachers, respect for information and respect for learning."



The little house on North First Avenue in Bay Shore will soon have new occupants.

Methodist House Nears Completion

Work has been continuing since July 26 on the house being renovated by the Long Island East District with the Suffolk County unit of Habitat for Humanity. Crews from four churches hung sheetrock throughout the home on November 1. The dedication of this first "United Methodist House" has been scheduled for December 20, which means that Michelle Murdock and her son, Malachi, will have a new home for Christmas. More than 45 of the district's 75 churches have donated to the project.

The \$67,000 raised by the district was combined with \$40,000 donated by Du-ralee Fabrics in partnership with Habitat. The Bay Shore company's donation allowed \$27,000 to be applied to a second United Methodist House build.



Habitat supervisor Gina Valenze hangs wallboard with volunteer Bob Silz from First UMC, Amityville.



Chris Wood of First UMC in Port Jefferson trims a piece of wallboard.



Father-son team, John, left, and Bob McDonough navigate the confines of the bathroom. The McDonoughs are members of the Huntington-Cold Spring Harbor UMC.