General Conference: A Future with Hope

The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference delegation to General Conference 2008 served ten days in legislative committees and plenary sessions in Ft. Worth, Texas. Back row (l to r): Larry Leister, Alfred Maloney, Mary White, Tom Gibson, Lenora Thompson, Candace Carter and Rene Perez. Front row (l to r): Ruth Daugherty, Michele Wright Bartlow, Dorothy Watson Tutem, Mindy McKonly and George Hollich. (Not pictured, reserve delegates William Gary George and Robert Ladd.)

Dr. Mary White, Conference Lay Leader, chair of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference delegation to General Conference 2008.

Marcia McFee and Mark Miller lead worship and music at General Conference 2008. McFee will be leading worship and designing worship space for the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference when it meets in Philadelphia on May 29 & 30.

See General Conference Insert
Calendar

- MAY 17, 2008 - A Unique Gathering of Antique Enthusiasts - Dr. Lori Appraisal Event from 1-3 PM at Historic St. George's Church 235 N. 4th St., Philadelphia www.historiestgeorges.org. Dr. Lori’s appraisals will inform and delight you. Celebrate unexpected treasures and groot in sympathy for the person who has been treasuring trash. Bring your OWN items and see how you fare. $10 admission, plus $5 per item for appraisal (3 item limit per person).

- MAY 18, 2008 - Peace with Justice Sunday. For resources go to: www.umc4giving.org.

- MAY 29, 2008 - Pre-Annual Conference Lunch. Arch Street United Methodist Church and Methodist Federation for Social Action, only four short blocks away from the Sheraton Hotel, invite you to a casual lunch on Thursday May 29th between 12 noon and 1:30 pm before the Annual Conference Sessions start. You’ll have a chance to greet old and new friends, and talk with EPA Conference members returning from General Conference. Vegetarian options will be available. A free-will offering will be taken to defray expenses. Any overage and leftovers will be donated to neighboring agencies that feed the homeless. RSVP to: Reinhard or Sue Kruse at 215/735-0797, or e-mail rhdnkuse@verizon.net by May 25th.

- MAY 29 & 30, 2008 - Health Fair during Annual Conference: DermaScan and Blood Pressure Testing Thursday, May 29 from 2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. and Friday May 30 from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Are You On Track to Retire? RETURNS TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE? See page 14 for more information.

- Sign up NOW! Contact Janet A. Mills, Senior Support Associate, Pension and Benefits, Communication and Coordination 1-800-828-9093 ext. 213 or janet.mills@epaumc.org to schedule an appointment.

- MAY 29-30, 2008 - Health Fair during Annual Conference: DermaScan and Blood Pressure Testing Thursday, May 29 from 2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. and Friday May 30 from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Are You On Track to Retire? RETURNS TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE? See page 14 for more information.


- MAY 31, 2008 - Lay Witness Mission Team Member Training, 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. at St. Andrew’s UMC, 909 York Road, Warminster, PA 18974. (215) 675-3745. See page 10 for more information.

- JUNE 1, 2008 - Service of Ordination. First UMC of Lancaster, 29 E. Walnut Street, Lancaster, PA 17602-4966.

- JUNE 7, 2008 at Grema Glen Time Away for Spiritual Nurturing - A Day Retreat for Adults VICTIMIZED by Violence. See page 10 for more information.

- JUNE 6 & 7, 2008 - Camp Innnabah - Early Response Teams Training. All ERT’s must be trained by authorized UMCOR trainers and it is absolutely necessary that each member of an ERT have, at minimum, the basic ERT training. See page 10 for more information.

- JUNE 8-15, 2008 - East District Revival: Hope and Healing Under the Tent at Emilie United Methodist Church in Levittown. Live Christian Music each evening, a time of witness will follow at 7:00 p.m. and our Speaker will begin about 7:30 p.m. Speakers will include: Gordon Douglas, Rev. Dr. Dorothy Watson Fatem, Pastor Kari McCullum, Rev. Adolphus Capphart, Rev. Ron Stott, Rev. Bob Varner, Christian Rock Band Unspoken, Mr. Tom Papania, Pastor Alicia Julia-Stanley and Pastor Dan Siddle. Everyone is welcome, please bring lawn chairs and an open heart. Please contact Emilie UMC 215 945-5052 or emiliepat@verizon.net, with questions or comments.

- JUNE 8, 2008 - Patriotic Concert 7:00 p.m. at Fritz Memorial UMC, 535 Packer Ave., Bethlehem PA 18015. All donations will go to UMCOR.

- JUNE 14, 2008 - Lord, Teach us to Pray - Part of the Making Disciples Series.

- JUNE 18, 2008 - Eco Eternity Forest Consecration. See page 11 for more information.

- JUNE 22, 2008 - The Annual Boehm’s Chapel Heritage Celebration Sunday will be held June 22, 2008 at 4:00 p.m. The Rev. James B. Todd, District Superintendent of the Southwest District, Eastern Pa. Conference will be the speaker for the 27th annual Heritage Celebration. In keeping with the bilingua of The Chapel’s early history, special music by a local quartet will feature several German hymns. Following the service a light meal will be provided in the fellowship hall. Call Dolores Myers 717/872-4133 for more information or visit www.boehmschapel.org.

- JULY 8, 2008 - Women in Professional Ministry will be holding a luncheon and Prayer Service for Mindy McNally and Michele Wright Bartlow from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. at St. Matthew’s UMC, Valley Forge. Please bring a covered dish. Dessert will be provided. Contact Dawn Taylor Storm at whumc@mccom.org for questions.


- JULY 26, 2008 - Weaving a Web of Connections. Part of the Making Disciples training series.

- AUGUST 8-10, 2008, the Academy for Laity will celebrate 25 years of training lay persons for ministry by bringing back the Rev. Dr. Charles Yrigoyen as the keynote speaker on Friday evening and Bishop F. Herbert Skeete as the guest speaker at the Saturday banquet. With an emphasis on Wesleyan doctrine and developing a range of skills, in addition to speaking, for ministry in the local church, the Academy is open to all laity who desire to grow in their faith and discipleship. The Basic Course for Christ Servant Ministers is offered as well as advanced courses which provide certification as Christ Servant Ministers. New advanced courses will also be offered. More information: www.gbgn-umc.org/om or contact Verna Colliver 215 855-5707.

Cokesbury Announces two book signings Friday, May 30, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm In the Cokesbury Display at Annual Conference United Methodism at Forty By Charles Yrigoyen, John McElhenny, and Kenneth Rowe Somebody’s Knockin’ By Frederick Douglas, Jr.

United Methodism at Forty

Save these dates!

BISHOP’S ADVENT DAY APART FOR CLERGY December 2, 2008 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM Aldersgate UMC, Wilmington, DE

BISHOP’S MIDWINTER RETREAT FOR CLERGY AND SPOUSES January 13 – 15, 2009 Clarion Hotel, Ocean City, MD

The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church 980 Madison Avenue, Norristown, PA 19401

Bishop Marcus Matthews Philadelphia Area Bishop

Suzy Keenan Director of Communications

Ilene Rivera Graphic Design and Layout

www.epaumc.org
Bishop Gregory Palmer receives leadership gavel

by Linda Green

“The church owes me nothing. I owe the church and the Lord of the church everything,” said Iowa Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, as he was installed April 26 as the new president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops.

Palmer, 54, will serve a two-year term as leader of 69 active and 87 retired bishops in the United States, Africa, Europe and the Philippines. He is the 59th president of the Council of Bishops and its fifth African-American president.

After the ceremonial passing of the gavel, Palmer assured the bishops that he would make sure the “singular honor” bestowed upon him is multiplied.

“At the end of the day, the ups and downs, it would be my great joy and delight to serve.”

“With friends and family in attendance, he told the council that ‘I will, with every fiber of my being, make sure your trust is returned, tenfold.’”

‘A visionary leader’

A native of Philadelphia, Palmer is a graduate of George Washington University and United Methodist-related Duke University School of Theology. He was ordained an elder in the East Ohio Annual Conference after beginning his ministry in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. He was elected bishop in 2000. He is bishop of the Iowa Area, based in Des Moines, where he oversees nearly 194,000 United Methodists in 840 congregations.

The outgoing president, Bishop Janice Riggle Hucal, 62, passed the gavel to Palmer during a worship service that also celebrated the council’s current leadership team, recognized its new leadership team and paid tribute to Hucal and past bishop Bishop Peter Weaver, New England Area.

“This council and the whole United Methodist Church has a wonderful, wonderful gift in store for them,” Hucal said of Palmer. “As all of us know, he is a visionary leader, he knows the church, but more importantly, he knows the human hearts of the people inside The United Methodist Church and outside The United Methodist Church. He knows how to speak from the heart to the heart.”

Looking toward the future, Palmer said the council and The United Methodist Church “are, in a sense, in enormous chaos” and “that is a good thing.” To those who wonder where the council is headed, he advised them “to hang steady” because “God is at work in our midst, God is using us in unimaginable ways… We are in the middle of something that we can’t fully name; we can’t put it in a box and we can’t control it… I pray we will not do anything to stop the momentum that has been created across a period of years.”

The Rev. Herbert Palmer, Bishop Palmer’s father and a retired clergyman in the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual (regional) Conference, said his son has “major opportunity” and “I am extremely proud of him.”

He envisions that Bishop Palmer “would continue to be the diligent and dedicated servant of God that he has always been.”

In Memoriam

Mr. Esther M. Hoffman, widow of the Rev. Russell Hoffman, Mrs. Hoffman passed away on March 5, 2008, at the age of 85. Rev. Hoffman served the following appointments beginning in 1953: Ash Grove, Clark’s Grove, Irish Valley, Elizabethville, Northampton Ctr., Cressona; Bellgrove Ctr.; Rancks, Parkesburg, and Bethesda. He retired in 1989. A Memorial Service was held on March 15 at Millersburg Assembly of God. Mrs. Hoffman is survived by a daughter, Doris Snyder. Condolences may be sent to Doris Snyder, 177 Big Run Drive, Lykens, PA 17048.

Rev. Roger O. Colvin, retired elder, on March 25, 2008. Rev. Colvin served the following appointments: Geigertown; St. Paul’s and Harmony; Phila; Wissahickon; Extension Ministry; serving with the General Board of Global Ministries as missionary with Mrs. Colvin in Puerto Rico from 1967 to 1972. Eastern; First; and Mt. Joy; St. Mark’s. He retired in 1992. A Memorial Service will be held May 10, 2008 at Elizabethtown: St. Paul’s UMC, 398 North Locust Street, Elizabethtown, PA 17022, with a 9:00 a.m. viewing, and 10:00 a.m. service. Rev. Colvin is survived by his wife, Phyllis, and three children: Richard, Carol, and Philip. Condolences are to be sent to Mrs. Phyllis Colvin, 42 Elm Avenue, Elizabethtown, PA 17022. Contributions in Rev. Colvin’s memory may be sent to Red Bird Missionary Conference; 54 Quendale Center, Beverly, Kentucky 40913.

Mrs. Eliza Stackle Matthews, mother of Bishop Marcus Matthews, passed away on Monday, May 5, 2008 at the age of 91. A service of remembrance will take place on Saturday, May 10, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. at Ebenezer UMC, 1776 State Route 72, North Lebanon, PA 17046; (717) 80-274-265. Rev. Gotwols is survived by his wife, Ruthann, and children, Andrew, Virginia, G. Robert and Timothy. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Ruthann Gotwols, 52 Mt. Lebanon Camp Meeting Drive, Lebanon, PA 17046.

Rev. George Webster Gotwols, retired local pastor, on March 18, 2008. Rev. Gotwols served Reading, Grace UMC. A Memorial Service will be held on May 11, 2008 at 4:00 p.m. at Ebenezer UMC, 1776 State Route 72, North Lebanon, PA 17046; (717) 274-265. Rev. Gotwols is survived by his wife, Ruthann, and children, Andrew, Virginia, G. Robert and Timothy. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Ruthann Gotwols, 52 Mt. Lebanon Camp Meeting Drive, Lebanon, PA 17046.

www.redbirdconference.org

www.epaumc.org
Delegates extend plan to strengthen the black church

The Rev. Dorothy Watson Tatem urges General Conference delegates to continue Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century.

by Linda Green*

The transformational power of the initiative that empowers African-American churches with a renewed sense of ministry was approved by the delegates to the 2008 General Conference.

The 12-year-old initiative, known as Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century (SBC-21), has helped hundreds of struggling black churches connect with successful ones to gain insights and encouragement for their ministries.

The General Conference delegates, in a vote of 739 to 15, approved the initiative that is "taking revitalization from the pew to the pavement," said the Rev. Dorothy Watson Tatem, a member of the project's coordinating committee and delegate from the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual (regional) Conference.

Delegates approved a budget of $2 million for 2009-2012, which will not become final until a total budget is presented by the denomination's Council of Finance and Administration and approved by the 2008 General Conference.

There are more than 2,400 African-American churches and 431,554 African Americans in The United Methodist Church in the United States.

Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century "is empowered by the resurrected Christ, challenging the belief that The United Methodist Church is dying," said Michigan Area Bishop Jonathan Keaton, chairperson of the initiative.

According to Cheryl Stevenson, the initiative's executive director, 32 congregational resource centers have developed more than 100 learning units that share training tools for African-American churches in rural, urban and suburban areas across the five U.S. jurisdictions. These centers covenant to open themselves up as partner churches to provide training, resources and models for church development.

Delegates were introduced to resources and churches that have increased their effectiveness, mission and ministry through participating in churches to separate. It's real hard to affect the numbers of bishops to be elected in the U.S. in July.

The Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, dean of Cannon Chapel and religious life at Emory University was elected president of the Judicial Council May 1. The first woman to hold that office, she was elected in 1992 to her first eight-year term on the council and was elected to a second term in 2004. Jon R. Gray, will serve as vice president, and the Rev. Belton Joyner, will be secretary.

The Nation in Brief

In a church fellowship hall in India-napolis, a long line of people are beginning to realize that many of them live with "an invisible, unearned advantage" based on the color of their skin.

"Sensitizing white people to an invisible system of advantage is a healthy beginning in the journey," said Blenda Smith, conference lay leader of the Wyoming Annual (regional) Conference and a board member of the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. To help people in the journey, a DVD called "Truth and Wholeness: Replacing White Privilege With God's Promise" has been developed by the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race and the Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. An accompanying study guide is also in the works.

Gulfside Assembly, a historic United Methodist conference center whose entrance was across the street from the Gulf of Mexico was wiped off the map in 2005 by Hurricane Katrina. However, something of the spirit that moved through those trees will be kept alive. The General Conference 2008 commemoration table, altar rail, baptismal font, lectern and a table have been crafted from trees salvaged from the 64-acre Gulfside property, which served as a retreat center and meeting place for African Americans during the segregation era. Bishop Gregory Palmer, president of the Council of Bishops, noted many UMs and Lutherans have working relationships at the local level.

"The decision for full communion was "a miracle," said Bishop Frank Brookhart, who serves as co-chairman of the UM-Episcopal dialogue. "It's real easy for churches to separate. It's real hard to get back together," he explained. "This doesn't happen without the risen Christ among us." The ELCA already has a full communion agreement with the Episcopal Church, while the UMC has just entered an interim agreement with that denomination.

General Conference delegates approved a plan that will result in one less bishop in each of four of the five U.S. jurisdictions, beginning in 2012. Delegates agreed that savings from those reductions will be used to fund new episcopal areas outside the United States. The new formula will not take effect until Jan. 1, 2009, so it will not affect the numbers of bishops to be elected in the U.S. in July.

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In the Nation
Liberia President Sirleaf addresses United Methodists

Liberia President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf told a worldwide gathering of United Methodists that her country and her church share a common commitment to eradicate poverty.

Sirleaf, a member of the Monrovia (Liberia) United Methodist Church, greeted delegates to the denomination’s top lawmaking body as “fellow Christians and fellow Methodists” many times during her April 29 address to the 2008 General Conference.

“This is a special honor for me,” she said. “I am the first African leader and the first female president to address the General Conference of The United Methodist Church.”

Sirleaf, 70, was greeted with cheers, applause and “ululations” from fellow Africans in the assembly. General Conference brings together delegates from around the world every four years to decide church law. The body is meeting April 23-May 2 in Fort Worth, Bishop John Innis of the church’s Liberia Area introduced the president to the assembly with the question, “Have you heard in Africa a woman was elected president of Liberia?”

People have hope
Liberia has been weighed down with poverty, lack of education and years of civil war, Sirleaf said.

“We need the church now as never before,” she said. “The moment has never been more opportune to collaborate with the government to improve health and education and give our people hope.”

Sirleaf became president in 2006 and has worked to restore the country’s infrastructure and to maintain peace and security.

“I am proud to say we have moved Liberia from a failed state, from an awful flicker on your television screen to a success story,” she said when she was first elected and traveled around Liberia, children were frightened by her presidential convoy and thought she was coming to take something away from them.

“Instead of the distress of yesterday, today their eyes light up and they smile,” she said. “Liberia is on the way back.”

President honored
After her General Conference address, Bishop William Oden presented Sirleaf with an award at a dinner sponsored by the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. The dinner was a fundraiser for the commission’s Bridges of Unity Ecumenical and Interfaith Endowment Fund.

The James K. and Eunice Matthews Bridge Builder Award is named for the longtime United Methodist bishop and his wife—the daughter of renowned ecumenical and interreligious activist Stanley Jones—who have been a team of bridge builders for unity during their entire ministry,” Oden said.

Created to honor a person “who has played a significant role in building global community and dismantling barriers that separate people,” the award’s first recipient was Sirleaf, who accepted on behalf “of the millions of Liberians who have suffered so much.”

She acknowledged the many Liberians who were forced to leave their country for their own safety, youth forced into civil war, women who were the most vulnerable but still took responsibility to lead the peace, and children who lost years of childhood and education.

“Today, we can start anew,” the president said.

She mentioned two of the programs her government has started: a Liberian education plan that is about one-third complete and calls for the renovation of 50 schools, training of 500 teachers and funding of scholarships for 5,000 girls, and a “market women” fund, now under way to provide space for women to sell their wares and have a small school for their children.

Attitudes also have changed in Liberia, as evidenced by a story Sirleaf told about a girl who was admonished by her teacher for not being ladylike in front of an important visitor. “I teach, be careful how you treat me,” the girl replied. “Don’t forget, a woman is president.”

“Bloom is a United Methodist News Service writer based in Nashville, Tenn. Gilbert is a United Methodist News Service writer based in New York City.”

The World in Brief

As the Iraq war enters its sixth year, the costs extend far beyond the more than 4,000 U.S. soldiers and 600,000 Iraqis who have died in the violence. Thousands have been left wounded in their bodies, minds and souls—and face a lifetime of struggles related to the experience, says a United Methodist chaplain who has seen those wounds up close. “I am deeply concerned about the returning troops and the mental and physical wounds they have sustained,” said the Rev. Laura Bender, a Navy chaplain who served in a field hospital in Iraq. “We do not have the resources in place to provide what is needed, and I am afraid that many will fall through the cracks. If The United Methodist Church wants to take a stand on the war, I’d like to see us champion the cause of these returning veterans,” she said.

A United Methodist bishop was among those welcoming Pope Benedict XVI to New York on April 18. Bishop Jeremiah Park of the denomination’s New York Area was invited to greet the pope at an ecumenical meeting at St. Joseph Church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. The meeting’s theme was “Christ, Our Hope for Unity.” Two other United Methodists attended the ecumenical meeting: Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar of the Greater New Jersey Area and the Rev. W. Douglas Mills, a staff executive of the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns.

United Methodists should officially reconnect with their Methodist brothers and sisters in Latin America and the Caribbean. “That’s the conclusion of a report for the United Methodist General Conference, which met April 23-May 2 in Fort Worth, Texas. A study commission presented its findings to the delegates April 26.”

The study panel was authorized by the 2004 General Conference to consider the relationship between The United Methodist Church and autonomous Methodist Churches of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Sirleaf, the Rev. Peeter Piirisild continues to preach. As he has for 34 years, each Sunday morning Piirisild enters the pulpit of the United Methodist Church in Narva, a city near the top of the Estonia-Russia border, and offers the morning sermon. “I’m retired, but I’m not totally free yet,” he says. Piirisild’s story parallels that of other retired United Methodist clergy and surviving spouses in Estonia. They are the stories the retirees and widows told when a delegation of United Methodists from the United States and Norway visited Estonia in 2006 in preparation for launching a campaign to raise funds for the denomination’s Central Conference Pension Initiative. More information: about the Central Conference Pension Initiative is available at www.ccpi.umc.org.

Four bishops and a top agency executive spoke passionately about the human cost of war April 29, calling for an end to the war in Iraq during a prayer service for the Eyes Wide Open exhibit in General Worth Park, across from the Fort Worth Convention Center, where General Conference was held. The Council of Bishops calls UMns to be peacemakers, said Bishop John Schol of the Washington, D.C., Area. “We believe war is incompatible with Christian teaching and the war in Iraq is an unjust war. We continue to call on the President and Congress of the United States and the leaders of all the nations in the Coalition Forces to begin immediately a safe and full withdrawal of all military personnel from Iraq.”
Classifieds

- DIRECTOR OF LAY MINISTRIES - Christ U. M. Church in Lansdale (Central District) seeks an outgoing disciple of Jesus Christ to direct members and worshipers in serving God in the church, community and wider kingdom. We prefer a Christian with experience in the Equipping Church model, spiritual gifts and recruiting/coordinating volunteers in a large congregation. These 20-hour responsibilities entail managing the volunteer effort, small group development, volunteer database management, and training persons in active discipleship. Contact Pastor Gary Knerr at 215-858-6643 or pastor@cumulansdale.org, if you are interested in this vocation.

- GREEN PARAMESTNGS - some in almost new condition, some need repair - various sizes - FREE - contact Messiah UMC - see messiahchurch@verizon.net 609/888-6118

- St Andrew’s UMC of Warminster, Bucks County, is looking for a PART-TIME STUDENT PASTOR to begin immediately. Our Student Ministry is well established with great volunteers. We are looking for someone who loves working with teens; loves God, and has the ability to work with adults and parents. For more information or a job description email wendykay@comcast.net or call the church 215-675-5748.

- PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER (10-12 hours per week) - Looking for a spiritually oriented Youth Minister to direct our youth program and assist with Sunday Worship. Send resume to: Linda Harney, Chair, Staff Parish, Asbury United Methodist Church, 200 W. Fredley St., Norristown, PA 19401 or email resume to ronpocono@poconoplume.org

- PART-TIME CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR (16 hours per week) - Responsibilities include providing clerical and administration support to clergy and church members. Responsibilities include preparing Sunday Bulletins, monthly newsletter, etc. Good organization skills are essential. Send resume to: Linda Harney, Chair, Staff Parish, Asbury United Methodist Church, 200 W. Fredley St., Norristown, PA 19401 or email resume to ronpocono@poconoplume.org

- MUSIC DIRECTOR for Ridge Ave United Methodist Church in Philadelphia (Roxborough), PA. Responsibilities: provide worship service music during the Traditional worship service (9:00-10:00 am) and Contemporary worship service (10:30 a.m.-11:00 pm) every Sunday and conduct regular rehearsals. Experience in choral music and music ensembles required. Piano, organ or keyboard experience a plus. Contact the SPRC at 215-482-2653.

- PROGRAM MANAGER - Immediate opening at Christian Camp & Retreat Center of The United Methodist Church in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. Full-time, year-round salaried position responsible for the coordination of program ministries (summer camp, weekly programs, camp sponsored retreats) and management of challenge courses (marketing, facilitating, maintaining). Benefits include health/dental, pension & on-site housing. Contact Rev. Ron Schane, Pocono Plateau Camp & Retreat Center, RR 2, Box 2747, Cresco, PA, 18326. Phone: 570-679-3665. Email: ron@poconoplateau.org.

- POSITION: DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES. Morrisville UMC is looking for a spiritually excited Youth Leader, who is enthusiastic about bringing our Youth to Christ. We need this person to have the ability to communicate with our Youth, need to be flexible, a self-starter and able to work with minimal direction leading a motivated team of youth counselors. We’re looking for somebody who can organize and carry out multiple tasks, continually developing our Youth Program to include, missions, confirmation classes, Sunday program, Wednesday evening program as well as social activities and retreats. Salary $12,000. Please send resume to Morrisville United Methodist Church, Taft and Maple Aves., Morrisville, PA 19067.

- YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT DIRECTOR, Hempfield UMC. Full Time Position, Junior & Senior High and Young Adults (16-25). Build upon established ministry; ability to lead teams of volunteers; good communication skills, experience with teaching, missions, audio-visual elements and small groups, and a solid understanding of today’s youth & young adult culture. Bachelor’s Degree in a related field and a minimum of 2-5 years of experience. Interested persons may begin application process by forwarding a resume to Sean P. Williams at 330 Marietta Avenue Lancaster, PA 17601, or by email to swilliams@humc.ws. Questions should be sent to this email address or addressed by phone at (717)285-3562 x248.

- PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTRIES DIRECTOR - a newly created position. We seek individuals who have a heart and passion to share the life of Jesus Christ with youth (grades 6-12) and to see them begin and grow in Christian faith. The successful candidate must demonstrate the ability to function independently, enjoy working in a dynamic environment that values teamwork and communicates clearly with a wide variety of constituents. Through the development of the Youth Ministries Program, support the mission and vision of the church. Send letter of interest and resume to Thorndale United Methodist Church, ATTN: Lay Pastor, SPR, 3303 Lincoln Highway, Thorndale PA 19372-1007. Application materials may also be emailed to catfaust@verizon.net. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled.

Interfaith Resource Center

1.800.336-6152/1.302.477.0910 913 Wilson Road, Wilmington, DE 19803
www.interfaithresourcecenter.com resource ctr@iolnet

Paula Hartzell of the Interfaith Resource Center and Madeline Beall of Cokesbury will team up for a series of Christian Education Workshops in May & June. The presentations will feature an overview of Christian education curriculum styles and what to look for in the decision-making process. We will review prevailing trends and denominational preferences regarding Christian formation. You will hear about changes in the offerings of current popular programs and get a sneak peak at the new curricula including Rock Solid, the new program from Abingdon/Cokesbury. Each participant will receive a completion chart listing over 50 curricula from over a dozen publishers, their source information, educational approach and pricing. There will be time for browsing samples of many of the curricula. Choose the workshop most convenient for you: on Tuesday, May 20 from 6:30-9:00 p.m. at Wesley U.M. Church in Dover; on Thursday, May 29 from 6:30-9:00 p.m. at First U.M. Church, Chestertown; or on Saturday, June 7 from 9:30 a.m.–noon at St. Alban’s Church, Wilmington, home of the Interfaith Resource Center. The cost of the event is $5 per person or $10 for 3 persons from the same church. Please contact the Interfaith Resource Center, 913 Wilson Road, Wilmington, DE 19803 for more information or to make reservations; phone: 1-800-336-6152. Check the IRC website at www.interfaithresourcecenter.com for additional dates.

www.epaumc.org
Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World – Next Steps

by Lillian Smith*

In January 2007, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference renewed an intentional emphasis on reaching more people for Jesus Christ. The emphasis, “Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World,” is a worldwide denominational effort that exists so that each congregation can, as Lovett Weems has said, “reach more people, younger people, and more diverse people.” The emphasis supported the goals set forth for this conference through the Strategic Review.

The words, “Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World,” were spoken and heard, numerous times, by bishops, other leaders, delegates, attendees and listeners of the live-stream proceedings of General Conference, in Ft. Worth, TX. It was exciting to hear the stories of United Methodist discipleship in the world.

The General Board of Discipleship, GBOD, partnered with this conference by providing monthly leadership and congregational development from agency staff in this conference. Additionally, the GBOD arranged EPA congregations to access the Congregational Vitality Indicator, a church self-assessment tool, for a reduced price.

One may ask, “Is this emphasis an attempt for denominational self-preservation?” No, from all that I’ve heard, read, seen, or experienced, this emphasis is not about saving The United Methodist Church. Instead, the effort is about reminding and engaging members and congregations of The United Methodist Church to share Christ’s love with people, in and outside the church walls, introduce them to Jesus and invite them to follow Him. The movement is a call for each United Methodist Christian and congregation to more faithfully live out the Great Commission.

One year and four months into this emphasis, we can share some exciting information. More than 2000 congregations have attended trainings. That represents 200 congregations. The level of participation is excellent for an effort that was not required or mandatory. The following table provides some promising information. According to statistics from Background Data for Mission, from the GBGM, the rate of decline in membership is slowing.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Goal 1: By June 2004, District Superintendents will work in collaboration with pastors and churches to identify seven (7) congregations per District which are ready for transformation and create an Individualized Revitalization Plan (IRP) for each congregation.</th>
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<td><strong>Total Professing Members at the end of 2006 was 124,775.</strong> (Down 1,994 from 2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Professing Members at the end of 2007 was 123,336.</strong> (Down 1,037 from 2006)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Worship Attendance at the end of 2006 was 50,581.</strong> (Up 10,896 from 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Worship Attendance at the end of 2007 was 49,945.</strong> (Down 636 from 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professions of faith in 2007 numbered 2,567.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professions of faith in 2006 numbered 2,577.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**While we are not where God is calling us to be in this regard, we are not where we were. It is exciting to note that at the end of 2006, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference was the only conference in the Northeast Jurisdiction, to reflect positive growth in worship attendance. Recent research, shared by Lovett Weems, revealed a trend of increasing worship attendance even as church membership is declining.**

Numerous persons have expressed concern that this current effort focuses “too much on numbers.” It is about the numbers. It is about the increasing numbers of persons who know, love and follow Jesus Christ. It is about countering the trend of numerous congregations that are not intentionally inviting unchurched people to know and follow Jesus Christ. This effort is working to help the each participating congregation further focus on the community outside the walls so that more people will be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Through this effort of church revitalization, Bishop Marcus Matthews has challenged every congregation and this conference through the following goals:

- **Have 100% of members praying as a spiritual discipline.**
- **Increase worship attendance by 10% by January 2009.**
- **Pay 100% of General Church Funds by 2009.**
- **Every district will have a local and global mission project by 2009.**
- **Annual conference to have 2 global mission partnerships by 2010.**
- **Encourage 100% tithing by 2010.**
- **Encourage 10% of our congregations to start two or more worship experiences by 2010.**
- **Increase church membership by 10% by 2012.**
- **Start at least 12 congregations by 2012.**

**Why focus on worship attendance? This specific emphasis is meant to encourage each United Methodist and congregation to reach and engage people who are not already in the church. If every member would ask one person to attend their church service, bible study, etc., once a month, attendance and most likely, church membership would increase. More importantly, more persons would be able to make a first time commitment to Jesus Christ.**

In an effort to keep the goal of reaching “more people, younger people and more diverse people” as a goal, congregations are encouraged to enter in monthly numbers as they relate to weekly average worship attendance, small groups, professions of faith, weekly Sunday School attendance, baptisms, reaffirmations of faith, average weekly attendance in bible study, This information is requested during the first week of each month for the previous month.

*The Rev. Lillian Smith is Director of Connectional Ministries for the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.*

The Strategic Plan – Where we are and where we are going

by Lillian Smith*

The question has often been asked, “How are we doing related to the Strategic Plan?” At the upcoming session of Annual Conference Rev. Gary Meekins and Rev. Wendy Orzolek, Co-Chairs, Congregational Transformation Team, CTT, will share more information about progress made.

During 2007 and 2008 much of the resourceful efforts have focused on Goal 1. This goal intersects with two “Arcas of Collaboration,” as identified by the Council of Bishops and Connectional Table – 1. Leadership and 2. Congregational Development. Below is information on Goals 1 and 4. The goal and action steps are as follows:

- **Goal 1: By June 2004, District Superintendents will work in collaboration with pastors and churches to identify seven (7) congregations per District which are ready for transformation and create an Individualized Revitalization Plan (IRP) for each congregation.**

  Action Step 1: By June 2004, each District Superintendent will use the church vitality assessment tool in conjunction with the Natural Church Development Survey with seven congregations on their district and create an IRP for each.

  Action Step 2: By June 2005, all District Superintendents will train continues on page 10
Lord, Teach Us to Pray
Wesley UMC, 2540 Center Street, Bethlehem, PA 18017
June 14, 2008
Registration: 9:00 a.m. Session: 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Margie Burger, of Aldersgate Renewal Ministries, will facilitate this seminar which is designed to “encourage God’s people to become a people of prayer.” The session will include activities and practical applications of teachings on prayer. “More than just a teaching tool, this seminar is an opportunity for all to encounter the Living God!” Aldersgate Renewal Ministries is an affiliate member of the General Board of Discipleship. To learn more about Aldersgate Renewal or to obtain prayer resources, visit:

www.aldersgaterenewal.org
Register now at: www.epaumc.org

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- Ways to Increase Your Church Attendance
  with the Rev. Rene Perez and the Rev. Dr. Dorothy Watson Tatem
  $10 x ____ = ____
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Weaving A Web Of Connections
Using Internet Technology For Effective Ministry
July 26, 2008
West Chester United Methodist Church
West Chester, Pennsylvania

Do you want to develop or expand a Web presence for your local church, district or conference organization? Then join local church, district, and conference volunteers, staff, webmasters/servants, communicators, editors and pastors for this exciting training event co-sponsored by United Methodist Communications and the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Office of Communications. Through interactive presentations, hands-on workshops and informative displays, you will be able to explore a variety of options for Weaving a Web of Connections by using Internet technology for effective ministry.

Training Session Topics include:
· Making Connections: What Is Web Ministry?
· User-Centered Design for Effective Web Ministry
· Welcoming the Seeker through Web Ministry
· Staying Connected: Maintaining a Dynamic Web Ministry

Training Leadership includes:
· Matt Carlisle, former director of the Web team for United Methodist Communications and now the founder and CEO of Big Heart Design
· Susan Crawford, director of Igniting Youth, UMCom staff
· Cheryl A. Hemmerle, technical training specialist, UMCom staff
· Mary Lynn Holly, coordinator of conference relations, UMCom staff

The training fee is $75 and includes all meals, breaks, sessions and materials. The registration deadline is July 18, 2008. To register for the training, visit www.training.umcom.org and select Weaving a Web of Connections. To register by telephone, call toll-free (888) 278-4862. Space is limited to 100 people. There is no refund for cancellation; however, registration is transferable. CEU credit (0.6) is available for full participation.

Overnight accommodations can be arranged with Holiday Inn West Chester by calling (610) 692-1900. The hotel is less than 1 mile to the church. Participants are responsible for their own transportation and lodging arrangements and payments. For more information, visit training.umcom.org or send an email to training@umcom.org.

Schedule
SATURDAY, JULY 26
8:00 a.m. Registration and Continental Breakfast
9:00 a.m. Making Connections: What Is Web Ministry? with Cheryl A. Hemmerle
10:00 a.m. User-Centered Design with Matt Carlisle
12:00 noon Lunch
1:00 p.m. Welcoming the Seeker with Susan Crawford
3:00 p.m. Staying Connected: Maintaining a Dynamic Web Ministry with Cheryl A. Hemmerle
5:00 p.m. End of Training

Register online at www.epaumc.org.

Sharing Your Faith
September or October 2008

Dr. H. Eddie Fox, World Director of Evangelism, World Methodist Council, and Executive Director, World Methodist Evangelism Institute will teach and “encourage lay and clergy to be about the ministry of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.” During this session, participants will gain confidence and tools to share their faith and Christian witness with others. To learn more about this, Dr. Fox and the World Methodist Council, visit:

The Strategic Plan – Where we are and where we are going

continued from page 8

seven additional congregations on their district to use the church vitality assessment tool in order to complete an IRP.

Action Step 3: The Office of Congregational Transformation will contract with external agencies for training and coaching for transformation for specific types of congregations (e.g., plateaued churches, urban churches, new church starts, small membership churches, etc.).

Action Step 4: The Office of Congregational Transformation and all District Superintendents will connect those contracted agencies with the identified congregations within 60 days of the adoption of their IRP.

Action Step 5: The Conference will provide guidance and scholarship aid for pastors of these churches to attend a “Training Academy” with at least two current or potential leaders from their congregations.

Action Step 6: All District Superintendents will identify 4 pastors annually on their district who are eager to retool as transformational leaders and will provide guidance and resources for them to attend a “Training Academy” with at least two current or potential leaders from their congregation.

Through the efforts of the emphasis “Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the ‘Transformation of the World,’” significant movement has been made.

The goal initially called for District Superintendents working with 42 congregations, 7 per district, to use a church vitality assessment tool with Natural Church Development Survey. To date, 189 congregations have activated the Congregational Vitality Indicator, a church assessment survey tool created by the General Board of Discipleship. The original goal of 42 has been surpassed.

Each congregation that participated in the monthly training sessions was invited to prepare a ministry action plan (Individualized Revitalization Plan) as part of the process. In the fall, District Superintendents will contact congregational leaders to obtain information to identify where the churches are in the process of completing the church vitality assessment and creating a ministry action plan.

Prior to the concerted effort, “Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World,” numerous congregations participated in Project 6:15, and utilized the Natural Church Development assessment tool. Of 40 congregations that responded to a recent electronic survey, 15 reported growth in ministry, attendance or membership in the past year as the result of the implementation of the ministry action plan.

The Office of Congregational Transformation contracted with the General Board of Discipleship to provide leadership and congregational development for all congregations that participated in the monthly trainings. These trainings represented “Training Academies” in each of the districts and in various locations of the annual conference. Additionally, this office arranged a reduced fee for use of the Congregational Vitality Indicator for EPA congregations.

In 2008-09, plans are being made to provide focused support with these specific types of congregations: new church starts/restarts, urban congregations, mobilization efforts for Latino congregations, high potential churches, and plateaued/declining congregations.

In the late summer, this conference will provide partial scholarships to send teams of three persons, including the pastor and two key laity, from 10 congregations to attend the School for Congregational Development. Those congregations are part of the High Potential Church efforts.

This conference continues to remain faithful to Goal 4, which reads: “Work, by God’s grace to dismantle racism by confronting behaviors both individual and institutional that perpetuate the sin of racism,” through Healing the Wounds of Racism trainings.

*The Rev. Lillian Smith is Director of Connectional Ministries for the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

EPA congregations.
Campers Will Learn to Listen! God is Calling

This year at Pocono plateau, Carson-Simpson Farm, Gretna Glen and Camp Innabah the theme is Listen! God is Calling. Campers of all ages will come to participate in dozens of different activities offered at each of our conference camps. But one thing will be the same no matter what week of camp, what age, what camp – every camper will learn about how to listen to God's call.

The fact that God talks to us - that God calls us - is a wonderful thing. We are not left alone to make sense of our lives. We are not left alone to make it through the day. The God of the universe wants to communicate with us. The Bible talks about God's "Word" because God is a communicating God. The campers will look in God's word to the theme verse for this year – 2 Timothy 1:17: “God saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to God's own purpose and grace, given to us in Christ Jesus before all time.”

God's communication has its center in Jesus Christ. God is not distant and out of our reach, a God whom we can glimpse only if we try very hard and do everything right. Rather, God is in the midst of human life and history, in the person of Jesus. God is in all of human life, even death. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus.

Spring Events at EPA Conference Camp & Retreat Centers

All four of our conference camps are busy preparing for an exciting season of summer camp. But that doesn’t mean that nothing is happening right now! Check the following list of weekend retreats and single day activities that will be offered between now and the start of summer camp.

MAY 13 - Spring Fling – Gretna Glen
Spring Fling is an event for older adults with exceptional programs, snacks, a hot lunch, bingo, crafts, and walks in the beauty of Mount Gretna. Adults can come in groups or as individuals to fellowship and have fun with other Christian adults. Cost: $25.00

MAY 16 - Fly Fishing Weekend – Pocono Plateau
Learn how to tie flies and fly fish while becoming "fishers of men" at this weekend retreat led by Dan Helm. This retreat is for ages 8 through adult, although children under 18 must attend with a parent. Space is limited. $85 per person

MAY 18 - Open House & Day of Prayer – Gretna Glen
Come explore Gretna Glen and find out more about our summer camp program. Tours will be available by staff ready to answer questions about all of our programs. There will be a hotdog roast for Lunch and a worship and prayer gathering time at 5 pm. Join us in a time to lift up in prayer the camp, staff, volunteers, and campers. Cost: Free

MAY 31 - Camp Fest & Adventure Race – Gretna Glen
Camp Fest is a free day of Fun and Food with your friends and family. Camp activities will be available to try along with music and other festivities as we enjoy all that Gretna Glen has to offer. Cost: Free

JUNE 1 - Open House – Camp Innabah
Come visit the camp to take a tour, see old friends and make new ones.

JUNE 16 - First Day of Summer Camp – Carson-Simpson Farm, Camp Innabah
For more information on these events, summer camp, or to reserve space for a retreat in the fall, please contact the camps directly or visit their websites:

Carson-Simpson Farm
257-679-3122; www.csfarm.org
Gretna Glen
717-727-6526; www.gretnaglen.org
Camp Innabah
610-469-6111; www.innabah.org
Pocono Plateau
570-676-9665; www.poconoplateau.org

An EcoEternity Forest to be Consecrated at Pocono Plateau

Bishop Marcus Matthews will preside at a consecration ceremony for the EcoEternity Forest at Pocono Plateau Camp and Retreat Center on June 18 beginning at 11:00 a.m. The Camping Board has designated several acres at the southwest tip of Beaver Lake for this purpose.

An EcoEternity Forest is an alternative burial concept. The forest floor under mature forest trees are chosen as a dedicated final resting places for the cremated ashes of individuals, families, or friends. Memorial trees are usually selected by personally visiting an EcoEternity Forest well in advance and selecting a personal nature tree. Families may select a tree where they can be interned creating a Family Reunion Tree. Those who want to participate, but have a need for only one or two places under a tree, may acquire interment rights under a Community Tree. Special interest groups, like churches, fraternal orders, or friends who want to be interned together, may select exclusive interment rights under a Friendship Tree.

Selected trees are inventoried and marked by an arboretum tag allowing quick identification by family members and friends. In addition, a memorial plaque of 3 x 6 inch may be attached to the tree stating the family name and a personal message of the family tree lessee. This natural grave site is protected for up to 99 years.

EcoEternity Forests are preserved in a natural state. They are not parks. Head stones, flowers, or ornaments are not allowed. The trails in an EcoEternity Forest are designed to protect the natural beauty of the forest. These forests are mixed stands of indigenous trees, bushes and wild flowers. The concept is a bonding with nature: the decision for a natural burial place in an EcoEternity Forest will actively assist forest conservation and avoid clear cutting or developed for at least 99 years.

The camp and retreat program is very pleased to offer this new ministry. Our camps are places apart where people come to experience God's love in the midst of God's creation. Many persons in our conference have attended summer camp and retreats at Pocono Plateau as children and youth. Many life-long friendships have begun at the Plateau.

By creating a Public-Private Partnership service model, he was able to help preserve some of the most prestigious natural forests in Germany. Since the establishment of the first EcoEternity Forest in Germany in November 2001, over 120 similar forest burial grounds have been established leading to a significant change in German national burial culture. Baudach said: “First I thought this idea would only apply to Germans because of our close relationship with forests and trees. However, over time I noticed immigrants like Asians or Americans leased Memorial Trees in our forests. That is when I thought this may be a universal idea for people enjoying the outdoors and nature. South Korea and the U.S. are my first ventures in this regard.”

At Pocono Plateau, the conference is partnering with EcoEternity, LLC, founded in June 2006 by Jack Lowe and Axel Baudach. They adapted the European concept to U.S. culture and laws. EcoEternity, LLC partners with forest owners like churches, municipalities, or private forest owners that plan to preserve their forest property for extended periods. EcoEternity is responsible for the entire administration and the day to day contacts with people interested in pre-planning their interments. Pocono Plateau is responsible for maintaining the forest, conducting tours of the forest, and making arrangements at the time of an interment.

Any interested persons are invited to attend the consecration service. If attending, please RSVP by email to info@ecoeternity.com by June 11. The suggested dress code is Forest Casual (appropriate footwear for walking on a forest trail).

For more information, please contact Jim Wilkin, Director of Camping and Nurture Ministries, 610-666-9300 ext. 225, jim.wilkin@epaumc.org.

EcoEternity Forest
www.epaumc.org
May 31, 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. at St. Andrew's UMC, 999 York Road, Warminster, PA 18974; (215) 675-3745

What is the Lay Witness Mission? In the 1960's tens of thousands of laypeople were caught up in the new spiritual excitement of Lay Witness Missions. Lives were changed. Marriages were saved. Families were strengthened.

People were called to ordained ministry. Churches were revitalized. For 45+ years now, the Lay Witness Mission has been a proven tool for evangelism, faith sharing, developing small group ministries, deepening prayer life, and church renewal.

A team of 12-20 or more lay witnesses (depending on the size of the church) come to a church for a weekend. They stay in the homes of church members. They share their testimonies with the people of the church in large groups, in small groups, in home groups, in Sunday school classes and in Sunday morning worship. Parallel programs for children and youth are provided. All participants are given credit will be given for this event.

Who should take this training? Current lay witness team members who would like to update their skills and learn to be better witnesses. Christ Servant Ministers who would like to be given additional speaking opportunities through Lay Witness Missions (training credit will be given for this event). Lay people who have experienced a Lay Witness Mission in their church and would now like to go out on a team to share their faith with others like they saw modeled at their own church. Pastors and lay people who would like to get a taste of what a LWM is about. Anyone who is wanting to learn how to share their faith on a Lay Witness Mission team. YOU?? More team members are needed to serve on teams all over the country, but especially in Pennsylvania and surrounding states. Six missions have already been scheduled for PA or MD so far this year. The training is designed for adults and senior high youth.

Churches that have hosted Lay Witness Missions are now seeing the value of hosting a training so they don't just host a mission but send their people out on mission. Their congregations are enriched as their own people come back testifying of how God used them to touch someone else.

What is involved in the training? The training is an 8:30-5:30 one day event. Participants will receive an overview of a Lay Witness Mission weekend, learn about the dynamics of a team ministry, and receive some tips for preparing a good testimony and then have some time to put together a short 5-7 minute testimony. They will share that testimony in a small group setting. The group will learn about small group dynamics and leading small group discussions. They will experience some of the small group sessions of a Lay Witness Mission.

What is the cost? The cost of the training and the training manual is $20.

How do I register? You can register by contacting the Aldersgate Renewal Ministries office toll free 877-875-9572 and ask for Pam, or email pdow@aldersgate renewal.org. The registration deadline is Monday May 26th.

Aldersgate Renewal Ministries is an affiliate of the General Board of Discipleship.

Rev. Frank Billman, Director of Church Relations, Aldersgate Renewal Ministries, 121 East Avenue, Goodlettsville, TN 37072, 615.851.9912; Fbillman@aldersgaterev.org

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Book review: United Methodism at Forty

by Benjamin L. Hartley, deacon, Assistant Professor of Christian Mission at Palmer Theological Seminary

Telling our stories – as individuals and as a church – is often a complex undertaking. We have to ask ourselves: Where should we begin? What should we emphasize? What themes – if any – pulse through our story, driving it forward like a riff in a piece of soulful jazz?

The authors of United Methodism at Forty – who are all clergy members of the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference – had to grapple with these questions, and I imagine a spirited debate took place amongst themselves on how best to proceed.

The authors choose to organize the story of United Methodism at Forty in a thematic way as they note the debates and discernment United Methodists have engaged in over these years. The opening two chapters review the history of the denomination. The authors do an excellent job of sketching the basic contours of United Methodist debate. As one can imagine, an entirely objective portrayal of these debates would be an impossible task for anyone who has voted on contentious issues in Annual Conference for the preceding forty years. The reader will easily detect that the authors do not artificially hide their own take on things, while they also seek to be judicious in their comments about people and movements with whom they disagree. Advocates of any number of particular issues will undoubtedly be disappointed that “their issue” did not receive more comprehensive treatment. Such disappointments are inevitable.

In terms of specifics, this reviewer was struck by three things in particular which were especially well handled. The authors provide a nuanced – albeit brief – analysis of changes in the “Our Theological Task” doctrinal statement from 1972 to 1988. No two documents illustrate the doctrinal changes our denomination has undergone more than these two, and clergy would do well to refresh their memories of what was said in them. The 1988 statement was more conservative than the 1972 statement in many ways, but in other ways – such as in its emphasis on global Methodism – the 1988 statement strikes one as more embracing. Second, on the subject of Methodist missions, this reviewer was delighted to see the authors note the importance of another 1988 statement on our denomination’s theology of mission, Grace Upon Grace. Although approved by General Conference and still the best statement of our theology of mission, it is almost entirely unknown today – save for a few seminary professors of mission and United Methodist studies. Third, United Methodism at Forty does an excellent job of honoring the history of the Evangelical United Brethren denomination, even though the book focuses on events after the merger took place. Too often this history is not well understood in terms of the effects it continued to have on the UMC after 1968. It is fitting that three Eastern Pennsylvania clergy are the ones to remind the wider denomination of this heritage.

For all of its strengths, however, this reviewer was left wondering about the book’s portrayal of the worship debate as well as its discussion of global Methodism. The polarization between “traditional” and “contemporary” worship – while still strong – seems to have become less pronounced in recent years in many churches and United Methodist studies. The authors claim that “already there is evidence that younger people favor more traditional styles of worship” who would benefit from more empirical support, which any number of books on the “emerging church” could provide. On the topic of global Methodism the reader receives very little insight into how Methodism outside the United States has changed over the past forty years. For example, in the case of Africa, the 1968 merger corresponded with many countries gaining their independence from colonial powers. How the church navigated these post-independence years is a story that deserves to be told in more detail than was possible in this book.

Charles Yrigoyen, John McEllhenney, and Kenneth Rowe have done the denomination a great service in their attempt at a responsible retelling of our story. As one who was born a year after the 1968 merger that created the United Methodist Church, this reviewer finds this bit of storytelling especially valuable. My prayer, however, is not that we simply read this book for the nuggets of wisdom and insight that it contains, but that we as gather for our Annual Conference meetings over the next few years, this book will prompt us to ask our lay and ordained colleagues to tell us how they remember our story over the past 40 or 50 years. These colleagues will inevitably choose different events and debates to highlight which may be just as important as those covered in this book.

United Methodism at Forty has no concluding chapter. This is an effective decision on the part of the authors. It reminds us that like a good piece of jazz music the riff – our story of debate and discernment as United Methodists – will continue as we seek to prayerfully and faithfully improvise as a fellowship of Christians seeking the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

www.epaumc.org
Tax season and she’s in great form

Seventy-four-year-old June Wesbury is a retired CPA. For 11 weeks, this year, she organized a group of 15 other retirees from First UMC Lancaster and other congregations to serve people in Lancaster. Partnering with AARP and First UMC, her ministry team offered free tax-preparation to city and county residents.

“There are those of us who enjoy doing taxes,” says Wesbury, formerly of Arizona, who tackled other people’s tax quandaries with the doggedness she brings to swimming laps every morning at Willow Valley Retirement Communities. She had done the same ministry in Arizona and began this ministry in Lancaster last year. In 2007, Wesbury and her team completed several hundred free tax returns. As her team prepared for the 2008 season, she joked with Senior pastor Kent Kroehler that they might surpass 1000 returns this year.

Wesbury’s ministry team were all financial people, and the AARP trained each volunteer. Very strict rules apply. Wesbury’s ministry area was a second-floor Sunday School room at Christian Street Place, a community center of First UMC. Volunteers welcomed clients at four tables with laptops June and her husband, Stu, brought especially for the tax blitz. No one needed appointments for this first-come, first-served tax preparation ministry. From the first week in February until April 15th, the tax prep team worked from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Sometimes, the waiting line was short; in April, dozens of people sat on chairs in the hallway waiting to be served.

Most of the people clutched forms and financial records, but Wesbury’s flock included a grandfather holding a chubby baby, moms with a toddler, and a pregnant young woman who communicated with sign language, her mother interpreting. People of many races and cultures came for help. Most had little ability to pay a commercial firm, and many returns were relatively easy to prepare. “I don’t get joy out of visiting sick people in the nursing home,” Wesbury says, “but I do get joy out of doing this.” Besides, she adds, doing taxes for 40 people a day might keep dementia at bay.

Some people express appreciation by offering to pay. “We’re absolutely not allowed to take a thing,” Wesbury says, although she didn’t turn down a hug. “What they’ve got here is very much appreciated,” says Catherine, a nanny. “Last year I went to a (for-profit) tax agency, and it cost me more than I was getting back.”

Angelica, a 22-year-old receptionist, says, “It’s not rush-rush, get it, get out, like those big tax places…. When I asked a question, it was explained very well and I felt comfortable.”

One of Wesbury’s team members, Bill, is a 77 year old career naval officer who rose to vice admiral and now bunks at Willow Valley. Leafing through papers brought by a retired couple, Bill came across a safe of mutual fund shares. He couldn’t calculate the tax on the gain or loss because the couple didn’t know what the share price was at the time of purchase. “Need help,” he said, signaling Wesbury. Wesbury called the mutual fund company and got the answer to the question, and soon the retirees were on their way.

After each day’s ministry, Wesbury took the returns home and Efiled the Federal and State returns. Her final report tallies the huge impact:

- 1463 Clients served (Married filing jointly + 1 client)
- 775 Federal Tax returns filed
- 786 State Tax returns filed
- 245 Local income tax returns filed
- 178 Rent/Property Tax Rebate forms filed
- 661 Federal Stimulus returns filed
- 2607 Grand Total Returns prepared.

Wesbury’s tax preparation ministry is an intentional fulfillment of one of First UMC’s Strategic Emphases: Establish new, enduring, grace-filled relationships with residents and business people in our immediate neighborhood.

Attention users of Natural Church Development

By Christian Schwarz and Christoph Schalk

If your church has used this resource to study the strengths and weaknesses of your church and to develop a plan to move your church off a plateau to new growth and renewal, Aldersgate Renewal Ministries (ARM) wants you to know that we have team-led, local church renewal events that can help address some of the “minimum factors” that you may have discovered in your church. You can read more about all of our team-led, local church renewal events on our website www.AldersgateRenewal.org under Renewal Events. Of the 8 factors mentioned in the book, those that we can help address are listed below.

Factor #2 Gift Oriented Ministry ARM’s Venture in Discipleship weekend where a visiting team seeks to encourage and empower the laity of a local church to deepen their commitment.

Factor #3 Passionate Spirituality ARM’s Lay Witness Mission is a weekend where a visiting team of lay people come and share with the church how Jesus has touched and changed their lives. ARM’s Lord Teach Us to Pray weekend targets improving the individual’s prayer life.

Factor #4 Holistic Small Groups ARM’s Lay Witness Mission is an excellent way to begin or strengthen a small group ministry. A DVD on small group leader training will soon be available from ARM.

Factor #5 Inspiring Worship Service ARM’s Worship in Spirit and Truth helps participants explore what the bible has to say about worship, which should ground the construction of an inspiring worship service.

Factor #6 Need-oriented Evangelism ARM’s Lay Witness Mission and Venture in Discipleship both model lay people sharing their faith with others.

Donald E. Edwards Is One of Twenty-Two New Missionaries

Donald E. Edwards was one of twenty-two new missionaries commissioned and appointed on March 11, 2008, during the annual meeting of the directors of the General Board of Global Ministries, meeting at Stamford, Connecticut. Bishop Joel N. Martinez of San Antonio, president of the international mission agency, presided over the commissioning service and was joined by Bishop Felton E. May, interim general secretary, the Rev. Edith Glaveas, head of the agency’s mission personnel unite, and several directors of the board, in the laying on of hands.

Donald now serves as a Church and Community Worker with the Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON) program in New York City.

JFON is a network in mission of the United Methodist Committee on Relief, Annual Conferences, local congregations, and ecumenical partners. The General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church initiated Justice for Our Neighbors in 1999 as a response to increasingly complex immigration regulations stemming from the far-reaching immigration law on 1996. JFON clinics provide a safe haven to vulnerable immigrants who seek free legal counsel to solve their immigration problems.

Organized in the Southern New Jersey Annual Conference, Donald transferred to the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and served in extension ministry at The Pennington School, NJ, and as pastor of the First United Methodist Church, Easton. He had been an adjunct philosophy teacher since 2000. He received his JD in Law from Seton Hall in 1996 and has been in private practice.

Churches that pay their Conference Connectional Ministries and other Conference Obligations are encouraged to consider joining in a Covenant with Donald, whose missionary support code is 982926. His email address is donedwards.esj@gmail.com.

In the application process with the General Board of Global Ministries, Donald had the full recommendation of the EPA Conference Committee on Missionary Personnel, The Rev. Mindy McConly, chair.

Donald Edwards

www.epaumc.org
The 2008 Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference
Sheraton Philadelphia City Center Hotel

Living Connected as God’s People:
“Building the Connection”

Annual Conference Overview

TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2008
CLERGY SESSION
Hempfield UMC, 3050 Marietta Ave., Lancaster, PA.
9:30 am - Extension Ministry luncheon will follow Clergy Session

THURSDAY, MAY 29 & FRIDAY, MAY 30, 2008
222nd Session of the Annual Conference
Sheraton Philadelphia City Center Hotel
17th and Race Streets
Philadelphia, PA

Bishop Marcus Matthews will preach for Opening Worship on Thursday, May 29 at 1:45 p.m. Matthews is the pastoral leader for nearly 1,000 churches and 250,000 United Methodists in the Philadelphia Area of The United Methodist Church, which includes the Eastern Pennsylvania and Peninsula-Delaware Conferences. Matthews includes among his church-wide service being a member of the Board of Trustees of Africa University in Zimbabwe.

Bishop J. Lawrence McCleskey will preach for Evening Worship and the Memorial Service. In addition to being resident bishop of the Western North Carolina Conference, McCleskey represents the Council of Bishops on the denomination’s General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. He is vice-president of that board and chair of its Division of Higher Education. He is vice-president of the University Senate of The United Methodist Church.

The Rev. Kelvin Sauls will lead the Bible Studies. Currently he leads the Office of Congregational Development of The United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, with a passion for congregational revitalization and community organizing in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and the United Methodist Church in the U.S.

Marcia McFee, will design and lead various worship experiences at the upcoming annual conference and will invite people to engage the arts in worship. Marcia also designed and led the worship experiences at the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in Ft. Worth, Texas. She has been a worship leader at various United Methodist gatherings around the globe.

SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 2008
ORDINATION SERVICE
First United Methodist Church, 29 E. Walnut Street, Lancaster, PA
4:00 p.m. - Building the Connection: God’s Call
The Rev. Kelvin Sauls, preaching

Congregations are encouraged to support the Conference Mission Projects with offerings and donations for:
Hope for the Children | Scholarships for United Methodist Undergraduate and Seminary Students | The Methodist Home for Children

Are You On Track to Retire?
You will find out in just 30 minutes...
...by consulting Josie Martinez, Conference Liaison/Education and Plan Sponsor Relations, from the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The United Methodist Church.

Meetings will take place in private room Salon 7 on the Mezzanine Level of the Annual Conference Sheraton Hotel on Thursday, May 29, 1:30pm-7:00pm and Friday, May 30 – 8:00am-7:00pm.
Sign up NOW! Contact Janet A. Mills, Senior Support Associate, Pension and Benefits, Communication and Coordination 1-800-828-9093 ext. 213 or janet.mills@epaumc.org to schedule an appointment.

SAVE A LIFE with scripture and CPR TRAINING during HOLY ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

Date: Thursday, May 29, 2008
Time: 10:00am to 1:00pm
Location: Salon 7
Sheraton Philadelphia City Center Hotel
17th & Race Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

PREPAY Cost: $45.00 per person- Adult CPR
Send check to Evangeline Williams, Event Planner, EPA Conference of The United Methodist Church, PO Box 820, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0820 or by PayPal online credit card payment.
http://www.areufithealthservices.com/cpr_registration.php

Hurray and Sign up NOW! Contact Janet A. Mills, Senior Support Associate, Pension and Benefits, Communication and Coordination 1-800-828-9093 ext. 213 or janet.mills@epaumc.org to schedule an appointment. Limited space available.
REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

100 Congregational Transformation Team
John Fisher (LM)(NE); Member-at-Large (1)

100.1 Calling Disciples Resource Team
Co-Chairperson - Albert Cheese (LM)(NW)(1)
Jac Filzar (LM)(NE)(1); Steven Hughes (LM)(NE)(1); John G. Smith (C)(SW)(1)

100.2 Nurturing Disciples Resource Team
Ron Waite (C)(NW)(1); Herman T. Stewart (LM)(EA)(1); Karen Todd (LM)(SW)(1)

100.3 Addressing Community and World Issues Resource Team
Armando Ibarrata (C)(CE)(1); Valerie Long (LM)(NW)(1); David Ryan (C)(NE)(1)

100.4 Leadership Resource Team
Co-Chrps. - Debra McPhail (LM)(EA)(1)
Members: Anthony Arrington (C)(EA)(1); Gerald McGrath (C)(CE)(1)

100.5 Administrative Support Resource Team
Members: Lester Groves (C)(CE)(1)

105 Archives and History, Comm. on
Chairperson: Dr. Eugene Miller (LM)(NE)(1)

106 Board of Lay Ministry
Members-at-large: Brian Albert (C)(NW)(1); Deborah Kenworthy (LM)(NE)(1)
Donneth Lee (LM)(CE)(1); Joyce Zimmerman (LM)(NW)(1); Elizabeth Hearn (LM)(SE)(1)
Donna Jones (C)(Ed Goodley (C)
Steward Warner (C)(CE)

108 Camping Board
Class of 2009: John Ingham (C)(NE)(1); Allison Billman (LM)(SW)(1)
Class of 2012: Brunilda Martinez (C)(NW)(2); Steward Warner (C)(CE)(2)
Karen Brown Davis (LM)(SE)(2); John Lynch (C)(NW)(1)

203 Commission on Equitable Compensation
Members: David Fulmer (C)(SW)(1); Dr. Richard Baumbach (LM)
Lou Hornberger (C)(NW)(1)

301 Council on Finance and Administration
Kip Craven (LM)(SE)(1); Albert Mosley (C)(EA)(1); Brenda Milowich (LM)(NW)(1)

302 Board of Trustees
Chairperson: L. George Mamourian (C)(SW)(1)

303 Commission on Conference Sessions
Russell L. Durbin (LM)(EA)(1)(DR); W. Matthew Whayland III (C)(NW)(1)

304 Committee on Nominations
Anita Benson (LM)(SW)(1); Susan Slicker (C)(SW)(1)

305 Commission on Religion and Race
Leonard Washington (LM)(NW)(1); Navin Saravat (C)(NW)(1)

306 Commission on Status and Role of Women
DRs: Virginia Brown (LM)(SE)(1); Elaine Bortman (C)(CE)(1); Jo Ellen Litz (LM)(NW)(1)

308 Loan Fund Board
Class of 2009: Anne Williams (LM)(NE)(1)
Class of 2011: Carole Hostetter (LW)(NW)(1)
Class of 2012: Doris K. Dalton (C)(CE)(2); Sandy Knaub (C)(SW)(1); Michele Dawson (LM)(SE)(1)

309 Conference Education Society
Class of 2012: A. Moses Rathan Kumar, Carol Aday (LM)(SW)(2);
Alfred H. Adey (LM)(CE)(2)

310 Board of Pension & Health Benefits
Charles Fahringer (LM)(NW)(1)

BY DISTRICT

301.1 Central District Connectional Ministries Fund Team
Benjamin Caldwell (LM)(1); Janelle Munro (LM)(1)

400.1 Central District Transformation Team
David Tatgenhorst, Chairperson (C)(1); Carlotta Madison (C)(1); Rick J. Rinert (C)(1); Blaine R. Wenger (C)(1)

401.1 Central District Committee on the District Superintendency
Richard H. Andrews (C)(1); Jose Ayala (C)(1); Gladys McGrath (LM)(1)

402.1 Central District Committee on Ordained Ministry
Mary Ammon (LM)(1); Carol Black (LM)(1); Beverly Conner (LM)(1)
Cheryl Ellerbee (LM)(1); Maxime Jaouen (C)(1)

403.1 Central District Board of Church Location and Building
Mary Jane Kirby, Chairperson (C)(2012)(1); Tracy L. Bass (C)(2012)(1)

407.1 East District Committee on the District Superintendency
Virginia Miles (C)(2); Milagros Vega (LM)(1)

407.2 East District Committee on Ordained Ministry
Dan Siddle, Chairperson (C)(1); Cookie Frances Lee Bracey (C)(2)
Cynthia L. M. Brubaker (C)(2); Elaine Calhink (LM)(1); Joyce Dence (LM)(1); Grant L. Johnson (C)(1); Clarita Anderson (LM)(1)

407.3 East District Board of Church Location and Building
Gayle Isselbe (LM)(2008)(1)

401.4 Northeast District Committee on Lay Leadership
Ruth Baker (LM)(1); Sharon Bean (LM)(1); Donna Bok (LM)(1)

404.1 Northeast District Board of Church Location and Building
Murray Y. Alderfer (LM)(2012)(2); Renee Delhaven (LM)(2012)(2)
Richard Freas (LM)(2008)(1); David G. Goss (C)(2010)(1); Carol V. Lawver (C)(2012)(1); Thomas S. Robinson, III (C)(2012)(2); Caroyln Shaplin (LM)(2012)(1); Jeffrey Snyder (LM)(2012)(2)

401.2 Northeast District Committee on the District Superintendency
Robin G. Fisher, Chairperson (C)(1); Faral Muzorewa (C)(1)
Brian Reading (C)(1); Dennis Scorsie (LM)(1); Joyce Zimmerman (LM)(1)

403.2 Northwest District Board of Church Location and Building
Lee Smedley (LM)(1)

402.2 Northwest District Committee on Ordained Ministry
Robin G. Fisher (C)(1); Daniel Henn (C)(1); James McNeil (C)(1)
Lee Smokey (LM)(1)

402.3 Northwest District Board of Church Location and Building
Timothy J. Patterson (C)(2008)(1); Thomas Steiger (C)(2008)(1)

403.1 Southeast District Committee on the District Superintendency
Clyde S. Flaherty, Jr., Chairperson (C)(1)

403.2 Southeast District Committee on Ordained Ministry
Joan Stout, Chairperson (C)(1)

403.3 Southeast District Board of Church Location and Building
Gail Armstrong, Chairperson (LM)(2011)(2); Mark Beideman (C)(2011)(1); Robert S. Booker (C)(2010)(2); Sharon L. Vandegriff (C)(2009)(2)

403.7 East District Board of Church Location and Building
Debra Davis (C)(2011)(1); Craig Lenhard (LM)(2011)(1); Bruce Orf (LM)(2011)(2)

404.6 Southwest District Nominations
Dianne Berlin (LM)(1)

409.1 Southwest District Committee on the District Superintendency
Dianne Berlin (LM)(1); Joseph Forrey (LM)(1); John Godikunst (C)(1)
Eileen Runner (LM)(1); Don Sherick (LM)(1)

410.1 Southwest District Board of Church Location and Building
Steward Warner (C)(1); Robert R. Shank (C)(2); Balu Theodore (LM)(2); Kea One Kale Yu (C)(1)

410.3 Southwest District Board of Church Location and Building
Timothy J. Patterson (C)(2008)(1); Thomas Steiger (C)(2008)(1)

410.1 Southeast District Committee on the District Superintendency
Gayle Isselbe (LM)(2008)(1)

410.1 Southwest District Committee on Ordained Ministry

410.1 Southeast District Committee on Ordained Ministry
John Ingham (LM)(1); Allison Billman (LM)(1)

410.1 Southeast District Board of Church Location and Building
Gayle Isselbe (LM)(2008)(1)

410.3 Central District Board of Church Location and Building
Mary Jane Kirby, Chairperson (C)(2012)(1); Tracy L. Bass (C)(2012)(1)

410.1 Southeast District Committee on Ordained Ministry
Mary Burger (LM)(1); James Garrett (C)(1); Susan Stiker (C)(1)

410.1 Southeast District Board of Church Location and Building
Sharon L. Vandegriff (C)(2010)(1); Robert S. Booker (C)(2010)(2); Sharon L. Vandegriff (C)(2009)(2)

410.1 Southwest District Spirit Network
Dianne Berlin (LM)(1)

410.1 Southwest District Committee on the District Superintendency
Dianne Berlin (LM)(1); Joseph Forrey (LM)(1); John Godikunst (C)(1)
Eileen Runner (LM)(1); Don Sherick (LM)(1)

410.1 Southwest District Committee on Ordained Ministry
Mary Burger (LM)(1); James Garrett (C)(1); Susan Stiker (C)(1)

410.1 Southwest District Board of Church Location and Building
Debra Davis (C)(2011)(1); Craig Lenhard (LM)(2011)(1); Bruce Orf (LM)(2011)(2)

410.1 Southwest District Nominations
Dianne Berlin (LM)(1)

410.1 Southwest District Youth Council
Sarah Morehouse, Co-Chairperson (LM)(1); Rosemary Asencio (LM)(1); Rachel Davis (LM)(1); Roseann Goldberg (C)(1)
Lee Anna Melendez (LM)(1); Ashley Santiago (LM)(1); Aubrey Ulric (LM)(1)
When Katherine Commale learned at age 5 that—a child dies from mosquito-borne malaria every 30 seconds, she said, “Mom, we need to send them bed nets right away.”

Her mother, Lynda, agreed. Now age 7, Katherine, a first-grader from Downingtown, PA, has collected more than $40,000 to send insecticide-treated sleeping nets to Africa as part of the Nothing But Nets campaign, supported by the people of The United Methodist Church.

In a convention center arena filled with thousands of delegates and guests, Katherine told the 2008 United Methodist General Conference that she wants “everyone who needs one to have a bed net.”

The brown-eyed youngster was introduced April 24 as a sign of hope in a denomination besieged in recent decades with steady U.S. declines in the numbers of members, worship attendance, professions of faith and baptisms. In 2006, the average age of United Methodists was over age 50, while less than 4 percent of its clergy was under the age of 35.

“Thank you for being a witness, a model for the rest of us,” Bishop John Hopkins told Katherine on the assembly stage as the audience applauded.

Seven-year-old Katherine Commale and her mother, Lynda, members of Hopewell United Methodist Church in Downingtown, PA, wave to delegates at the 2008 United Methodist General Conference after giving Bishop John Hopkins a Nothing But Nets T-shirt. UMNS photos by Mike DuBose.

United Methodist Night at the Phillies

Phillies™

VS

Braves

JULY 26, 2008

3:55 p.m.

For more information contact Ross Brightwell at rossbrightwell@verizon.net

How to Reach Unchurched People in Your Community

One-Day Seminar

“Fast-Paced and engaging. Lots of good, practical information...”

Saturday, May 17, 2008

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Thorndale UMC

3503 E Lincoln Hwy, Thorndale

“The seminar was an answer to prayer for our churches! It was packed with information, research, guideposts and practical ideas to help any size church be more effective in Christ’s command to go and make disciples.”

J. Hurley Thomas, Winston - Salem District Superintendent

For more information, contact Carol von Minden at: 800-828-9093 x 228 or carol.vonminden@epaumc.org

Sponsored by the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference