

"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

February 19, 2010

Pastors Share Witness From Haiti

Pastors Tom and Wendy Vencuss, who serve the Wethersfield, Conn., UMC, were in Haiti at the time of the earthquake. They offer this report, given in interview format:

Tom: We had been invited to attend a two-day meeting between leaders of the Methodist Church of Haiti (MCH) and international mission partners. We met on January 12 on the property of the Methodist Guest House in Petionville, on the border of Port-au-Prince. The gathering had been called by Pastor Gesner Paul, who is the new president of the Methodist Church of Haiti, and is someone we have worked with and come to know as a close friend over the past eight years.

There were nine Americans including two missionaries from La Gonave, and Clint Rabb, Jim Gulley, and Sam Dixon. The meeting had a very positive tone to it. A document had been prepared by an independent organization outlining the challenges facing the Methodist Church of Haiti and suggesting ways to move forward as mission partners. On Wednesday, we were to sign a covenant of agreement and begin a new phase in our work together. We left the meeting room at about 4:20 p.m. and walked back to the guesthouse.

Wendy: We were standing just outside the small dining area of the guesthouse when all of a sudden there was a low, deep rumble in the ground. Tom thought at first it might be a large cement truck driving by, but quickly the house and ground began to shake and I knew immediately what was happening. We had just moved into an open area when suddenly the ground heaved up and then came down. It then began to rock violently back and forth. People began to come running out of the house and we had to hold onto each other to avoid falling down.

While the guesthouse stayed in tact, the property walls around the house began to collapse. The water in the small swimming pool began to slosh violently and come out of the pool. Within 10 or 15 seconds it all stopped and we moved to a small open area where vehicles



PHOTO BY JOANNE S. UTLEY

Bishop Jeremiah Park introduces Revs. Tom and Wendy Vencuss during the Bishop's Convocation, just days after the couple had returned from Haiti.

are kept. The building next door collapsed with three people in it.

Almost immediately people began coming in the open gate from the streets—some hurt, all incredibly frightened. One of the American missionaries, Shirley Edgerton, is a nurse and Tom is an EMT. Rushing back into the house we gathered as many bandages, towels, sheets and medical supplies as we could. Shirley and Tom did basic triage and we all tended to the needs of the hurting—washing wounds with the water from the pool, cutting bandages from sheets, praying with and comforting as many as we could. Two women were extricated from the house next door; people continued to arrive and the guesthouse soon became a clinic and place of refuge.

By this time night had come. Our friend, Jude Exantus, who has served as our interpreter for mission teams, suddenly appeared. He had been in Port-au-Prince when the earthquake struck and had made his way on foot to the

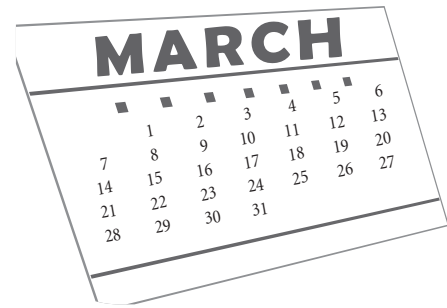
guesthouse to see how we were. The scene he described was unbelievable. He said he had cried all the way from Port-au-Prince.

He had gotten word that this sister's house had collapsed. Jude and Tom made their way there and found his sister under the house, being dug out by several men. For two hours they worked—with sticks and hands despite continuing after shocks—digging through cement and dirt to free her. Finally, she was brought out having sustained a broken leg. She was placed on a metal door and carried to the guesthouse—almost a mile—by a group of men. They all stayed the night.

Through the night we continued to offer food, water, blankets and comfort to the more than 90 people who were sleeping on the ground outside the guesthouse. Many of the guesthouse staff had gone to find their own families and brought them back. The house manager, Donette, had gone to the Methodist

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SAVE THE DATE



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.

Preaching Seminar With Thomas Long

March 8: Talithacum Ministries will host Dr. Thomas Long as he explores the challenges facing today's preacher. He will also draw on his latest book, "Accompany Them with Singing: The Christian Funeral," to discuss what makes a good funeral sermon. Long is the Bandy professor of preaching at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta. Seminar is from 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. at Smithtown UMC, 230 E. Main St., Smithtown, NY. Go to the web site of the Parish Resource Center at <http://www.parishresourcecenter.com/lieast/seminarregister2.php>, to register. Early registration fee is \$69; \$79 after February 22. A light sandwich lunch will be served. Questions to Rev. Dr. Albert Hahn, at 631-742-8241, or smithtownumc@netzero.com.

Clergy & Spouse Tax Seminars

"Compensation and the IRS," sponsored by the UM Frontier Foundation and the Office of Connectional Ministries, at the following sites from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Lunch will be provided. Register with: Lynda Gomi, at Learningcenter@nyac.com, or 1-888-696-6922, ext. 219.

March 9: NYAC Learning Center, 20 Soundview Ave., White Plains, NY

March 16: Grace UMC, 121 Pleasant St. Southington, CT

March 17: Poughkeepsie UMC, 2381 New Hackensack Rd., Poughkeepsie, NY

March 18: Riverhead UMC 204 East Main St., Riverhead, NY

March 24: Grace UMC, 21 South Franklin Ave., Valley Stream, NY

March 25: Reservoir UMC, 3056 State Route 28, Shokan, NY

Early Response Team Training

March 13: Train to become part of an early response team for UMCOR in this 8 a.m.–4 p.m. workshop at Smithtown UMC. Maximum class size is 20; each applicant will need to authorize UMCOR to conduct a background check. To register, email Warren Ferry, Long Island East District disaster response coordinator, at warrenferry@verizon.net. Smithtown UMC is at 230 Middle Country Rd., Smithtown, NY 11787. Participants should bring a bag lunch; coffee, tea, water, and soda will be supplied.

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.

UMM Luncheon With Bishop

March 20: Join the UM Men of the conference and Bishop Park in celebrating 100 years of boy scouting in this 12th annual luncheon at Memorial UMC, 250 Bryant Avenue, White Plains, NY.

The cost is \$30; All Scouts attending the 12–2:30 p.m. luncheon in uniform will pay half price. The Bishop's Award for Excellence will be presented and Torch Award winners will be recognized. Before March 16, send your registration information (church name, address, phone, church contact and list of attendees) and a check made payable to "NYAC UMM," to John Lemon, Financial Secretary, 645 Westchester Ave., Apt. 17C, Bronx, NY 10455. For questions or further information, contact Lemon at 917-365-7850.

Paul Nixon is Back!

April 15–16: Author of "I Refuse to Lead A Dying Church," Paul Nixon is back for an overnight seminar to dig a little deeper and continue the conversation began last fall at the Bishop's Retreats. The event at Stony Point Retreat Center, Stony Point, N.Y., begins at 10 a.m. Thursday and ends at 2 p.m. Friday. For additional information or to register online by April 8, go to <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/2725>.

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.

"Building Up a Healthy Body of Christ"

June 9–12: The packets containing the call to annual conference have been mailed out with information about registering online, at <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/2714>. Register by May 1 for the lowest fees. See the related story on Page 3 for details.

Cooperative School of Christian Mission

July 22–24: More details to come.

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

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Are You Called to Certified Lay Ministry?

“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”

—1 Peter 4:10

The 2004 General Conference passed legislation affirming the certification of lay ministers to serve in the United Methodist Church. The basic reason for this is spelled out in the following quotation from the Book of Discipline:

“Certified Lay Ministry—In order to enhance the quality of ministry to small membership churches, expand team ministry in churches and in deference to an expression of gifts and evidence of God’s grace associated with the lay ministry of early Methodism, the certified lay minister is to be recognized and utilized.” (p 200–



201, 2008 *Book of Discipline*)

Certified lay ministers preach, engage in vital caring ministries to the congregation, and assist with leadership. They sometimes assist with multi-point charges, or in larger churches, can serve as a pastoral associate or as part of a pastoral team. They provide witness in the community to the missional call of the United Methodist Church.

In order to become a certified lay minister (CLM), one must be a certified lay speaker or have equivalent training. This would be determined by that person’s district

or conference with certification through the District Committee on Ordained Ministry.

Here are some of the steps that need to be taken:

- A written recommendation by your pastor along with a supporting vote of the staff-pastor-parish relations committee, and the church council or charge conference.
- Demonstrated understanding and appreciation of the history, polity, doctrine, worship and liturgy of the UMC, through service in the local church.
- Completion of four training modules prescribed by the General Board of Discipleship, namely: The Call and Covenant for Ministry, The Practice of Ministry, The Organization of Ministry, and The Connection for Ministry. Candidates

can be assigned to learning experiences relevant to the coursework. Each candidate will be assigned a supervising and mentoring clergy member of the annual conference. The district superintendent offers general oversight.

- At the request of the candidate, the district superintendent provides a letter of recommendation.
- The candidate makes a written application to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry.

Could God be calling you to serve at this level? Pray and seek God’s leading. In the next article, you will hear from one of the two certified lay ministers in our annual conference.

For more information, visit <http://www.gbod.org/laity/clm/>.

Catch the Momentum Heading to Conference

The call to Annual Conference has gone out! So decide now on those legislative sessions and housing accommodations to take advantage of the discounted registration by May 1. Registrations will be handled totally online at <http://www.nyac.com/events/detail/2714>.

This year’s theme for our time together on June 9–12 will continue to focus on the NYAC vision statement: “For Such a Time as This: We Are Building Up a Healthy Body of Christ.”

Bishop James Swanson will be the preacher for the joint service of commissioning and ordination that will be held at 7 p.m. on Friday. Swanson, who was elected to the episcopacy in 2004, serves the Holston Area, which includes 906 churches in east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and north Georgia. He is a dynamic preacher who will also speak during Saturday afternoon’s “Momentum of Ministry” gathering.

For that event, Bishop Park has invited all



Rev. Vance Ross



Bishop James Swanson Sr.

those who have joined any of the conference’s 476 churches since 2004 to celebrate their membership in the United Methodist Church. He hopes to fill the arena with 5,000 people—the new members, their families, and anyone who has been instrumental in their faith journeys.

From 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, a special

“Ministries in Action” festival will occur under three tents outside the Hofstra arena. The festival will demonstrate the many ways that the conference serves God’s world. Activities will include live music, children’s events and the assembling of health kits for Haiti.

After a boxed lunch, the festival-goers will move inside to hear Bishop Swanson and help celebrate the work of our Volunteers in Mission, especially those who have gone to Biloxi during the last five years.

This year’s morning Bible study will be lead by Rev. Vance Ross, the first-ever deputy general secretary of the General Board of Discipleship. He will also lead the laity session at 2 p.m. Wednesday, and offer a special course for lay speakers at 1 p.m. Friday. All lay speakers in the conference are encouraged to attend Ross’ course, although it won’t be counted as an advanced requirement.

Denman Adds Youth Evangelism Award

For the first time, the Foundation for Evangelism will be offering the Harry Denman Evangelism Award to youth in addition to the clergy and laity categories. The Denman Award recognizes people whose life and ministry exemplifies the teaching of Christ and the Great Commission. Recipients of these awards, nominated by their local church and selected

by the Annual Conference, live their call to “Offer Them Christ” daily as modeled by John Wesley and Dr. Harry Denman, founder of the Foundation for Evangelism.

The awards are given out during the NYAC gathering in June at Hofstra University. To learn more about the award or to download nomination forms, visit the foundation website

at www.foundationforevangelism.org or call (800) 737-8333.

The Foundation for Evangelism is an affiliate of the General Board of Discipleship with a focus on providing venture capital for the development of leaders with a passion for evangelism who will have a multiplying impact on the UMC.

Pastors Share Haiti Witness

Continued from page 1

School on the property and spent the night outside with her husband, a pastor, and a group of children and youth on a basketball court. An uneasy calm prevailed, punctuated by continued tremors and songs and prayers.

The next day we all awoke early, not really having slept through the night. We continued to offer food, water, and first aid to our guests. At one point, a young girl appeared, having spent the night trapped under a building. In shock, she was covered in dirt and cement dust, but was alive and unhurt. We rejoiced in this miracle!

Tom: Electricity, coming off the generator, was sporadic, and while we occasionally had internet service, it was difficult to communicate. We heard varying reports about the National Palace, the airport, and the Montana Hotel, where Jim, Sam and Clint had gone after our meeting. Several of us drove to the Montana to check on the status of our United Methodist colleagues. After a while, talking with some of the survivors, we had no choice but to return the guesthouse and await further word.

At the guesthouse one of the caretakers siphoned gas from a truck and started the generator, which allowed us some internet access. We were able to make contact with family who spread the word that we were okay. We read the news reports, including conflicting advice about leaving. Our son sent a note telling us to go to the airport on Thursday because they were evacuating Americans. The State Department web site said not to go to the airport and that plans would be forthcoming. By this time we had decided, with the other Americans, that we would go to the airport in the morning.

Wendy: That night Jude came back and asked if we would take his two children, ages five and

three who are American citizens with us. Immediately I said, "Yes." I told him that we were leaving at 6:30 the next morning. At 6:30, he arrived with his two children, wife, a plastic bag with diapers, and identification papers. They came with us to the airport in case there would be a problem.

The scene at the airport was chaotic. We were there for 10 hours when all a sudden someone from the State Department announced that several planes had arrived. Persons with medical conditions, the elderly, and families with children would be given a priority. With the kids in our arms we made our way through the crowd to the airport door. When our turn came, the gentleman from the State Department asked who the kids were. We told them they were with us. He asked who the two adults with us were. We told him they were the children's parents. He then waved us all through. Ten minutes later we were sitting on a U.S. Coast Guard plane and within an hour we were making our way to the Dominican Republic. When we arrived, the Coast Guard, State Department, and U.S. Embassy were wonderful in the way they treated us, and assisted us in making our plans to come home. The next day we were all on a plane to Puerto Rico and then to New York. Several family and church members met us at the airport. It was wonderful to see them!

Tom and Wendy: There is so much more that could be said. The hardest thing was leaving our Haitian friends and the people in the yard of the guesthouse. Through tears, they thanked us for what we had done, and told us to go.

Our first visit to Haiti was in 2002. Little did we know that that visit would begin what would become a NYAC mission known as "Mountains of Hope



Rev. Joong Urn Kim, far right, senior pastor of First UMC of Flushing, presents a \$60,000 check to Bishop Joel Martinez, interim chief executive of Global Ministries, as Long Island West District Superintendent Kenny Yi, far left, and Bishop Jeremiah Park look on.

NYAC Reaches Deep for Haiti

Congregations from around the conference have contributed more than \$172,000 for Haiti relief. Efforts have stretched from the youngest to the oldest, and from the smallest to the largest congregations. Hundreds of churches have been making health kits, children at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew created and sold special Valentines to raise money and First UMC of Flushing took up a special offering that led to a \$60,000 donation.

The UMCOR Advance number for Haiti is 418325 and you can contribute by going to the web site, www.umc.org, and clicking on the "Donate Now" button.

There is also a great need for health kits in Haiti and churches are being asked to bring completed kits to Annual Conference at Hofstra in June. And the children and teens are being challenged to raise funds for kits that they will assemble and pack on Saturday, June 12. The instructions for the health kits can also be found on the UMC web site.

for Haiti." Over the years we have been blessed to know, serve, and serve with the people of Haiti. We watch the news reports with a combination of emotions: from heartache at the scenes of destruction to joy at the discovery of a new survivor.

We thank you all for the many prayers, thoughts, notes, calls, support, and other blessings you have offered. We thank you for the opportunity to tell this story. We thank you for the support you have offered Mountains of Hope, a mission serving in your name. Please continue to pray for healing

and hope for the good people of Haiti.

In faith,
Tom and Wendy

(Sam Dixon, head of the United Methodist Committee on Relief, and Clint Rabb, director of mission volunteers for GBGM, died as a result of the injuries they suffered in the quake. The two were honored in a memorial service on February 11 at Riverside Church in Manhattan. Jim Gullely, an UMCOR consultant, who was trapped with the others in the rubble of the Montana Hotel, was freed 55 hours and survived.)

Thanks, Concern from Haiti Methodists

Jan. 2 2010

On behalf of the Methodist Church in Haiti and the Haitian people, we thank you. Thank you all for your outpouring of love, support and Christian brotherhood in our great hour of need. Haiti has suffered a great tragedy, and to rebuild, recover and strengthen, it will take us all. You have kept us in your prayers and we are grateful. You have sent donations through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). We thank you for your generosity. You have expressed your selfless interest in volunteering your time to come to Haiti to help with the recovery effort and we look forward to welcoming you.

In the coming days and weeks, the Methodist Church in Haiti will complete an assessment of the damage and communities impacted by the earthquake, and will prioritize areas for relief and rehabilitation in partnership with UMCOR. Teams of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission will be integral in the long-term recovery of the church and communities in Haiti, and opportunities will soon be available to come and help in meaningful ways.

In the short-term, the immediate needs of providing emergency aid of food, water, shelter and medical care are being addressed by UMCOR and a host of national and international relief organizations and technical specialists. Soon, the work of clearing debris in preparation for rebuilding will be done by teams of locals in cash-for-work programs. The participation of international volunteers is welcome after this initial emergency phase is complete, at which time the Methodist Church in Haiti will work closely with UMCOR and UVMIM to identify rehabilitation projects which match the needs prioritized in the country.

With great appreciation for the outpouring of support and offers to come in person to help volunteer in Haiti as quickly as possible, the Methodist Church in Haiti, in partnership with UMCOR, requests that volunteer teams consider delaying their arrival into Haiti in light of the following:

- The Methodist Church in Haiti and UMCOR are still undertaking assessments and evaluations in the six circuits most impacted by the earthquake to determine the extent of the damage in church communities and beyond. Suitable projects and assignments for volunteer teams will not be identified until this process is complete.
- The Methodist Guest House is currently being assessed for structural integrity, and will undergo some rehabilitation and reconstruction of the security wall before



UMNS PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

Rev. Gesner Paul, president of the Methodist Church in Haiti, discusses the church's needs as the country rebuilds.

being brought to full capacity and security to host teams of volunteers.

- Commercial flights into Haiti are currently suspended and all travel into Haiti must be done via the neighboring Dominican Republic. Once in Haiti, transportation and logistics are further complicated due to the influx of international aid groups and the reality of debris and closed roads.
- The emergency relief and debris removal phase may last at least another one or two months, depending on the severity of the impact to the communities. Volunteers wishing to work on the programs identified as priority by the Methodist Church in Haiti and UMCOR can begin to schedule trips for

late March and April.

Volunteer teams with pre-existing travel plans to Haiti are urged to reconsider the timing and nature of their trip, in order to allow for re-assessment and prioritization of earthquake recovery programs. Please continue to communicate with us your interest in volunteering for the recovery effort, and we will connect you with recovery projects and rehabilitation programs as soon as possible.

We thank you again for standing by us in this time of great need, and look forward to working in Christian partnership to build a better Haiti.

Blessings,

Rev. Gesner Paul

President, Eglise Méthodiste d'Haiti

Protective Status Clinics Scheduled

Three clinics have been organized to provide assistance to Haitians who are now eligible for temporary protective status (TPS) as a result of the devastating earthquake in that country. This protective status, granted by the Department of Homeland Security, allows Haitian nationals to remain in the United States and legally work for 18 months until they can return home. To be approved for TPS, immigrants must submit proof of Haitian citizenship and show they were in the United States before the quake.

The clinics, sponsored by Justice For Our Neighbors, Church World Service and Brooklyn Jubilee, will take place at the following locations:

February 17: 10 a.m.–4 p.m., 475 Riverside Dr., 3rd Floor Conference Room, Manhattan, N.Y.

February 26: 6–9 p.m., St. Jerome's RC Church, 2900 Newkirk Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y.

March 4: 6–9 p.m., St. Mark's UMC, 2017 Beverley Rd., Brooklyn, N.Y.

To make appointments for these clinics, contact Sofia M. Pezua, regional coordinator, NYAC-JFON at 212-987-9705 or 646-575-7983.



A blessing is offered for Pastors Tom and Wendy Vencuss, who have lead mission efforts in Haiti.

Convocation Pushes for Strong Connections

With a mixture of homespun wit and an obvious passion for ministry, visiting Bishop Richard Wilke charmed and energized the clergy gathered for the 60th annual Bishop's Convocation on January 19–21. After his introduction by Bishop Jeremiah Park, Wilke marveled at his trip from Kansas. He drew immediate laughter when he remarked how amazing it was to experience New York City and “wherever we are” in one day. That “wherever” was the Hudson Valley Resort in the Ulster County hamlet of Kerhonkson, N.Y.

Bishop Park opened the convocation by expressing his deep concern and sorrow for the Haitian people. He said that since his VIM trip



Bishop Wilke reads from Matthew 25 as he talks about connecting church with the world.

there in April 2009, “these beautiful, beautiful people are near to my heart.” Park noted that the conference was already at work exploring specific ways to help.

One of the most touching moments came on Thursday when Park introduced Tom and Wendy Vencuss, pastors of the Wethersfield, Conn., UMC, and leaders of the Mountains of Hope mission in Haiti. The couple had been in Haiti to meet with UMCOR officials when the earthquake hit January 12 (see their story on Page 1). They spoke about their experiences there, and of their journey home. Bishop Park led the gathering in singing and offering a blessing for the people of Haiti and the work of the Vencusses.

Bishop Park announced that for the sixth year in a row the conference had been able to pay in full its shared ministry apportionments. He encouraged the clergy to rally their new members to attend a Saturday program at annual conference. “God will create the momentum,” Park said. “We need to ride the wave.”

Bishop Wilke, who was the preacher for the 2009 ordination service, shaped his presentation around the tri-fold theme for the convocation, “Connecting Movement: Connecting with God, the Church and the World.”

To connect with God, he encouraged the clergy to preach and teach about receiving the Holy Spirit. “We need to offer Jesus. The world is hungry for Jesus Christ,” he said. “We know how to do mission, but how well do we introduce people to Jesus Christ?”



Bob Kersten, from left, Patrick Perrin and Gabriel Akinbode add their musical gifts to worship.

He suggested that connecting with the church means getting people into small groups like Disciple Bible study which he created. Wilke stressed the importance of getting new people into groups with other newcomers. “Everyone is new,” Wilke said. “They’ll come because people know their name.”

The situation in Haiti provided Wilke with a ready example to talk about connecting with the world. “Never has the world been so small, or so much in need,” he lamented. He said pastors should identify the gifts and graces of their members before they are needed to serve and then offer the training that will allow them to succeed.



UN PHOTO

Talking with children about the situation in Haiti can help ease their fears.

Talking about Haiti Can Teach Empathy

You may have seen psychotherapist Robi Ludwig on television giving advice on how to talk with your children about tragic events with a healthy sense of empathy while reassuring them of their safety.

Tragedies, such as the earthquake in Haiti, Ludwig explained, can be used to give your children a sense of empathy, and it can be used to educate them about the circumstances of children in different parts of the world.



- By talking to your kids about the disaster in Haiti, they can learn that all children from around the world share the common experience of humanity.
- Explain our differences, too, from country to country. Some countries are poor and their populations struggle every day to get fresh water, food, and shelter. There are places where children don't have toys, television, the internet, and video games.
- Have discussions with older kids about the face of poverty, and the difficulty of life elsewhere. These discussions can help your children develop a sense of awareness, sensitivity and charity.
- Decide how much news coverage is too much. Most young children do not have a clear sense of the difference between reality and fantasy. So the most important thing to keep in mind is supervision. If you are worried about your kids being overexposed, do not let them watch TV alone. If they see graphic images on the news, you will be there in case they have any questions, or if they get frightened.
- Ask your children what they know, what they have heard, and correct misinformation. Use what they are being exposed to as a springboard for an open discussion about their fears.
- It's good to have open, but not frightening discussions about the fragility of life, the responsibility of privilege, and why it's so important to give to those who have less. If your children are younger than six, it might frighten them to know how lucky they are, how difficult life is for others. They are probably looking for reassurance as to how safe they are.
- Talk to older kids about the difficulty the younger ones might have with understanding and coping with such a disaster. Enlist their help watching the little ones, and noticing their fear and anxiety levels. Impress on them the importance of helping others through charitable action.

For more information or to schedule a presentation on the Children's Home, call Rebecca Mebert, toll free at 800-772-6904, ext. 131; or visit our website at www.chowc.org.

Counselors Sought for Woodsmoke

Female and male counselors are needed for the Woodsmoke camps during the weeks of July 18–24 and July 25–31. Woodsmoke, which is held at Kingswood campsite, will provide small-group rustic camping experiences for up to forty boys and girls, ten each in four age-specific sites. Kingswood is a 766-acre campground operated by the NYAC in Delaware County, approximately 150 miles northwest of New York City.

Experienced program staff includes a program director, chaplain, nurse, lifeguards, and food service personnel. The 9–10 and 11–12 youth will participate in age suitable camp construction projects under skilled adult leadership.

Each Woodsmoke unit has two platform tents, one for boys and one for girls, with six beds apiece. Counselors may sleep in the tents or in separate dome tents pitched on the site. Counselors are expected to participate in a training event to be held June 12–13 at Kingswood. A \$300 stipend is offered for each week served.

Persons interested should contact Cynthia Price, program director, at caprice925@gmail.com for additional information or to receive an application form. Please also see our web site at www.kwcamp.org.



PHOTO BY GREG NISSEN

Welcome Center Moves Along

Workers prepare a series of concrete forms for the foundation walls in the new Welcome Center at Camp Quinipet on Shelter Island. Once the walls are completed, a ranch-style house—that was donated to the camp—will be moved to rest atop the foundation. The basement level will be a walkout space, providing access to the infirmary and the nurse's living quarters. The welcome center will be connected to the existing dining hall (far right in photo) by a covered walkway with benches for seating. Camp Director Greg Nissen is hoping to dedicate the completed facility in honor of Sue and George Klein in June.

Life & Death Decisions Need Discussion

BY JIM STINSON

Coordinator of Older Adult Ministries

She lingered between life and death for more than four months. She was not responsive to sound or touch. She was hooked to the usual array of machines and was fed through a feeding tube. Under the best of conditions, her situation was tragic. In this case, it was even more so because she had often expressed the feeling that she would never want to be in this situation and would rather let "nature run its course."

Each visit to her was a cause for two colliding emotions. One was that of compassion. How could I not feel this emotion about a woman to whom I had ministered and whom I had come to love? The other was that of anger. Why did her family, knowing how she felt, allow this situation to develop and continue? What gave them the right to go against her wishes?

The short answer is that she had never put her feelings in writing (although she had led me to believe she had). She had no living will, no advance medical directives, no medical proxy. Legally, the right to make the end-of-life choices fell to her daughter, who disagreed with her mother's feelings. The doctor, nurses, others, and myself conversed with the daughter, to no avail. Her mind was made up. The hospital even held an ethics committee meeting to respond to what they saw as a bad medical decision and went to court over the issue. The result was expected. Without written documents, or the ability of the patient to speak for herself, the daughter was the only one legally entitled to make the end-of-life decisions.

The lesson from these four and a half months is clear. Those of us doing ministry with those most likely to face the need for life and



death decisions do an injustice not discussing such issues with them. There is a need to be proactive in encouraging people to write living wills, advance directives and choosing medical proxies to insure that their wishes are followed. Opening such a dialogue will allow for clarification of a person's faith and values. It provides an opportunity for people of faith to share and to come to grips with the practical implications of a faith based on resurrection. It also shows utmost respect for an individual.

To my mind what was most wrong about my friend lingering on machines and a feeding tube for

months is that it showed disrespect and disregard for her. It suggested that her daughter's wishes were more important than her own. Our faith leads us to affirm the sacredness of each individual. If my friend had wanted the "heroic" measures, there would have been no questioning of the ethics of her decision. Those of us who were upset were disturbed, not because the measures were chosen, but rather because the choices took no account of what the patient wanted. All of us, more than once, expressed our belief that no one can say for certain what the best course of action should have been. What we could say with conviction was that each person stands before God alone, and alone has the right to make such final decisions.

Those of us involved in ministering to and with older adults have an obligation to wrestle with the issues of this case and help the older adult to do so as well.

'Truth Commission' Studies Conscience in War

The United Methodist Board of Church and Society is a co-sponsor of the "Truth Commission on Conscience in War," meeting March 21-22, at Riverside Church in New York. Truth commission hearings will launch a six-month nationwide effort to support the rights of conscience for service members who object to a particular war.

The intent is to convene a group of interfaith leaders who want to launch a nationwide conversation aimed at changing the current conscientious objection law to include the conscience of soldiers and "just war" tradition in religion in the regulations.

The truth commission is a project of Faith Voices for the Common Good, the nonprofit fiscal sponsor; Luna Productions; Riverside Church; Starr King

School for the Ministry; and Union Theological Seminary. The commission begins with a public hearing from 4 to 8 p.m. Sunday, March 21. The hearing will screen Luna Productions' "Soldiers of Conscience." On March 22, a daylong meeting of commissioners and testifiers will be conducted in a session closed to the public.

The commission will comprise 10 testifiers: soldiers featured in the film and the filmmakers, plus a legal expert, an ethicist, faith leaders, and representatives from military families and veterans. There will also be 100 commissioners representing the U.S.'s diverse religious traditions, scholars, activists, artists, policy makers, journalists and military family members.

A report of the truth commission's findings will be issued Nov. 11, Veterans' Day.



PHOTO BY JOANNE S. UTLEY

Under the Roof

The roof and exterior walls are up as construction continues on the Sag Harbor UMC on Long Island's East End. Ground was broken in early November on the facility that includes 3,700 square feet on the first floor and a full basement accessible via stairs and an elevator. The curved wall leads visitors to the front entrance of the church. Expected completion is late summer.

Churches Host Food Ministry to Fill In Gaps

When you hear the words angel food, what first comes to mind? A spongy, white cake, right? For two churches in the Long East District, those words have taken on a different meaning thanks to their involvement with Angel Food Ministries.

Dix Hills UMC and Seaford UMC have become host sites for Angel Food Ministries (AFM), a national, non-denominational, non-profit organization that supplies low-cost monthly food packages to individuals and families. The idea is a simple one: by buying food in bulk directly from major companies without the advertising labels, Angel Food is able to provide high-quality meats, produce, and dry goods at roughly half the cost of the grocery store.

"In today's difficult economic times one is not sure who is in need and this was a good way to make sure that people have something to eat," Seaford's pastor, Rev. Edwin Jones, said in an email. "Some folks who did not need the food themselves were buying it for a neighbor in need. So for me, this is a great opportunity for neighbor to help neighbor, if and where the need arises." At Seaford, Jones is serving as site director, while at Dix Hills, Chuck Baglivio who is a new member of the church, has taken on that role.

There are no qualifications to utilize the food program. Patrons place a monthly order, either online or in person, and pay for it themselves. Orders can be placed in person using checks, money orders, and food stamps. Credit cards and debit cards are accepted online at the AFM web site, www.angelfoodministries.com.

In addition to AFM's "signature" box, they may also order allergen-free boxes, pre-seasoned and pre-packaged senior convenience meals, specialty meat boxes and produce boxes. The content of the boxes varies a little month to month. February's signature box contains all of the following for just \$30: 1.5 pounds each of top sirloin steaks and boneless pork roast; 2 pounds boneless chicken breast; 2 pounds lasagna with meat sauce; 1.5 pounds fully cooked boneless chicken drumsticks; 1 pound lean ground beef; 1 pound each frozen baby limas and frozen green beans; 1 pound each fresh broccoli florets and carrots; 1 pound each of rice and pasta; 28 ounces of pasta sauce; four large baking



Above: a variety of the meats available in the Angel Food "signature" box. Right: Chuck Baglivio, third from right, directs the food distribution at Dix Hills UMC.



PHOTOS BY DAVID CZEISEL

potatoes; 32 ounces of 2% shelf stable milk; a dozen eggs; and one family dessert. The monthly menu and ordering information can be found online.

One Saturday per month, the food packages arrive at the churches and patrons stop by to pick up their orders. Angel Food provides the discounted food, the churches provide the labor, and the patrons save the difference in their monthly food budget. At their first monthly distribution at the end of January, both the Seaford and Dix Hills churches distributed about 40 boxes of food.

Despite a bit of hesitancy over whether their small congregations could handle a ministry of this kind, both churches have embraced the program. Rev. David Czeisel, the Dix Hills pastor, noted that the majority of the congregation has either offered to help out, or to place an Angel Food order, or both. "About 15 people came out to volunteer the first time, just to learn the ropes," he said in a recent email.

Dix Hills is the first Angel Food site in Suffolk County, and is planning to become the drop site for all of Long Island within the next few months. At that point, all the sites in Nassau County and any future sites established in

Suffolk County will come to Dix Hills to pick up their orders. The majority of the orders placed in the first week at Dix Hills were from people outside the congregation who had been driving further into Nassau County to pick up their food.

"Every single patron we met was thrilled that we were doing this ministry, and one commented that it was the best service she'd ever had," Czeisel said. "At times, our congregation has felt a bit overwhelmed, but the joy in what we are doing seems to be rising as we consider the impact this can have on Long Island."

The two churches will continue to hold their distributions on the last Saturday of the month. The next pick up date is February 27, and then March 27, April 24, May 22 and June 26. For more information or to place an order, go to Angel Food's web site listed above. For those who would like to learn about or help distribute the food, contact the Seaford UMC at 516-7858877, or church@seafordumc.org; the Dix Hills church can be reached at 631-499-1940.

According to the Angel Food Ministries web site, two of the conference's Connecticut churches also serve as host sites: Summerfield UMC in Bridgeport, and Jesse Lee Memorial UMC in Ridgefield.

Music, Worship Arts Scholarships Available

Scholarships are available from the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts (FUMMWA) for exceptional students planning a career in church music and/or worship arts. The awards include: Memorial Scholarships for music, Thom Jones Scholarships in the arts other than music, and the Robert Schilling Music Scholarship for a rising college

freshman or sophomore.

Candidates must be a member of the UMC, or work for a UMC, for at least one year immediately before applying. More information and applications can be found at www.UMFellowship.org; the deadline is March 1 for 2010-11 academic year.

St. Mark's Pastor Allan Kirton Dies

The Rev. F. Allan Kirton, 70, the pastor of St. Mark's UMC, Brooklyn, and the former director of mission service training for the United Methodist Church, died on January 29, a day before his retirement and birthday were to be celebrated.

A native of Trinidad, he was associated with the General Board of Global Ministries from late 1991 through 2001, much of that time as director of what was then the Mission Resource Center located in Atlanta. One responsibility of the center was to equip new missionaries for service around the world.

"Allan Kirton had a profound love for the church and a passion for mission and ministry," said the Rev. Keith Rae, now retired from the Global Ministries' staff. "He had a love for music and the arts and had the ability to weave these components in his teaching and preaching in a relevant and meaningful way."

Kirton was ordained in the Methodist Church of the Caribbean and Americas and was at one time superintendent of the Haiti District.

Instead of the retirement party, a prayer service was held at St. Mark's on January 30. It was followed by a pre-arranged reception and dinner at which colleagues paid tribute to his ministry. The funeral and burial was in Trinidad. A memorial service was scheduled at St. Mark's on February 12.

He is survived by his wife Sandra, and two children, Arlene and Jerry. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Kirton at St. Mark's UMC, 2017 Beverley Rd., Brooklyn, NY 11226. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts can be made to the UMCOR Haiti Fund, Advance #418325.

Rev. Dr. Nathaniel T. Grady, Sr., has been named by Bishop Jeremiah J. Park to serve as interim pastor for the Brooklyn church, until the Rev. Dr. Glyzer Beach can be appointed there, effective July 1.



Rev. F. Allan Kirton

Ecumenical Work Brings Many Firsts

It has been a season of firsts on the ecumenical front in the New York Conference. Our bishop, Jeremiah Park, was at St. Patrick's Cathedral January 25 to participate in a service of worship celebrating the Week of Christian Unity. It is believed that this is the first time a United Methodist has been a leader of worship at St. Patrick's. Several United Methodist clergy and laity were also present.

Bishop Park also met recently with Bishop Mark Sisk of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. From that meeting came a decision to meet regularly and to include Bishop Robert Rimbo of the New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church to strategize about working together in the overlapping geographical areas of their respective responsibilities.

The three bishops then wrote a letter to the senators and congresspersons representing New York City urging a comprehensive reform of health care. The letter is available on the conference web site at <http://www.nyac.com/news/detail/122>. The United Methodist Church is in full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church. It is hoped that a vote in 2012 by both the United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church will bring the same status to these denominations.

Other firsts

- Retired pastor, Rev. Stu Baker, was asked to serve for three months as the interim pastor of St. Luke Lutheran Church in Greeley, Penn.
- Rev. Dr. Brian Bodt, president and CEO of the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, presided at Holy Communion at Good

Buchanan Church Seeks Organist

Trinity-Boscobel UMC in Buchanan, N.Y., is seeking an organist/accompanist for its small, devoted choir. The choir rehearses on Sunday mornings before the 10:30 a.m. service. Other obligations include evening services for Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Christmas Eve; weddings and funerals are at the discretion of the organist.

Requirements for the position, which

UMC, Episcopal Dialogue Planned

The Methodist-Episcopal dialogue team of the New York Conference invites you to a lecture and discussion with the Rev. Dr. J. Robert Wright, professor of ecclesiastical history at General Theological Seminary. The event is scheduled for 1 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 23 at the Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Ave., Manhattan, N.Y. Father Wright will address issues pertinent to the hoped-for full communion status between the United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church in 2012. Please RSVP to Rev. Dennis Winkleblack at dwinkleblack@nyac.com, or 914-615-2234, if you plan to attend.

Shepherd Lutheran Church in Monroe, Conn., the first time for a UM clergy to officiate at a Lutheran Church in the Bridgeport area.

- Rev. Laura Galbraith, pastor of Asbury UMC in Forestville, Conn., and Rev. Dennis Winkleblack, interim pastor of Prospect UMC in Bristol, Conn., participated with Rev. Paul Krampitz, pastor of St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Bristol, in a series of Advent dinners followed by Holy Communion. They met in each of their churches, taking turns preaching and officiating together for the Sacrament.

Do you have ecumenical news to share? Send your information to Dennis Winkleblack at, dwinkleblack@nyac.com.

offers a salary of \$10,675, include proficiency in reading choral scores and playing choral accompaniments as written. Proficiency in organ preferred. Academic degree not required. The organ is an Allen digital computer organ, MDS-16 and is 10-15 years old

Applicants should contact Choir Director Mary Jo Matthias, at 914-737-7095, or mjmatthias@optonline.net.