



WISHING YOU A BLESSED CHRISTMAS

I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people; to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. – Luke 2:10-11

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

THE VISION

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

December 18, 2009

Sag Harbor Building New Church

BY JOANNE UTLEY
Editor, The Vision

The first ceremonial shovels of dirt were lifted in early November, and construction begun shortly thereafter on the new home of the Sag Harbor United Methodist Church on Long Island’s east end. After worship on November 1, the members of the church, led by Pastor Tom MacLeod, gathered at the new location on Carroll Street to break ground for the 7,400-square-foot church. Rev. Koonae Lee of Southampton UMC represented the Bishop Jeremiah J. Park at the ceremony that was marked by singing, scripture reading and applause.

By early December, the concrete foundation was in place and the project was moving toward the expected completion date of late summer 2010. This new construction is the only project of its kind in the New York Annual Conference.

The congregation made the difficult decision to sell its former building, a 10,000-square-foot structure that had been built in 1853 and moved to its present location in 1863. Since April 2008, they have been worshipping, praying and holding Sunday School and Bible study in the former St. David’s AME Zion Church in Sag Harbor. That small structure had not been

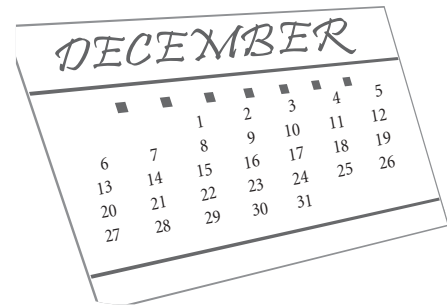
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Pastor Tom MacLeod, far left, gets some applause from Kevin Foote, partially obscured, Bruce Stafford, Maureen O’Gorman, Van Giacoia, Warren Elmslie, Suzanne Lewis, Dwight King and Nancy Foote during the groundbreaking. At right, MacLeod stands with his wife, Bobbie, from left, Kit Mace of East Meadow UMC and Rev. Koonae Lee of Southampton UMC.

Elizabeth Small Photos

SAVE THE DATE



Lay Speaking Classes

January 2010: Lay speaking classes will be beginning in some of the districts across the conference for both adults and youth. For the schedule and registration information go to: <http://nyac.com/events/index?area=7>.

Healing Retreat for Immune Diseases

January 14, 2010: The Oratory of the Little Way in Gaylordville, Conn., is offering a one-day retreat for people suffering from immune system diseases who would like to learn how to deal with these diseases spiritually. The retreat runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.. Suggested donation is \$30. The retreat includes "soaking prayer." Participants should bring a bag lunch. To register, call 860-354-8294, or email: oratory1@sbcglobal.net. For information, check the Oratory Web site, www.oratoryhealing.org/.

Wilke at Bishop's Convocation

January 19–21, 2010: "Connecting Movement: Connecting with God, the Church and the World" with retired Bishop Richard Wilke. Hudson Valley Resort and Spa, Kerhonkson, N.Y. Register by January 4 for the early bird discounts. Download registration information at: <http://nyac.com/events/detail/2364>. Make checks payable to: Bishop's Convocation, and mail to:

Ken Coddington, 555 Joslen Blvd., Hudson, NY 12534. For questions, call Ken at 518-828-0226, or email, TrinityUMC@mhonline.net.

Ignite 2kX for Youth!

January 29–31: Exciting Worship! Engaging Speakers! Amazing Performances! Relevant Workshops! And some free time to relax and enjoy at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, White Plains, N.Y. The weekend starts at 6 p.m. Friday and runs through 11 a.m. Sunday. Events include open microphone nights and music with Hype praise band. Register by January 14 for the cheapest fees and the best hotel room rates. Find all the details at: www.umyouth.com.

Church Records & Archives Workshop

January 30: Workshop for pastors, administrative assistants, trustees and local church historians will introduce basic archival concepts. The noon–4 p.m. session is sponsored by the Commission on Archives and History, and is limited to 25 participants. Hands-on activities included. Lunch provided at noon; workshop begins at 1 p.m., NYAC Center, White Plains, NY. To register, contact Mary Robison at archives@nyac.com; or 888-696-6922.

Boundaries & Sexual Ethics Workshop

February 6: Training for clergy runs from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., NYAC Center, White Plains, N.Y.

Souper Bowl of Caring

February 7: For information and helpful resources about this

campaign to fight hunger, go to www.souperbowl.org, where you can register your congregation.

Genealogy Workshop

March 6: A discussion with Saugerties historian, author and genealogist Audrey Klinkenberg, 1–4 p.m., NYAC Center, White Plains, N.Y. The workshop is sponsored by the Commission on Archives and History, and is limited to 25 participants. To register, contact Mary Robison at archives@nyac.com; or 888-696-6922.

Black College Benefit Luncheon

March 14: UMC Black College Fund Committee Annual Luncheon, 3 p.m., Crowne Plaza Hotel, White Plains, N.Y. Dr. Haywood Strickland, president of Wiley College—home of the great debaters, will be the guest speaker. For tickets and information, contact Caroline Nanton at 718-377-7568, Veronica Darby at 718-455-7784 or Cleolene Jones at 718-739-9046.

NYM Hospital 2010 Pastors' Health Clinics


April 12–16 and November 8–12: Rev. Richard S. Parker, Coordinator of the Methodist Hospital Pastors, Clinics, has announced these dates for the two 2010 New York Conference, All Districts, Pastors' Health Clinics. The respective registration and payment deadlines are March 26 and October 22, 2010. For more information and an online brochure, go to the news section of www.nyac.com.

Clergy Spring Retreat

April 20–23: Four-day spring retreat for all conference clergy members.

Calling All Metro District Students

April 24 and July 31: The Metropolitan District Committee on Higher Education and Campus Ministry is planning two events to connect with its undergraduate and graduate students. Join the Facebook group NYAC Metropolitan District Campus Ministries or send email addresses to pastorjessica@parkavemethodist.org for upcoming details.



The Vision

The News of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church

Bishop: **Jeremiah J. Park**
 Director of Connectional Ministries: **Ann A. Pearson**
 Editor: **Joanne Utley**
 New York Conference of The United Methodist Church
 20 Soundview Avenue, White Plains, NY 10606
 Phone (914) 997-1570 or (914) 615-2219
 Fax (914) 615-2244; Website: www.nyac.com
 Vision e-mail: thevision@nyac.com

Sears Puts on A New Uniform

Rev. Denise Smartt Sears has a couple of new pieces of apparel to wear with her clerical collar—the uniform and hat of the New Rochelle Police Department. For the first time in its history, this Westchester County, N.Y., police department has appointed a woman chaplain to its ranks. Sears was sworn in as one of the department's four chaplains on November 13 with Bishop Jeremiah J. Park, her family and members of her two congregations in attendance. Sears serves as pastor for Christ and St. Luke's UMCs, both in New Rochelle.

Sears, who was given the assimilated rank of captain, will serve a department of 250 police and civilian employees. Police Commissioner Patrick J. Carroll asked Sears to join the department's team in an effort to reorganize the role of the chaplain within the department. "He's asked me to help remake the office of chaplain," Sears said. Sears will take a more active role in building pastoral relationships with the police officers and the staff. Commissioner Carroll came to know Rev. Sears through her work with the group, Citizens For A Better New Rochelle. The chaplain has also participated in New Rochelle's Citizen's Police Academy, a program which aims to give civilians an inside view of the job of a police officer.

Sears has served St. Luke's for the past seven years and was given the added responsibility of Christ UMC in July. Eventually the two churches will join together as one congregation.

"I have a huge challenge before me to bring these two congregations together, but the congregations are very supportive of sharing my



Rev. Denise Smartt Sears, center with hat, is flanked by family, friends and congregation members following her swearing-in as a chaplain for the New Rochelle Police Department.

time with the police department," Sears said. "It's an honor to serve the community in a broader way."

Sears is well acquainted with the challenges of a life in law enforcement. Her husband, Wendell Sears, a 26-year veteran of the New York City Police Department, is a lieutenant in the Aviation Unit. She also has found memories of an uncle who was also an officer with the NYPD.

He took her along to march with the police department at an annual parade that was followed by a church service and breakfast. Those memories inspired Sears to put together an ecumenical service in May that honored those in law enforcement in New Rochelle. "We often look at them [police officers] as others," Sears said. "I wanted to show our appreciation, to create some harmony."

Finding Unity in Ecumenical Efforts

BY REV. DR. DENNIS WINKLEBLACK

"How good it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity." This beautiful affirmation of what gladdens the heart of God from the 133rd psalm is nowhere more wonderfully realized than when the children of God hack away at artificial barriers and seek to live out the unity that being part of the body of Christ entails.

In a Vision article two months ago, I asked readers to send me local ecumenical happenings. I received only two, but they're worth sharing in the hopes that the ideas might inspire you—clergy person or lay person—to hack away at some artificial barriers in your community.

Rev. Dr. Brian Bodt, president and chief

executive officer of the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, and a member of our Conference Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, wrote to say that in the past year he has been invited to preach and lead Holy Communion in three Evangelical Lutheran (ELCA) churches in the Bridgeport area. (You know that we are now in full communion with the ELCA.) On December 6, Brian preached and celebrated the sacrament of Holy Communion using the new protocol approved by the UMC and the ELCA at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Monroe, Conn.

Ms. Diane Antos, UMW treasurer in the United Methodist Church of Hartford, noted that her church's pastor, the Rev. Bryan Hooper and the pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Hartford shared in an evening program titled, "Together at

the Table." In addition to discussion about what it means to be joined in this new arrangement of our denominations, the Lutheran pastor offered a "Lutheran 101" on the denomination's basics. The conversation then proceeded to include what is similar and different in each other's traditions. The evening concluded with sharing the Sacrament of Holy Communion using the Lutheran liturgy.

What will you send me? More importantly, what will you and your church be doing to foster the unity Christ desires for us? When you do, drop me a note at dwinkleblack@nyac.com.

If you're stuck for what to do, I urge you to visit the web site of our General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, www.gccuic-umc.org for resources pertaining to all things ecumenical.

VIM REPORT

Farm Project, Computers In Mozambique

Martha Nelson, John Olszewski and Annette Griffith traveled to Beira and Lichinga, Mozambique, in October 2009, as part of the New York Annual Conference/Mozambique Sister Conferences Connection.

Why go back to Mozambique?

In the words of Greg Forrester, Northeast Jurisdiction VIM coordinator, "The project is not the project. The people are the project." We return because we develop relationships as we work together to build God's kingdom through the projects we identify each year.

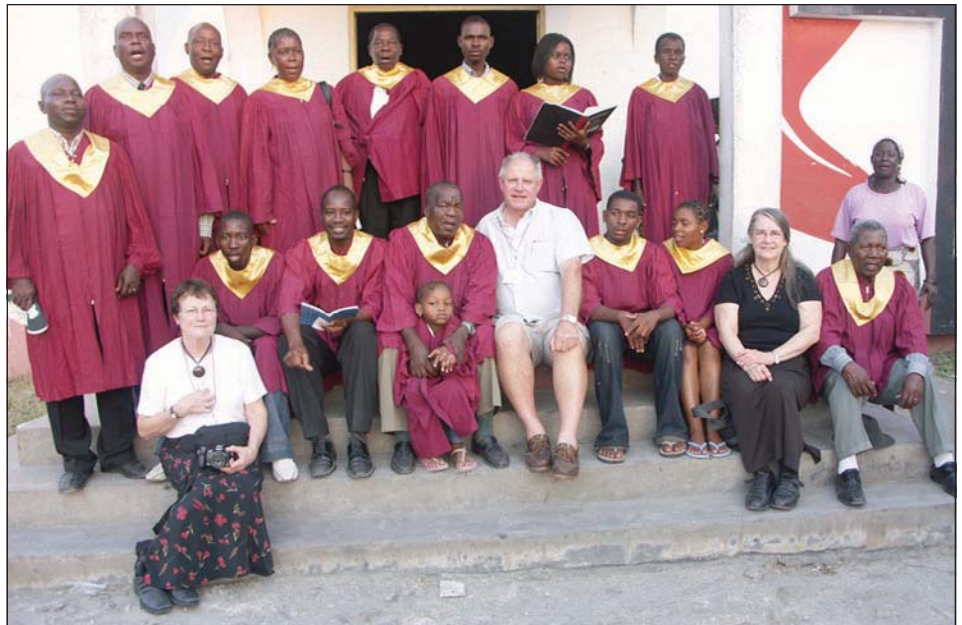
The projects for 2009 included: bishop's residence and conference center; scholarships; Lichinga Farm project; computer internet center; the English School; student art exchange and cottage industries. Some of the goals for the UMC in Mozambique set by Bishop Joaquina Nhanala include: developing leadership; new places for new people; self-sustainability; inter-conference communication and cooperation; and financial transparency.

Bishop's Residence and Conference Center: Two major donations were made to the center this year: \$10,000 from the Bishop's Partners in Mission fund, and \$10,000 by the Connecticut District. While in Beira, we saw interior stairways, windows and doors, electrical work, and plumbing being installed. About \$20,000 is still needed to complete the building (see sidebar for details).

Overnight accommodations and dining facilities will allow the bishop to meet more frequently with the cabinet who must often travel for several days to reach Beira.

Lichinga Farm Project: Four years ago, Bishop's Partners in Mission funds were used to begin a community farm project to teach best agricultural practices, raise food and help fund the Lichinga church. The project is a model for other UM congregations to become self-sustaining. Banana trees have been planted and church members will soon plant beans and corn. With the proceeds from the crops, pigs will be purchased.

Scholarships: We currently seven scholarship students. Rev. Julio Vilanculos is pursuing a doctorate degree, so the Bible School in Cambine can eventually become an accredited university. Pastors will then be able to receive



Above, donated choir robes were welcome gifts as the VIM team joined their Mozambican friends for a final worship service: Martha Nelson, far left; John Olszewski, center; and Annette Griffith, third from right. Left, an additional \$20,000 is needed to complete work on the Bishop's Residence and Conference Center in Beira.

their theological training within Mozambique.

The English School: This Saturday school where Mozambican youths teach others English continues to be successful. Under the leadership of Katie Brunkhorst and her father, the school is partially funded by the Warwick, N.Y., UMC. The stipends the young teachers earn are applied to their college costs. We brought the school new "English as a Second Language" materials and a CD player.

Art Exchange: Students of the English School and those in the Wilton, Conn., schools were asked to draw something that has meaning to them and answer questions to share with their exchange partners. In April 2010, both sets of drawings will be displayed at the National Art Education conference in Baltimore, Md.

Computer Internet Center: With funds from an American donor, a three-year pilot program will be established to encourage use of computers and the internet. A part-time staffer will help with computer use.

Cottage Industries: Several members of the Mozambique Connection board are working to support the women with dress and doll-making projects. Prototypes of dolls were brought back to sell at conference. The women's groups at Central Church are also testing the

practicality and usefulness of two solar ovens.

Relationship: Since we were a team of just three this year, we were able to stay in the home of our friends Judge Jone and his wife, Paula. It was a pleasure to be part of the family for two weeks. At our farewell service, our Mozambican friends were excited to wear the choir robes donated by one of your churches.

For additional photos and daily reports from our October trip, go to: <http://www.nyac.com/pages/detail/1683>. For more information, please contact me at: annettegriffith@earthlink.net.

Peace be with you,
Annette Griffith
Volunteer in Mission/Mozambique

How You Can Help

To make a donation for the Bishop's Residence and Conference Center, send a check to: Jerry Jones, Moz/NY Connection Treasurer, 57 Sullivan Farm, New Milford CT 06776. Checks should be made out to the United Methodist Frontier Foundation, with "Moz/NY Beira building" on the memo line.

VIM REPORT

Schools, New Jobs In Ghana

BY JAY HOCKENBERRY

What are we really building?

We send money to Ghana to buy sand, cement, roof panels, wood and nails. We seek donations of wood turning tools and equipment. We bring school supplies, soccer balls and Frisbees, first-aid supplies, medicines, letters from Sunday school children, hand-crafted collection plates, and chocolates.

While in Ghana we pick corn, dig trenches, pick rocks, make concrete blocks, build walls, play with children, laugh and sing and worship, establish friendships, tend wounds, engage in the village hierarchy, start a cottage industry, and participate in tribal celebrations. And, in a very short time, we learn more about ourselves, and God's love, than we could have in a lifetime at home.

Awombrew, Ghana, is a small agricultural village of about 800 people who are desperate to improve the lives of their children. The village of mud huts with grass roofs lacks sanitation, plumbing, water, and electricity. Yet the villagers are working hard to construct schools for their children. But without money for school supplies or desk sets, hundreds of village children will not receive an education. Without schooling, the future for these precious children lacks an essential component—hope.

In 2006, eight members of the Woodbury, Conn., United Methodist Church traveled to Awombrew to continue building a second three-room school there. During our two-week stay, we worked with the villagers to make cement blocks, build blackboards, and dig the footing trench for a storage facility. The people won our hearts and we committed to support them in building a better life for their children.

Since September 2006, the following projects have been accomplished:

- School #2 was completed with room for 140 children. Desks, chairs and books were supplied by WUMC. Electricity in the school allowed installation of computer center and night classes for adults. A nursery building was also completed and work has begun on a third school.
- A storage facility was built to hold construction materials and school supplies. It also houses a workshop for the pen-



Above, the building of new school classrooms has been a priority for the VIM teams; left, wood turning equipment has provided for the startup of a business making ink pens from African hardwoods.

making industry, medical clinics and a feeding program.

- A cottage industry that makes ink pens from African hardwood was created. A wood lathe, drill press and grinder were supplied by mission teams. The pens are sold in the United States with the proceeds going to the construction of more schools.
- Two medical clinics have offered treatment to more than 115 adults and children. First aid supplies and needed medicines have also been provided.
- A pipeline and water storage system are providing clean water to the storage facility and the school.
- Some 260 mosquito nets were distributed in September.
- Each school child receives a hot lunch prepared with clean water through a government-sponsored feeding program.

What now?

Although much has been accomplished, there is still a great deal to do. School #3 is in the footing stage and the building still needs to be constructed. Funding is also needed for

books, desk sets, and uniforms.

Joe Mensah, a Ghanaian cabinet maker, has been contracted to teach the villagers, including the school's technical instructor and some selected senior students, how to using the wood turning equipment.

Besides the physical structures, our involvement with Awombrew has produced an enhanced sense of community self worth. Awombrew is now recognized as a progressive community that is held up as an example to neighboring villages. As a result, the population of Awombrew continues to grow.

What are we really building?

For the people of Awombrew and the surrounding villages, the answer is hope. For some of the political and social organizations in Ghana, the answer is trust. For the individuals and churches that generously support our efforts, I believe the answer is the joy of making a difference in the lives of others. For those of us able to participate, the answer is understanding and love. I hope we are building what Jesus would have us build. As Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie says, "We are building God's kingdom on earth."

Sag Harbor UMC Building Anew

Continued from page 1

used for worship for more than seven years, so renovations were needed before the church could move in.

MacLeod, who is a licensed local pastor and former construction contractor, has been serving the congregation for eight years. When he began his first appointment with the church, there were only about 12 members. But attendance has grown steadily since then with about 45 people in worship today, some driving as much as 35 miles one way to attend.

In the week after the groundbreaking, MacLeod responded via email to the following questions about the changes to his church:

What led to the decision to sell your former building?

It was simply beyond our means to care for. We were a small congregation meeting in a church that can hold 240 people. As it was, we were spending too much money just to heat the space.

How did you go about making the decision?

In 2005, we conducted an assessment of the entire structure and it was determined that we would need to spend close to \$1 million in repairs and updates. The church had no endowment money to work with.

In 2006, we had an appraisal and it was determined that the market value of the building—in an “as is” condition—was \$2.2 million. During this time we had allowed the community to know of our dilemma, hoping for some philanthropic gesture . . . that never materialized.

So in winter of 2007 the church had a decision to make. They either could spend the next 20 years fundraising to keep the building open, or they could explore selling it and building a new church. They choose the latter.

In the summer of 2007 the church was put on the market for \$3.45 million and within a month we signed a contract to sell for \$2.9 million. Within weeks of that time we were able to find a 2.95-acre piece of property that was adequate for our needs and parking. We bought that in the winter of 2008. We sold the church in July 2008.

What's the square footage of new church?

A total of 7,400—3,700 on the first floor and a full basement.

And the anticipated cost?

The land cost \$695,000. The building is



Above: Carol Hallman digs in with the shovel as others wait for a turn. At left, Dwight King and Nancy Foote flank Ashley Alexander as she reads from the Bible. The church, seen in the architect's rendering, will be a total of 7,400 square feet.



estimated to cost \$1.3 million.

What's been the best part of this journey?

As of right now, being in the small AME Zion Church because in this intimate sacred space we are experiencing growth both numerically and spiritually . . . as well as we are growing into a faith community. That and the fact that the new church is being built on a main road with great exposure—something this church has never had. In all my studies I have never read that getting into a smaller building could be a catalyst for growth!

The worst part?

We had 3 members leave when we sold the church and I still grieve that loss . . . also I never anticipated the level of interference from the outside community with regards to

their protesting the sale of the church. I took a few shots for that. But there has been no opposition to our building a new building. In fact at one public site plan meeting, a member of the community stood up and said that this new church will enhance the gateway of the community of Sag Harbor. She said she couldn't think of a better building for visitors to see first as they enter into the village.

How will this move affect your church's ministry?

We give God all the honor and glory for us to find a way out when there seemed to be no way out, and I also know that without prayer none of this would be possible because this entire project has been bathed in prayer as we waited for God's direction.

To us it is a miracle from God that we will have a new debt-free building that will take care of us rather than the other way around. That alone will allow us to be more in mission to the community that surrounds us.

Also, we have changed our identity in the village to being a church that nobody went to anymore . . . to being known as the church that would sell its historic building in order to survive . . . to being a vibrant church that's attracting more local members who want to be in ministry to the world for Jesus Christ.

Older Adults Viable Workers for Kingdom

BY JIM STINSON

Coordinator of Older Adult Ministries

And Sarah laughed! And the Lord said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh?

What was God thinking, asking this question? Who would not laugh at such a ludicrous promise—an announcement that God would make it possible for Sarah to bear a child in her old age. After all, this was long before the advent of invitro fertilization and other medical advances that allow for older women to bear children well beyond nature's time frame! Who would not understand Sarah's response? More than 50 years after preaching my first sermon there is a part of me that still laughs at the way God has used me. The call to ordained ministry did not make sense then, and it doesn't make sense now. I am not that special to be called into this vocation. Or am I? It has always been difficult to believe that no matter who we are, where we have been, where we have succeeded, where we have failed, that God can still use us. Nowhere perhaps, is this doubt, this faithlessness, more apparent than among some older adults.

"I can't do anything like I used to!"

"I earned my right to do nothing. It's my turn to sit and be waited on."

"Who would listen to an old lady/man like me anyway?"

"I can't see/hear as well as I used to."

And so goes the list of



comments we all have heard and, sadly, often accepted as fact. Well, guess what? None of the above are valid reasons for not being challenged to be used by God, none are valid reasons for not living out the mandate to love our neighbor, which is always part and parcel of the call to Christian living.

I am always amazed by the number of people physically dying, who still reach out to those around them in love and concern, whose last act on earth is offering hope and assurance (God's work) to those around them. What an affirmation we can always be about "our father's business."

The challenge of ministering to/with older adults is to recognize the limitations that are real, and yet offer ways in which they can still serve God by loving service to someone else. Allowing the list of reasons for not reaching out to go unchallenged is unfaithful and misses the opportunity to help the older adult experience anew the joy of being called.

The truth is, we all are called—young and old, weak and strong, sick and well—to make the Kingdom of God a visible fact in the world. That is the challenge anyone in ministry with the older adult is called to issue!

Stinson Chaplain of Year

How does a "retired" elder get selected as chaplain of the year by the United Methodist Association? If you ask recipient Jim Stinson, chaplain at Wesley Village in Shelton, Conn., he'll say, "I don't understand it, but I'm grateful."

Jim Stinson has been the director of spiritual life for United Methodist Homes since 2002.

His primary responsibility is to

serve Wesley Village, which is home to approximately 400 seniors and workplace for more than 300 employees.

In addition, he provides support to the residents and staff of Sharon Health Care Center and assisted living communities in

Farmington and Newington, Conn. Stinson performs ecumenical services and provides religious and spiritual guidance to hundreds of residents, staff, families, and volunteers that he serves.

Stinson also serves as the NYAC's consultant on older adult ministries, writing a column that appears in *The Vision* and on the conference web site. He has served in parish ministry for more than 40 years, leading congregations in Middletown, Brooklyn, Monroe and Warwick, N.Y.; and Watertown, Danbury and Norwalk, Conn. He is a member of the Golden Hill UMC

in Bridgeport.

In the nomination papers for the award, Wesley Village's Campus Administrator Ron Bucci wrote about Stinson: "Jim's presence truly fits his title of director of spiritual life. His ability to be ever-present, and feel the pulse of our community—staff, residents and family alike—is uncanny. Jim frequently "grounds us" by



Rev. James Stinson

reminding us of the reasons why we are here doing the work that we do. He is always encouraging us to treat each other, and ourselves, kindly. In a non-judgmental way, Jim deals with ethical dilemmas and is quite courageous when frank, or tough love,

guidance is needed. We are an infinitely stronger community with Jim navigating our spiritual direction."

The national excellence in ministry award will be presented to Stinson during the UMA's annual convention in March in Burlingame, Calif. The United Methodist Association of Health and Welfare Ministries (UMA) is a national association of United Methodist and other faith-based ministries that promotes quality care in faith-based settings. The UMA serves more than 380 health and human service organizations and professionals nationwide.



New Blessings At Babylon UMC

Lay Leader Mark Gafney, from left, Bill and Joan Holmes, Bishop Jeremiah J. Park and Pastor Ray Lange take part in a special worship service to reconsecrate the sanctuary of the Babylon UMC in honor of its use for 150 years. Long Island East District Superintendent Adrienne Brewington and Babylon's pastoral intern Tracy Laderer joined in the celebration on November 8. The Holmes served as the co-chairs for the rededication. The Long Island congregation was formed in 1837, with the present sanctuary being consecrated in 1859.

Sue Macaluso Photo



Scott Every



Isabelle Vandemark



Daniel Latch



Denise Harrington

Glenn DeWitt Photos

Photos Capture Lives of Soup Kitchen Clients

Photographer Glenn deWitt puts a face on hard times.

DeWitt, 60, of Kingston, N.Y., has captured images of people who struggle, sometimes with their own demons, in 40 portraits that were exhibited this fall at the Caring Hands Soup Kitchen in the Clinton Avenue United Methodist Church. All of the people photographed by deWitt, a Kingston native and retired teacher and guidance counselor, are clients of the soup kitchen.

"These are really solid people who are just trying to survive, and this was a way to tell their story," deWitt said. The exhibit, which raised more than \$900 for the soup kitchen, is titled "In Our Backyard: Portraits and Words of a Disadvantaged People."

Rev. Darlene Kelley, pastor of the church, believes the exhibit has a strong message to share. "It is the whole idea of seeing God in the faces of strangers," Kelley said. The Caring Hands Soup Kitchen serves about 1,200 meals a month on an annual budget of \$12,000 to \$15,000, according to Kelley.

DeWitt said he got the idea for the exhibit in the spring of 2008, while volunteering at the soup kitchen. At the time, deWitt said, he had done a lot of "fine studio" work but wanted to venture into the documentary realm, so he approached Kelley.

"I walked in one day a year ago

and we sat down and we started talking about the project," deWitt said. "She [Kelley] has been more than helpful. She said, 'Go for it.'" So deWitt did.

He set up a temporary studio in the church's fellowship hall, complete with lights and backdrops. Then he offered soup kitchen clients \$25 each to take their portraits. It didn't take long to attract takers. "The line was out the door," Kelley said. "I was impressed that he was willing to pay people for their time, and that got a lot of attention."

Something else about deWitt delighted Kelley. "He really got involved with the people," the pastor said. "He was relational with people."

Over the next year, one by one, about 80 people were photographed by deWitt. Each got a complimentary portrait from him, and those whose photographs were chosen for the exhibit were given an additional \$50. DeWitt's subjects ranged in age from their late teens to middle 60s, and each subject in the exhibit provided an autobiographical sketch, telling about their lives.

One was Denise Harrington.

"I have always been a hard worker," Harrington said. "I have cleaned houses, motels, worked in food markets and kitchens. Since my fall and recent heart surgery, I have been disabled.



Daily Freeman photo by Tania Barricklo

Photographer Glenn deWitt stands in the dining area of the Clinton Avenue UMC in Kingston, where he has been photographing clients of the church's Caring Hands Soup Kitchen for more than a year.

"Money is tight right now," she added. "I end up short of money and food each month. I try to raise my teenage daughter, but it is very hard given our situation."

Then there are stories like the one Isabelle Vandemark tells.

"I am writing to tell you how I got into this mess," Vandemark wrote. "OK, I met this guy at 17 and got hooked on drugs. I got put out of my mother's house. Moved to Kingston, and continued the drugs."

Vandemark said she has lost two apartments in the past but has been free of drugs for 17 months. "I really don't think things are going to get better, but I am going to keep struggling to try," she wrote.

Scott Every tells of coming from

a nice neighborhood in West Hurley and having loving parents. But he got involved with drugs at age 11, was arrested for the first time at age 13 and has spent much of life since then in and out of jail and on probation.

His mother died, he said, and he lost "a good county job."

"I lost everything and become homeless," Every wrote. "Everything is a struggle when you are homeless. Finding a job, talking to people.

"All I do is take day by day, gaining stuff, losing stuff," Every continued. "Now I reside under a bridge, where I hope things will get better."

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Food Pantry Rebounds After Vandalism

We often wonder why bad things happen to good people. And certainly that's a question that has been uttered after vandals recently ransacked the Our Daily Bread food pantry at the New Milford United Methodist Church. But the outpouring of the community in response to the senseless act may well be our answer.

"We've just had a tremendous response from the community," said Rev. Stefanie Bennett, pastor of church located on Route 7 in New Milford, Conn. "People just walked in the door with donations" as soon as the incident was reported in the news. Individuals and businesses have donated more than \$5,100 to help offset the pantry losses.

One unexpected blessing has been an increase in those coming to the pantry. Some 50 families had been receiving food and other staples before the vandalism, but that number has now increased to nearly 70 families. The news about the break-in "made more people aware of the help that is available here," said Bennett. "That is a great blessing."

On the morning of October 7, pantry volunteers arrived to find food and other goods strewn all over the floor. The doors of the refrigerators and freezers had been left open; spaghetti sauce and peanut butter had been smeared and splattered on the walls and

ceiling.

Volunteer Hank LeMien estimated that about \$1,000 worth of food was destroyed by the vandals. A box of blood pressure cuffs worth \$500 was stolen, and some toys and school supplies were damaged in the incident. They also tore down lighting fixtures and dented the walls.

According to Bennett, the vandals pried open a padlock and then cracked open a window to gain entry to the pantry. Although one of the stolen blood pressure cuffs has been recovered, the police have not yet identified any suspects in the case.

The day after the break-in, Bennett told the New Milford News Times, "Is this the saddest thing you've ever seen? It's nauseating. All these people did was take food from the mouths of hungry people. It's mind-boggling . . . and so very sad."

LeMien and other church leaders vowed at the time not to let the incident hamper the three-year-old ministry. Dozens of the church members are involved in the operation of the pantry. They got to work cleaning up the place and were able to be open the next day for their regularly scheduled hours on Thursday afternoon and evening.

LeMien, 75, told the News Times, "We don't understand these things, but we'll go on."



Shoebox Party Helps Needy

The Highland Mills UMC recently threw an "Operation Christmas Child" party to fill more than 150 shoeboxes with school supplies, hygiene items, small toys, and clothing. The shoeboxes were delivered to the Samaritan's Purse organization, which will distribute the gifts to children in need around the world. Gathering up the packed boxes are Amiel and Janice Tutolo, standing from left, Lyneth Whitley, Becky Fernandez, Fred Lindlaw; and seated, from left, Angelina Fernandez, Jared Fernandez, Essie Fernandez and Ryan Fernandez. A number of local businesses donated items for the boxes.

Alternative Gifts Make a Difference

Still in need of a quick gift for someone on your Christmas list? Consider skipping the malls and giving a gift that will make a life-changing difference. Check out the possibilities on these web sites:

The Advance: Alternative Gift Ideas; United Methodist Committee on Relief; Best Gifts Catalog, sponsored by the global humanitarian agency Church World Service; and the Gift Catalog at www.heifer.org. (UMNS)

Photos Capture Lives of Soup Kitchen Clients

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Besides taking photographs and collecting anecdotes, deWitt befriended some of his subjects. He gave some of them jobs at his home, including yard and roofing work. He took family portraits on Christmas Eve and handed them out for free.

He took those struggles to heart, wanting to show off a powerful array of human strife for others to see. Following the show several

people contacted deWitt about making donations to some of the people he had photographed. A local hair salon also called to offer free haircuts at the soup kitchen.

In a statement that accompanied the exhibit, deWitt wrote: "We hope to increase the level of empathy and understanding and subsequently increase the commitment of the greater community to improve the quality of life for people who are

indeed our neighbors. Not only are they disadvantaged, but quite often forgotten and pushed aside. We hope that this is a step in doing something about that. They deserve better."

But so far deWitt is not happy about the response. "My conclusion coming away from this exhibition is that people care, but not enough to make the time or effort to become part of the action phase in attacking these problems," he wrote

in a recent email.

DeWitt continues to add more images to the portfolio, and is sending the project to art and literary professionals who may be interested in bringing the story to a larger audience. There are plans underway to exhibit deWitt's project during annual conference in June 2010.

(This story was reprinted with permission from The Daily Freeman; some revisions have been made.)

Bishops' Letter Urges Care for God's Creation

December 2009

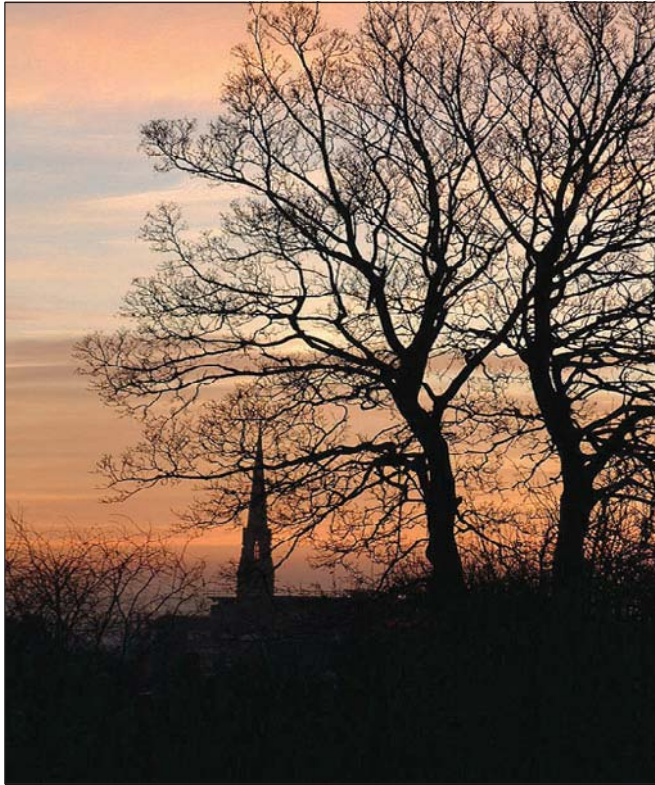
Dear Pastor:

I greet you in the name of Advent's coming Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ!

I am writing to ask you to share with your church the Pastoral Letter from the Council of Bishops, "God's Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action." I am urging you to read it in a service of worship during the Season of Advent. If you prefer, the letter is contained within a liturgical setting for congregational participation. There is also a foundation document. You may access full documents

through our conference web site at this address, www.nyac.com/news/detail/115. A study guide for the foundational document will be published early next year. The letter will soon be available in Spanish, Korean, German and Portuguese, as will the foundation document shortly thereafter.

As the bishops' letter states, "This beautiful natural world is a loving gift from God, the Creator of all things seen and unseen. God has entrusted its care to all of us, but we have turned our backs on God and on our responsibilities. Our neglect, selfishness, and pride have fostered: pandemic poverty and disease, environmental degradation, and the proliferation of weapons and violence." The



letter also affirms, "We must begin the work of renewing creation by being renewed in our own hearts and minds. We cannot help the world until we change our way of being in it."

You will note that within the letter is contained nine pledges by the members of the Council of Bishops. I hope that you will use these pledges as a guide for action for you and your congregation as you address the challenge and opportunity before us as Wesleyan Christians.

I pray for you and the people whom you serve and lead a holy Advent and a blessed and merry Christmas.

In Christ,
Jeremiah J. Park

Bishops Offer 9 Pledges

1. We as your bishops pledge to answer God's call to deepen our spiritual consciousness as just stewards of creation. We commit ourselves to faithful and effective leadership on these issues, in our denomination, and in our communities and nations.

2. We pledge to make God's vision of renewal our goal. With every evaluation and decision, we will ask: Does this contribute to God's renewal of creation? Ever aware of the difference between what is and what must be, we pledge to practice Wesleyan "holy dissatisfaction."

3. We pledge to practice dialogue with those whose life experience differs dramatically from our own, and we pledge to practice prayerful self-examination. For example, in the Council of Bishops, the fifty active bishops in the United States are committed to listening and learning with the nineteen active bishops in Africa, Asia and Europe. And the bishops representing the United States' conferences will prayerfully examine the fact that their nation consumes more than its fair share of the world's resources, generates the most waste, and produces the most weapons.

4. We pledge ourselves to make common cause with religious leaders and people of good will worldwide who share these concerns. We will connect and collaborate with ecumenical and inter-religious partners and with community and faith organizations so that we may strengthen our common efforts.

5. We pledge to advocate for justice and peace in the halls of power in our respective nations and international organizations.

6. We pledge to measure the "carbon footprint" of our episcopal and denominational offices, determine how to reduce it, and implement those changes. We will urge our congregations, schools and settings of ministry to do the same.

7. We pledge, to the best of our ability, to provide the resources needed by our conferences to reduce dramatically our collective exploitation of the planet, peoples and communities, including technical assistance with buildings and programs, education and training, young people's and online networking resources.

8. We pledge to practice hope as we engage and continue supporting the many transforming ministries of our denomination. Every day we will thank God for fruit produced through the work of The United Methodist Church and through each of you.

9. We pledge more effective use of the church and community web pages to inspire and share what we learn. We celebrate the communications efforts that tell the stories of struggle and transformation within our denomination.

Job Opening For Korean UMC Youth Director

The Mid-Hudson Korean UMC has an immediate opening for a part-time youth director. The youth director's responsibilities will include teaching Sunday classes, recruiting and training teachers, planning and leading weekend activities and retreats, preaching on Sundays, counseling, and visitation, if necessary.

A seminary student or graduate is preferred, but not required. Some experience with youth is also preferred. The church's theological perspective is

evangelical and conservative. The current youth group—6th through 12th graders—numbers about 35. Most of them speak English.

The salary may depend on qualifications. The temporary budget for seminary graduate is \$2,100 a month including \$300 in ministerial expenses. Those interested should contact Pastor Seong Jin, at Mid-Hudson Korean UMC, 38 Jackson Rd., Poughkeepsie, NY 12603, or call the church office at 845-463-0027.