Several hundred persons from The Eastern Pennsylvania and Peninsula-Delaware Conferences welcomed Bishop Peggy Johnson in a Service of Installation on Saturday, September 13, 2008. Bishop Johnson is assigned to The Philadelphia Area, where she will shepherd the 1,000 churches of the Area and their 250,000 members.

Held at Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Wilmington, DE, the worship service opened with a Native American flute melody by Mrs. Boe Harris. Rev. Chansoon Lim directed The Korean Choir and Liturgical Dance Group of Wilmington Korean UMC.

Bishop Johnson was introduced and certified by the Rev. Dr. Charles Yrigoyen, first elected clergy to General Conference from Eastern Pennsylvania, and was presented by Mr. Royal Pinder, chairperson of the Philadelphia Area Episcopacy Committee.

“The Holy Spirit has anointed you for the task ahead, and charges you to exercise the gifts that the Holy Spirit has deposited within you,” said Bishop Violet Fisher, who had served as superintendent in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference prior to her own election. “The task before you is never as great as the power behind you, Bishop,” exclaimed Bishop Fisher. “Today you are highly favored by our God!”

Clergy and lay persons representing both annual conferences presented Bishop Johnson with the signs of episcopal ministry. Nine persons represented the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference in the presentation of these gifts: Dr. Mary White, Conference Lay Leader: the crosier; Rev. Andrew L. Foster III, Board of Ordained Ministry: the stole; Ms. Ann C. Jacob, Conference Youth Leader: a Bible; Rev. Alicia Julia-Stanley, Emilie UMC: a globe; Mr. Ben Botti, Volunteers in Mission Coordinator: water to represent baptism; Rev. Nancy H. Ross, Order of Elder: the bread and cup; Rev. Deborah Tankesley-Brown, Deacon, a towel and basin representing service; Rev. Dr. Christopher Kurien, Dean of the Cabinet: the Book of Discipline; and Rev. Rodney Miller, Conference Secretary: a gavel and conference Journal.

The Rev. Dr. David Fife, Bishop’s Assistant, offered a Prayer for Illumination. The Rev. Lillian Smith, EPA Conference Director of Connectional Ministries read the Epistle Lesson from Titus 1: 7-9.

The Gospel Lesson, Matthew 25: 31-46, was presented in a deaf ministry drama, translated into English from American Sign Language, illustrating persons who did or did not show compassion: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Bishop Johnson preached, beginning with a story of being in college at Lebanon Valley (which is in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference), and being startled awake at 3 a.m. one night to the trumpet blast of the “Red Avenger,” and wondering if she had been raptured, or taken to heaven. “Sometimes I prayed that the Lord would come before the next exam,” she joked. “Can I be sure? Will I go to heaven? Yes, we can be! Matthew 25 includes the parables of how we are to live; the criteria is humble ordinary acts of kindness. Our great and glorious King asks us to be kind.” She gave the example of John Wesley, who walked the streets for six hours one day, raising funds for a poor widow, having nothing to give herself, since he had already given it all away already. “Together we can do so much,” she continued, “for the poor and sick, in welcoming new persons, especially strangers, and including them in our minis-
Calendar of Events

OCTOBER
1 - Nothing But Nets Rally at City Hall in Philadelphia, PA. See page 12 for more information.
2 - Nothing But Nets Malaria Seminar. See page 12.
3 - Nothing But Nets Dinner. See page 12.
4 - Healing Seminar and Service @ Hope Church 9:00 a.m. thru 12:00 p.m. featuring Dr. Jill Smith of Penn State University’s Hershey Medical Center. She brings years of experience in dealing with those who are physically, mentally and emotionally ill and how to deal with medicine, science and Christianity in today’s world. Hope UMC, 17 North Monocacy Creek Road, Douglassville, PA.
5 - United Methodist Men’s Breakfast, Saturday, Oct. 4th, 8:00 a.m., Fellowship Hall, Jarretttown UMC, 1460 limelick Pike, Dresher, PA 19025. Our guest speaker is Maj. Chris Downey, U.S. Army. Prior to the breakfast, our UMM Bible Study will meet at 7:00 a.m. in the JUMC Friendship Room. For further information, please contact Brightwell 215/643-1206 or Barry Schultz 610-332-5525 or visit www.jarretttown.com.
6 - Cornwall Manor Society to host Fall Festival & Auction. Crafts, homemade candy, a live auction event and silent auction, antiques appraisals, and fun for the kids will be featured at the 5th annual Cornwall Manor Society Fall Festival on Saturday, The Fall Festival will run from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., rain or shine. There is no admission fee. For information or directions call 717-273-6747 or visit www.cornwallmanor.org.
7 - Conference Youth Rally The Big Event – Transformers. More than meets the eye!! See page 12.
8 - World Communion Sunday. For more information and resources for your church go to www.umcmin.org.
9 - Dialogue on Race in the Church and Society in the chapel of Eastern University’s Palmer Seminary on Lancaster and City Line Avenues from 7:30-9:00 in the evening. We invite you and one of your church leaders to join us for this event and for a reception following. Please e-mail abice@eastern.edu or call 610-225-5700 to reserve your place(s). Call or e-mail by September 30 as seating is limited.
10 - The Rural Church Institute 2008. All rural churches are invited to come and be a part of the 2008 training event guaranteed to stimulate church growth and provide vibrant ministry in their communities. Inquiries may be addressed to Rev. Marvin Taylor, Sr., St. Thomas Charge, 3629 Cainhoy Road, Huger, SC 29450-833 349-4188 (phone); 843-736-4388 (fax); taylor1254@comcast.net. The St. Thomas Charge is a resource center for Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century.
11 - Time Traveler Event at Historic St. George’s - 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. Our popular Time Traveler event has been re-formatted for adults … bring a group and experience Methodist history where it began in Pennsylvania. For more information and to reserve your space, please call or email: Donna Miller, Administrator, Historic St. George’s United Methodist Church, 235 N. Fourth Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106; 215-525-7788, www.historiest George.org.
12 - Boehm’s Chapel Apple Festival - 9 a.m.3 p.m. Come early and watch our locally well-known apple butter being made in kettles over open fires. View the history display and video inside the oldest Methodist meeting house in Pennsylvania while you tap your toes to the gospel music of The Howard Simmons Orchestra Reunited. Rain or Shine. Free parking on site. Boehm’s Chapel, 13 West Boehm’s Road, Willow Street, PA 17584; 717-464-4885; www.boehmschapel.org.
13 - Spiritual Fatherhood – If you are a divorced, separated and/or remarried father who yearns to be a more consistent, healthy and positive presence in the lives of your kids, we have a safe place for you to share your insights and feelings with other men in the same position and to find the tools to be the best father you can be! The group is led by family therapist and Methodist pastor David McMillan and Episcopal clergywoman Elizabeth Eisenstadt Evans. Course meets Thursdays from Oct. 16-Nov. 20, 7:30 p.m. to St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church, 2440 Conestoga Road, Chester Springs, PA 19425. For more information please contact Dave at 610-383-7380, or Elizabeth at 610-247-7172. The fee for the course if $180.00 if this is a hardship, please contact us directly.
16 - 18 - Celebrations of the South Asian National Census for United Methodists (SANCUM) October 16 (Thursday)-18 (Saturday), 2008 @ Best Western Airport Plaza Inn and Conference Center St. Louis (Bridgeport), MO 63144. Open to all United Methodist lay and clergy of all age groups of South Asian descent. Register for free! For more information or to register: www.epaumc.org/NewsDetails.aspx?PageID=11440.
17 - 19 - An all-day Early Response Team training event guaranteed to stimulate church growth and provide vibrant ministry in their communities. Pre-registration is required. Please contact Ben Botti at 215-733-8967 or bobbott@centennials.org or you would like to attend.
18 - Group Life Conference 2008: Satellite broadcast from Willow Creek Community Church at First UMC in Schuylkill Haven. Pastors who attend will be eligible to receive CEUs from BOOM for their attendance (between 0.6 and 0.7 CEUs). For more information and a poster: http://www.epaumc.org/NewsDetails.aspx?PageID=11256.
19 - Come early and watch our locally well-known apple butter being made in kettles over open fires. View the history display and video inside the oldest Methodist meeting house in Pennsylvania while you tap your toes to the gospel music of The Howard Simmons Orchestra Reunited. Rain or Shine. Free parking on site. Boehm’s Chapel, 13 West Boehm’s Road, Willow Street, PA 17584; 717-464-4885; www.boehmschapel.org.
20 - Nothing But Nets Rally at City Hall in Philadelphia, PA. See page 12. For more information: 717-872-4313; email: execdirboehms@deejazz.com or www.boehmschapel.org.
21 - Spiritual and Pastoral Formation Event - The Body of Christ Alive in Prayer at Camp Hebron: 975 Camp Hebron Rd Halifax PA, 17032. For more information go to www.campherebron.org.
22 - Women In Professional Ministry Fall Gathering, Tuesday Oct. 28, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. St. Matthew’s UMC of Valley Forge. Bishop Peggy Johnson will join us for our fall gathering. All women in professional ministry are invited to come to a “morning apart” to share, collaborate and learn from each other. For more information: www.epaumc.org/NewsDetails.aspx?PageID=1445.
23 - Bohem’s Chapel Apple Festival - 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Come early and watch our locally well-known apple butter being made in kettles over open fires. View the history display and video inside the oldest Methodist meeting house in Pennsylvania while you tap your toes to the gospel music of The Howard Simmons Orchestra Reunited. Rain or Shine. Free parking on site. Boehm’s Chapel, 13 West Boehm’s Road, Willow Street, PA 17584; 717-464-4885; www.boehmschapel.org.
24 - Bishop’s Advent Day Apart for Clergy. 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Aldersgate UMC, Wilmington, DE. Guest Preacher: bishop Violet Fisher.
25 - United Methodist Student Sunday. For more information and resources for your church go to www.umcgiving.org.
26 - First Sunday of Advent For resources, go to: www.gbod.org.

NOVEMBER
12 - 19 - International Sabeel Conference. Sabeel, a peace movement of Palestinian Christians, sponsors pilgrimage and witness visits to the Holy Land. For more information, go to: www.fosna.org.
24 - Bishop’s Advent Day Apart for Clergy. 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Aldersgate UMC, Wilmington, DE. Guest Preacher: bishop Violet Fisher.
30 - United Methodist Student Sunday. For more information and resources for your church go to www.umcgiving.org.

JANUARY
13-15 - Bishop’s Midwinter Retreat for Clergy and Spouses. Clarion Hotel, Ocean City, MD.

For more information on these and other Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Events go to: www.epaumc.org
Southeast District welcomes Dr. Kurien

by Suzy Keenan

The congregations of the Southeast District welcomed the Rev. Dr. Christopher Jacob Kurien on Sunday, September 14, at Grove United Methodist Church in West Chester. The Southeast District is one of six districts in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and includes parts of Delaware and Chester Counties, and towns and urban areas such as Chester, Media, West Chester, Coatesville, Downingtown, Kennett Square, and Oxford.

Dr. Kurien was formally installed as a superintendent of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference when he became superintendent of the Northwest District. He was re-assigned to the Southeast District beginning July 1, 2008.

Clergy and lay persons gathered in a reception to speak with Dr. Kurien, and to share news of their churches’ ministry. Then all gathered in Grove UMC’s historic sanctuary for a time of worship and prayer, and were welcomed by Grove’s senior pastor, The Rev. Jack Wright. The Rev. Herbert Coe of St. Daniel’s UMC in Chester offered a prayer for Dr. Kurien, and his wife, Susan Coe, minister of music for St. Daniels played the piano and sang.

Dr. Kurien said, “I am thankful Jesus Christ called me to his service and for God’s faithfulness!” He first expressed his sadness over the critical illness of his father-in-law, who lives in India. Because of the illness, Dr. Kurien’s wife, Christie Jacob was not present at the reception, having travelled to India to be with her father.

“I would like to see congregations excited about ministry and wanting to make a difference.” Speaking of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference emphasis to make disciples of Jesus Christ, Dr. Kurien said, “If a congregation can’t take in one new member in a year, then there is a problem! We will grow together as God’s children. I am color blind. I love all God’s children. The Southeast District is a very diverse district – we have it all! What a wonderful gift!”

“I look forward to accomplishing a lot for God, including children and youth ministry on the district. We are currently looking for a district youth coordinator.” He added, “I will do all I can to support ministry in the local church. I pray together we can do great things for God. The only way we can do this is with your prayers.”

*Suzy Keenan is the Director of Communications at the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church.

In Memoriam

Mrs. Marilyn Sponsler, spouse of Rev. Melvin G. Sponsler, Jr., retired elder past away on September 11, 2008. Rev. Sponsler served the following appointments: Ender-Powells Valley, Miami Chapel UM, Ohio; Clarksgurh Christian Church, Manheim; Salem; Campbctown; former Allentown: Trinity, Mountville; St. Paul’s, and Mount Hope. He retired in 1998. The viewing was held Sunday, September 14, at Glossbrenner United Methodist Church. She is survived by her husband, Rev. Mel Sponsler, and her four children, Timothy, married to Melanie Bryan Sponsler, Orlando, FL; Tamara, married to Daniel Johnson, Mount Joy, Theodore Sponsler, Mountville, and Thomas, married to Sharon Buttemere, Budapest, Hungary, and seven grandchildren, Sarah, Jenna, Luke, Mark, Andrew, Jessica, and Jordan. Condolences may be sent to Rev. Melvin Sponsler, 211 Willow Valley Square, Lancaster, PA 17602. Memorial contributions to Marilyn’s name may be made to: Hospice of Lancaster County, P.O. Box 4125, Lancaster, PA 17604-4125. Online condolences to www.sheeztfuneralhome.com.

Mrs. Katherine E. Shannon, spouse of the Rev. John A. Shannon, retired elder past on September 13, 2008. Rev. Shannon served the following appointments: Jim Thorpe: Grace-St. Paul’s; Bensalem; Cedarville, Ohio: Grace, Downingtown, and Clifton Heights. A memorial service was held at Williams-Lombardo Funeral Home Inc., on Wednesday, September 17, 2008. She is survived by her husband, John, a daughter, Joann Wise, and a son, John A. Shannon. Condolences may be sent to the Rev. John A. Shannon, 248 Sanford Road, Upper Darby, PA 19082. Memorial contributions may be sent to Clifton UMC, 135 S. Springfield Road, Clifton Heights, PA 19038.

Rev. Richard W. Watson, 89, retired local pastor, on Sunday, September 14, 2008. He served for the past eleven years as pastor of Birdsboro: Christ UMC on the Central District. Funeral services were held at Mt. Carmel United Methodist Church. He is survived by his wife, Roberta Watson, daughter, Charlotte Stevens, son, Richmond C. Watson, 6 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Roberta Watson, 2870 S. Hill Camp Road, St. Peter’s, PA 19470. Contributions, in lieu of flowers, may be made in his memory to Christ United Methodist Church, 114 Bird St., Birdsboro, PA 19508.

Mrs. Codell Boyer, spouse of the Rev. Eugene Boyer, full-time Local Pastor. Mrs. Boyer passed away on September 16, 2008. Rev. Boyer has served the following appointments: Akron: Mt. Zion, Allentown: Emmanuel, and Black Creek (current appointment). A viewing and Memorial Service were held on September 20, 2008, at St. Johns UMC, 165 Firchouse Road, Grantville, PA 17028. She is survived by her husband, Eugene, a daughter, Kelley, and sons, Christopher and Robert. Condolences may be sent to the Rev. Eugene Boyer, 185 Golf Course Road, Sugarloaf, PA 18449. Memorial contributions may be sent to: Black Creek UMC Memorial Fund, 158 Golf Course Road, Sugarloaf, PA 18449.

Rev. Dr. A. Jane Harner, retired Elder, on September 16, 2008. Rev. Dr. Harner served the following appointments: Schoeneck: West Memorial, Lancaster: Bethany, Springton: Salem, Hellertown: St. Paul, Palmerton: Salem, and Former Reading: Faith. She was ordained in 1957, one of the first two women to be ordained in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. She and her husband, The Rev. William E. Harner (who predeceased her in 2007), were the first clergy couple in the conference. A viewing will be held on Saturday September 20, 2008, 2:00 – 5:00 p.m., followed by a memorial service at 7:00 p.m., at Cornwall Manor, 1 Boyd Street, Cornwall, PA 17016, 717-773-2647 or 800-222-2476. She is survived by her daughters, Louise Harner and Cindy Karr. Condolences may be sent to the family in care of: Ms. Louise Harner, 1911 Elder Street, Reading, PA 19604. To read a front page article from NEWSpirit, June 2007, on the 50th anniversary of Dr. Harner’s ordination, go to: http://www.epaumc.org/pdf/June07.pdf.
College students meet million-meal challenge

Students pack meals at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill during Stop Hunger Now's Million Meal by John Gordon

Volunteers are among more than 4,000 participants assisting at three North Carolina campuses.

Take more than 4,000 students and volunteers, add tons of rice and soy, then blend well for one day.

Those ingredients made for a record-breaking challenge as students from eight North Carolina colleges and universities joined together to pack more than a million meals for hungry people. The food is now en route to El Salvador, Haiti and India.

Stop Hunger Now, a Raleigh-based non-profit organization, held the Aug. 23 challenge on the campuses of North Carolina State University at Raleigh, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and East Carolina University at Greenville.

“We're really excited to be here and hopefully we can make a big difference,” said Mariana Chuck, a Duke University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and East Carolina University at Greenville.

"I didn't realize, like, how many people were hungry in the world," said Lauren Vineette, a student and member of the Raleigh Wesley Foundation, a United Methodist ministry for college students. "This is the highlight of my day. I think it's pretty cool that we can come together and do this."

"Twenty-five-thousand people a day die from hunger-related illnesses," Metcalfe said. "There's plenty of food to feed everyone on the planet. So, you know, why is this not being done?"

Stop Hunger Now began feeding the world's hungry 10 years ago. In that time, the organization has sent more than 60 countries.

The organization's previous record for a one-day packaging event involving college students was 300,000 meals.

"We're in the midst of an unprecedented global food crisis," Buchanan said. "There's been a perfect storm of factors that have come together that have created a global food crisis that is threatening millions more people."

Buchanan said an increased demand for beef and chicken in China and India, combined with ethanol production in the United States, has increased the demand for corn and driven up prices. The recent sharp rise in fuel prices also has increased the cost of providing meals to developing countries.

The Rev. Steve Hickle, chairman of the board of Stop Hunger Now and pastor of Fairmont United Methodist Church in Raleigh, said the University Million Meal Event went a step beyond providing meals to the hungry. It also helped raise awareness.

Students load food boxes for distribution to El Salvador, Haiti and India.

Student Brittany Johnson, another member of the Raleigh Wesley Foundation, said teamwork helped exceed the 1 million goal by more than 10,000 meals. "I think at least 4,000 volunteers are all getting a message of hunger and taking that to heart," Hickle said. “So it's like a whole generation of people that's been awakened to what they can actually do about world hunger—to help raise the funds and work with the delivery system that is in place and really have an impact."

"There are so many people here that are just helping, and we get so much accomplished with everyone working together," she said.

Stop Hunger Now holds similar events, though on a smaller scale, at churches. With the help of students, churches and other volunteers, Buchanan believes the organization's goal is attainable.

"The vision of Stop Hunger Now is simply to achieve a world without hunger," he said. "We can do that—in our lifetime—if all of us simply will do what we can."

*Gordon is a freelance producer based in Marshall, Texas.*

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The Nation in Brief

The Rev. Donald E. Messer, executive director of the Center for the Church and Global AIDS, Centennial, Colo., has been elected by the United Methodist Global AIDS Fund Committee to serve as chairperson. He succeeds Bishop Fritz Mutti and his wife, Erta Mutti, who have led the committee since its inception in 2005. Messer wrote the original legislation adopted by the 2004 General Conference that established the fund. To support the Global AIDS Fund, donate online, contribute through any local United Methodist church or send gifts to UM-COR Advance #98234 Global AIDS Fund, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10108-9068. Contributors also may call (800) 554-8285 to make a credit card donation. For more information, visit the Global AIDS Fund website or UM-COR United Methodist Global AIDS Fund.

Do churches with contemporary worship grow more than churches with traditional worship? How does conflict affect congregational giving? Where are churches placing their ministry emphasis? These and other questions relevant to church life will be explored in a United Methodist survey being conducted by the Office of Analysis and Research of the church’s General Council on Finance and Administration. Nearly 10,000 churches have been randomly selected to participate in an online survey, and another 200 will participate by mail. “We will gain new insights on worship styles, ministries, age demographics, and a number of topics that can’t be gleaned from statistical forms,” said Scott Brewer, director of research for the denomination. Survey results are scheduled to be available by the end of this year at www.gcfa.org.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief is working with United Methodist in the U.S. Gulf Coast region to respond to Hurricane Gustav. UM-COR encourages United Methodists to ship flood buckets and other kits to the UM-COR Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La. Information about flood bucket preparation can be found at http://new. gbhm-umc.org/umcor/getconnected/supplies/floodbucket/. Credit-card donations can be made at www.givecommission.org.

“Beams of Heaven As I Go” and “Thy Way O Lord” were the two hymns that the congregation at Shiloh United Methodist Church was singing on the day before Hurricane Gustav ripped off their roof. Four days following the Sunday worship service, the church had died down and the rain finally stopped, hymnals were still open on the waterlogged piano and colorful artwork still hung on the church’s buckling paneled walls. The scene was poignant as United Methodist Bishop William W. Hutchinson toured the wind-whipped sanctuary with representatives of the Louisiana Annual (regional) Conference and the United Methodist Committee on Relief. The contingent was visiting churches in the state’s hardest hit areas on Sept. 4 to assess damage from the Sept. 1 storm.

Experienced Red Cross volunteers from all over the United States know that the “Broadmoor Hilton” is the place to stay in southern Louisiana.

Broadmoor United Methodist Church carried the nickname because of its Christian hospitality after housing disaster relief workers for the American Red Cross following Hurricane Katrina three years ago. Today, the Baton Rouge church is providing accommodations for some 170 Red Cross volunteers in the wake of Hurricane Gustav on Sept. 1. Brian Flynn from Columbus, Ohio, calls the people of Broadmoor the “most hospitable host group that he has ever worked with” in his role as shelter coordinator.

Members of Hillcrest United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tenn., learned quickly how to show radical hospitality when the church sheltered hurricane evacuees from the Gulf Coast. As members drove up for their early-morning worship service on Aug. 31, more than 100 people had arrived on five buses from New Orleans to escape Hurricane Gustav. Gustav was the first emergency for which Hillcrest has served as a Red Cross shelter since leaders signed up the Nashville congregation as a potential shelter site 10 years ago. “We have been overwhelmed by people in the congregation wanting to respond,” said Rev. Paul Purdue, pastor of Hillcrest UMC.

Church World Service has announced the opening of its 2008-09 CROP Hunger Walk season. “As the United States and the world come to grips with a food crisis that has seen supplies dwindle and prices skyrocket, more people than ever are finding it difficult to provide for their families, and CROP Hunger Walks are more important than ever,” said CWS Executive Director John L. McCullough, a United Methodist pastor. To find a CROP Hunger Walk near you, go to www.cropwalk.org or call (888) 297-2767.
African bishops renew call against poverty

by Linda Green

Describing poverty as a " scourge to human dignity" that " robs people of hope," United Methodist bishops in Africa have issued a church-wide call for renewed ministry to bring hope and greater prosperity to poor people on their continent.

Meeting for their second time, the 13 bishops that make up the church’s African College of Bishops outlined new actions to combat poverty in a Sept. 11 letter sent from the campus of United Methodist-related Africa University in Mutare, Zimbabwe.

The bishops expressed “righteous indignation and the current plight of our continent” and resolved to work with professional, community and nongovernmental organizations to alleviate poverty in Africa. They view Africa University as a vital resource toward that goal.

“Poverty robs people of hope, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a call to hope, salvation and abundant life," they wrote. "In Africa, we see poverty manifesting itself in environmental degradation, disease, hunger and malnutrition, inequitable access to education and even the exposure of some of the most vulnerable among us—the girl child, for example—to sexual and economic exploitation.”

While appreciative of the Holy Spirit for bringing peace and stability to areas of conflict in Africa, they expressed concern for those displaced and still suffering as a result of the violence. They called upon churches in Africa and across the world to “continue to advocate for tolerance and understanding of differing views, cultures, ethnic and religious affiliations as well as for the equitable sharing and use of God’s gifts for the common good.”

The bishops’ call was consistent with an emphasis by The United Methodist Church to eliminate poverty and diseases of poverty in the world.

Last April in Fort Worth, Texas, the 2008 General Conference approved four focus areas of ministry for the denomination for the foreseeable future. Two of those areas to engage in ministries with the poor for the foreseeable two years ago, the African bishops have collectively focused on poverty and its manifestations. During their most recent meeting Sept. 8–12, they shared individual progress and action plans being implemented in their respective conferences.

“Poverty robs people of hope, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a call to hope, salvation and abundant life." (Photo by Andrea Stevens.)

Since they began meeting as a college of bishops two years ago, the African bishops have collectively focused on poverty and its manifestations. During their most recent meeting Sept. 8-12, they shared individual progress and action plans being implemented in their respective conferences.

“It is our belief that Africa has all that it needs to build a future with peace, greater prosperity and hope,” they wrote in their letter.

The African bishops’ letter also addressed climate change, youth migration and corruption, resolving to: Engage the membership of The United Methodist Church in Africa and the wider community, including youth, in practical efforts to renew God’s creation and in dialogue on the use and protection of non-renewable resources;

Work to install a love for one’s country and continent among African youth and young people and continue to educate, encourage and provide them opportunities to become more involved in community-building, leadership and development while ensuring an environment in which their gifts and energies can be fully used.

Begin a process of self-examination, engaging clergy and laity in dialogue on the use and protection of non-renewable resources; establish definitions of what constitutes corruption and work to eliminate corrupt practices at all levels.

A UMNS photo by Andrea Stevens.

African bishops in Africa, joined here by Bishop Felton May (far right) representing the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, have issued a Sept. 11 letter outlining new actions to combat poverty on the continent.

A UMNS photo by Andrea Stevens.

AUMN photo by Andrea Stevens.

The Rev. Alex Awad can trace the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through its impact on his mother’s 90 years of life. The 62-year-old United Methodist missionary also can trace the influence the Christian church has had on his mother and her family. His new book, Palestinian Memories: The Story of a Palestinian Mother and Her People, is a story of his mother’s Christian faith and of the Palestinian people.

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October 19 service to launch district mission project: 
Lets Rebuild Mid-Town Parish

by Jennifer Smith*

A special worship service on Sunday, October 19 at 4:00 p.m. at Wayne UMC will publicly launch Central District efforts to re-build Mid-Town Parish, in the heart of Philadelphia.

Mid-Town Parish, formerly at 7th and Norris Streets, lost its building a few years ago, when it was condemned and torn down. The congregation has been meeting at a nearby playground, and wants to rebuild on its old site. Mid-Town has a wonderful history of outreach and ministry that has touched lives and congregations – well beyond the neighborhood where it resides – for more than a century. For instance, the hymn “In the Garden” was written by Mid-Town’s organist and choir director, C. Austin Miles, in 1913, and the choir there was the first ever to sing it!

The worship celebration will include great preaching, a mass choir, a signing choir, and more. There will be an opportunity to learn more about Mid-Town’s history, vision for the future and how to get involved. Through our connection, we will link up talents, resources, and people to make a major difference for Christ!

Please pray during worship for the three Sundays preceding this service as follows:

Sunday, October 5: Pray for Pastor Reggie Monte, Mid-Town Parish leaders and the congregation, that the Holy Spirit will bless and guide them in the vision.

Sunday, October 12: Pray for the Mid-Town Parish Vision Table that the Holy Spirit will bless and use each person’s gift in a united effort to help Mid-Town Parish’s vision become a reality.

Sunday, October 19: Pray for the churches of the Central District for the Holy Spirit to bless and enable them to participate in this extraordinary connectional ministry.

For directions, visit Wayne’s website at wayneumc.org. For more information, call 610-688-5650.

*Jennifer Smith is the Central District Resource Assistant.

Site of Mid-Town Parish

www.epaumc.org
Church of the Open Door receives charter in new home

*by Sally Warren*

This year has been a tremendous year of growth and celebration for “young” church start, United Methodist Church of the Open Door (UMCOD) in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, where the Rev. Dr. Anita Adams Powell serves as Senior Pastor.

In March, the church settled into its first church home at 210 South Broad Street after worshipping in various spaces for six years. On Sunday, June 8th, Bishop John R. Schol, Episcopal Leader of the Baltimore-Washington Conference and former Pastor of West Chester United Methodist Church, officiated the Consecration Service of the new church home. The church was granted its official charter on June 15th, presented by the Rev. Susan May, District Superintendent. The first Confirmation Service was held for six youth on Sunday, June 22nd. Since moving to the new ministry location, the congregation has been blessed to receive several new members.

The vision of a diverse faith community, planted in Pastor Powell in June 2001, has blossomed into a congregation involved in community ministries and partnerships. Such collaborations include Community Prayer and Renewal, Community Wellness Ambassador, Community Youth Fellowship, H.U.B. of HOPE HIV/AIDS Ministry, New Horizons Ministry with Hispanic/Latina women and children, and Martin Luther King Jr. Community Advocates.

Church of the Open Door seeks transformation of the congregation and community into God’s image through worship and small group ministries known as Prayer Circles, which have grown to seven over the past seven years. Other milestones include birthing the first Confirmation Service was held for six youth on Sunday, June 22nd. Since moving to the new ministry location, the congregation has been blessed to receive several new members.

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Grace Community UMC hosts three-day Youth Explosion

On the evening of Friday, September 12, Youth Explosion hosted youth who were dancing, rapping, reciting poetry, singing, eating and listening. The fellowship hall of Grace Community UMC was being called “Hilltop Café”, since the church is at the top of Central Ave. in Chester, Pa. The young minister, Rev. Ralph Terrell, who delivered the message of “Don’t Come Down,” brought along a bus full of youth from Atlantic City. He came to deliver a word that would encourage our youth to continue to follow Jesus.

On the following day, Saturday, Rev. Hilda Campbell made rounds of the community, inviting youth to participate. “In no time we had kids looking for hot dog and sodas, playing, dancing and guessing the number of candies in the jar to go home with the prize. Sterlen Barr of Health Promotions Council shared his testimony on the way cigarettes destroy lives. His story is two-fold. He lost his grandmother to cigarettes and that started the series of steps you’ve got to be healthy.

Church of the Open Door has been blessed with the faithful commitment and cooperation received from the administrative stuff, lay leadership, ministerial team, and supportive friends. This thrivng ministry is indeed a witness to God’s power, presence and provision.

Church restarts to build mission and ministry on Solid Rock

St. James United Methodist Church in Philadelphia will restart as SOLID ROCK UMC with an official grand opening on Sept. 28, 2008.

Building upon the foundation that was established by members of St. James, Solid Rock is committed to reach out as a diverse community-minded church, to meet the needs of the community, as God directs us for the present.

Over the past few years, St. James has established a Food Distribution in the neighborhood in two locations. The church developed a licensed Day Care Center that accepts subsidies, and partnered with Philadelphia Health Management to offer free Summer Day Camp and afterschool programming. In addition, members of the church have mentored young men and women.

Pastor Margaret Powell said, “St. James United Methodist Church was built in 1910 as a place for believers to worship on the Lord’s Day. Many of the neighborhood’s needs have changed since that time. After considerable prayer and the vote of the Church Conference on August 13, 2008, the church will restart as Solid Rock UMC. We assert the words from the Book of Esther, ‘And who knows whether thou art come to the Kingdom for such a time as this?’ (Esther 4:14). We are unashamedly an inner-city urban church. We love serving the community! When you are blessed, we rejoice with you. When you suffer, we pray with and offer comfort to you. We are here to serve our local community, the nation and the world!”

As Solid Rock UMC, the congregation will remain concerned about the health and holistic needs of the body, mind and spirit - of members and of the community. This concern includes a partnership with La Salle University Public Health to develop and offer health screenings free to the neighborhood on a consistent basis.

All are invited to Solid Rock UMC’s Grand Opening Dedication Service on Sunday Sept. 28, 2008, at 11 a.m., followed by a reception from 1-3 p.m. Please RSVP if you plan to attend the reception: 215-329-2851 or Zoelifenow@msn.com.
Pocono Plateau

Summer camp at Pocono Plateau had a huge impact on the lives of campers as the theme Listen! God is Calling was taught through Bible studies, evening chapel and campfires, and throughout the day in teachable moments. The campers were provided with encouragement, spiritual renewal, and fun as they experienced God in a personal way—sometimes encountering Jesus Christ for the very first time. Campers and staff returning to Pocono Plateau year after year found comfort in the familiar environment and faces of old friends. However, they also anticipated and welcomed change, knowing that every improvement, every new acquaintance, and new experience provided an opportunity to grow in their faith walk.

The camp’s magnificent mountaintop setting provided 1,044 campers with the opportunity to experience God’s wonderful creation while enjoying their specific camp programs. There were the traditional camps for children and youth at the Adventure and Main Sites, as well as, the specialty camps that experienced rock-climbing, rafting, horseback riding, sports, crafts, and nature studies. Our backpacking trip traveled to Yosemite National Park.

Pocono Plateau was equally blessed with volunteers who gave of their time and energy to share their love of Christ with the campers. We could not have done it without them! Most important of all was the opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with campers. Whether they were familiar with the Plateau or new in 2008, lives were touched and changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. And let’s face it, that’s what summer camp is truly all about!

Camp Innabah

Innabah was filled with over 1,100 campers who “Listened” and learned that “God is Calling” through worship, bible studies, prayer times, nature hikes, arts and crafts, sports, and many other ways. Our popular camp events continue to be Grandparents and Me, Challenge Camps, Water Sports Splash, Archery, and Wet-n-Wild. Our new Ultimate Survivor Camp led by Bekah Weaver was a tremendous success. The campers lived in the rustic outpost and practiced a variety of survival skills and cooked over the campfire. A highlight for most of them was building rafts and trying to float on them in the French Creek.

God called over thirty five people ranging in age from fifteen to seventy to serve on our summer staff, including five sets of siblings (10 staff members) and two married couples. It is truly enriching for all of them to have this experience in ministry together.

We were blessed to have a group from Park UMC, Northeast, PA come for a week in June and work on many projects including the completion of the Sky Hill Pavilion, staining buildings and picnic tables, several projects in the outpost area, building swings by the camp store, rebuilding our shed at day use, and chain sawing some trees. Has your church considered a mission trip to Innabah? We have the need for three more new log cabins on Sky Hill. We’d love to talk with you about how your church can help support our ministry!

God has truly blessed us with another amazing summer camping season. Special thanks to all of the churches and families that send campers our way each year. We are thankful to serve God each day and praise God for our callings to be in camping ministries.
The theme at our EPA Conference camps this year was Listen! God is Calling. Campers learned the fact that God talks with us – that God of our lives. The God of the universe wants to communicate with us. Because God is a communicating God.

This summer we were challenged with the task of being quiet and listening. God’s call is heard on God’s terms and we had to create the program, environment and circumstance to be ready to hear. Our prayer was that each child would hear the truth of God’s Word, encounter God in some way and listen to God’s call in their life. Many children responded, many heard the call and many made commitments to Christ for the first time.

Along with Bible study time, children enjoyed nature presentations, a rodeo, a 4th of July parade, Frisbee dogs, a water carnival, “CSF got Talent” show, a visit from the local police department, Olympics, a carnival and an amazing final chapel that celebrated and praised the Lord. Our campers gave back to the community by collecting for a Philadelphia food closet, participated in a Dunce-a-thon, saved “cans for cash” as they learned about recycling, played all camp CLUE, Counselor hunt and Capture the flag. It was a busy summer of creek walking, rescuing baby birds, finding snakes, discovering craw fish, fishing and canoeing.

God took our program and made it what God wanted, and as we got quiet, paused and took in God’s creation we heard God’s voice...not just on the prayer walk or in the prayer garden, but through each other’s care for one another, and in the Holy Spirit’s work in all of our hearts. We heard God’s call in the face of a child seeking to understand “who was this Jesus” and our prayer is that we answered in a way that glorified and honored our Savior.

Gretna Glen

Summer Camp at Gretna Glen began each week with an exhilarating All Camp Opening that was sure to bring the campers to their feet. In that first hour of camp Listen! God Is Calling was already echoing in the ears of every person on site. As the week progressed, each day’s theme was heard loud and clear as Bible Studies, Activities and Crafts focused on God’s Call to us all. Every Wednesday evening the staff’s mission was to share the call through skits and songs. The tradition of R.O.C.K. [Reaching Out for Christ’s Kingdom] is always a camper favorite. The drama company, Maranatha Productions capped off the evening with performances of the story of Jonah. On Friday evenings an All Camp Closing rounded out the week, featuring campers sharing songs and skits that portrayed what they had learned during the week.

We are thankful that God worked through Gretna Glen to make an impact on young people’s lives. Here are a few comments parents shared with us:

• My son said, “I met God. Well I got to know Him better.”
• My kids had the best experiences from making “the best friends they ever had” to being mentored by staff.
• “Thank you so much for the blessings provided by this camp.”
• “My son came home a lot more open about his love for God and all of the things God had done for him.”
• “My child has an appreciation for the wonders of God’s creation.”
• “My kids say camp is the best part of summer.”
Conference to reach out to make new disciples through advertising

The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, in partnership with United Methodist Communications, will reach out to 30 million unchurched persons throughout the country during Advent with messages of “Open hearts, open minds, open doors.” In Eastern Pennsylvania, a total media buy of $44,789, will be made possible by an Igniting Ministry matching grant.

“The Journey” is the advertising expression that the public will see through a mix of cable TV ads, radio ads on KYW 1060 News Radio, and billboard ads. Cable TV ads will be seen on sixteen different channels, including Animal Planet, Fox News, Discovery, TLC, TBS, CNN, the Food Network, and others.

Last year, during Advent of 2007, 50 churches each contributing $100, made it possible to place a full-page ad in the Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News newspapers, reaching 1.5 million people throughout five counties in eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and northern Delaware. Conference churches will again be offered an opportunity to combine efforts to place advertising in local and regional newspapers.

In addition, churches are encouraged to use resources available in the Igniting Ministry Media Warehouse that complement the media advertising. Banners, doorhangers, postcards, web graphics, bulletin covers, worship graphics, and cinema ads are all available in “The Journey” expression.

Now is the time to prepare your congregation to invite and welcome new persons to your church. The Welcoming Congregation Certification will give you a checklist to intentionally review how prepared you are to welcome guests to your church. The certification is among many welcoming training tools available in the Planning Handbook; you can download the handbook free of charge from www.ignitingministry.org.

Grand opening

by Irving Cotto*

Recently, I went into a furniture store which had out front a sign which read, “Grand Opening.” Of course, moving into a new area and a new house, I was searching for something simple to add to our few riches. The same way I walked in, I walked out: alone! No one really bothered to assist me in making my way through the store, which consisted of a main show room, and then another level.

In a sense I was at liberty to walk around, but at the same time I was surprised that with such an advertisement the store managers wanted to really get my business. As I left the store, I could vaguely hear, “Do you need help?”

There are times when that could be the proper expression, but in that very moment I would have preferred to hear, “may I help you.” In others, an offer to help, an offer to be available to guide me through the store and hear my need. Yet it felt like indifference, or a bit patronizing, “do you need help?” It sounded like, why are you here? Are you not capable of figuring things out on your own? Are you dependant on my help?

It would have been preferable to hear, “Can I be of service to you?” “Is there anything I can do for you?” What is so “grand” about a place where people have to struggle to find their place in what seems and feels like a strange environment? What is so “grand” about big furniture, impressive facilities without the managers of the store ready to give you time to hear you out? What is so “grand” about having a business, with all of its structures: programmatic, financial, administrative, but yet its daily operation leaves the client abandoned in labyrinth of bewilderman.

On my way out of the furniture store I could not help but think about what it means to be a truly welcoming congregation. Dr. Ron Wolfson is an author, an editor devoted to the task of enabling Jewish synagogues to become more hospitable. In his book The Spirituality of Welcoming: How to Transform Your Congregation into a Sacred Community he contends that the prime example of what it means to be a “sacred community” is to be precisely a welcoming congregation. A faith community in his words, is one that “offers everyone who steps into its midst a welcome infused with spirituality – with meaning, purpose, connection, and the presence of the Divine.”

Dr. Wolfson brings to the reader’s attention the Disney Company. In order to become a successful customer service organization, this company created the Disney University devoted exclusively to the goal of making sure that every employee has the customer as their primary and most important concern.

By the time you have entered your first ride in the amusement park you have been greeted by seven persons: the parking gate person, the parking attendant, the tram operator, the person at the refreshment booth, the person who rents you the stroller, the person who guides you to your ride and the person who helps you get into the ride. Can you imagine local churches putting this much of an effort at being a “customer service organization,” having our visitors as the primary goal of the church’s mission?

The Scriptures, both Old and New Testament, are permeated with a call to hospitality and special care for the stranger. A couple of verses taken from the Torah say, “...the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.” –Deuteronomy 10:17-19.

From the gospels we gather that Jesus’ own way of life very often led to a path of friendship, connections, care for outcasts, foreigners, and people broken by oppression, and sacrificial love on behalf of others, as in Luke 4:18-20; Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:16; John 6:37.

What does a welcoming Christian community look like? Among others things, it is a place where the sign, “grand opening” is honored, uplifted and lived out in concrete actions of mercy, justice, compassion, and love. A place where people are expected and people are accompanied through a journey of communion – with God and with our neighbors. A welcoming Christian community works hard at developing a spirituality that transfers into the sphere of relationships at all levels with people we know and are like as well as with people, who are totally different than us, and who perhaps have a radically different view than ours. A “spirituality of hospitality” requires that we humbly look at ourselves both as persons of faith and as communities of faith, and see what barriers we place in front of people and what bridges we build that could bring people closer.

A hospitality-minded congregation is truly a grand opening for people seeking counsel, for people seeking friends, for people seeking acceptance and a place to belong, and for people seeking meaning for their lives.

Let us ask ourselves, “when people visit my church are they gently escorted to their seats? Can people find restrooms? Are they engaged in conversation during the coffee hour? What is our eye contact like? Are the ushers truly friendly and helpful? Is our communication of the gospel clear and relevant?

What about our youth and children? Is it still pretty much an adult-oriented worship service? Have we made the entire church facility friendly toward people with special needs or special gifts? Are we embracing of people’s languages and cultures? Are we sensitive toward people’s economic and documentation status? Are the signs we place on our buildings or the gestures we use invitational or alienating?

“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison, as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if your yourselves were suffering.” –Hebrews 13:1-3.

Let us invite God’s Spirit to teach us how to be more welcoming. We have been given the honor and the enormous responsibility to be a company of greeters, an outpost of the kingdom, where people can find open spaces to be themselves, and to be loved.

*Irving Cotto is director of Congregational Development
Reflections on study leave

by Lloyd F. Speer*

This past summer I was privileged to have a wonderful new experience: I went on a three month formal and spiritual growth leave. Since I had worked my way through college and seminary, this was an extremely enjoyable (and rejuvenating) event for me.

My leave began on Monday June 2, 2008. At 4:00 a.m. that morning, I left for Duke Divinity School. My purpose in going there was to participate in the “Summer Wesley Seminar.” Participants in this event gathered twice a week with Richard Heitzenrater and Randy Maddox (well known Methodist scholars), used the library and archive resources of the Divinity School and Wesleyan Studies Center, and worked on their individual research projects.

While I was there, I was also able to attend worship services at Duke Chapel, West Raleigh Presbyterian Church (where the pastor who officiated at my wedding is now serving), and Asbury Temple (where Chris Brady – a probationary member of our conference – was preaching).

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the seminar was being able to spend time with the other participants, as they literally came from all over the world. When I returned home, I moved into the second phase of my leave by working my way through the libraries of Evangelical School of Theology, Lancaster Seminary, Palmer Seminary, Drew Theological School, and my alma mater: Messiah College. In each of these places, I was able to speak with faculty, as well as people like Ken Rowe, who graciously shared with me some of his own research and teaching notes. Since setting time aside for sabbatical rest is also part of the process of my own research and teaching notes. Since setting time aside for sabbatical rest is also part of the process of my own intellectual endeavors, however, it took an entire supporting cast to make it happen. That supporting cast began with my wife (who cared for our boys alone for a month). It involved Jonestown United Methodist Church (which approved my taking leave for three months, and stepped up to handle all kinds of tasks at the Church). It included George Mamourian (who served as interim pastor at Jonestown UMC while I was gone), Richard Heitzenrater and Randy Maddox (who invited me to participate in the Summer Wesley Seminar), and the Eastern Pennsylvania Board of Ordained Ministry (for providing a grant that funded a major portion of the costs of my leave). If you would like to know more about my leave, you can check out the blog I posted as I was on leave: home.comcast.net/~lspeer3

*Lloyd F. Speer is pastor of Jonestown UMC.

Safe Sanctuaries

At Annual Conference in May a new Safe Sanctuaries policy was adopted. This policy is available for download from the Safe Sanctuaries page of the conference website. In order to assist local churches to be in compliance with this policy, the Safe Sanctuaries Task Force is scheduling trainings throughout the fall in various locations around the conference. The first of these to be scheduled are listed at the right.

During the meetings we will be looking at the latest Safe Sanctuaries standards that the conference has set, why we need them no matter how big or small our church is, and how to set up the policy for our own church. It would be helpful if you bring your own document with you if you have already started or completed it. Remember we have all been encouraged to review them each year.

Please contact the session leaders directly to register for the sessions. Some locations have size limitations, so please register early. Watch your email and the conference website for additional dates and locations to be scheduled.

For any questions related to Safe Sanctuaries, contact Jim Wilkin, Director of Camping and Nurture Ministries, at 610-666-9090, ext. 225 or jim.wilkin@epaumc.org.

Native American Sunday

Arch Street United Methodist Church will celebrate its annual Native American Sunday on November 16, 2008. The procession and dancing of Native Americans in full regalia to the beat of Native drummers will be part of the worship. There will be the traditional ceremony of the four directions by Chief Buffy Red Feather Brown (Cherokee) and storytelling by Namorah Gayle Byrd (Chitimacha/Cherokee) at the 11 o’clock worship service.

The speaker for the 11 o’clock service will be Rev. Gary Locklear, a pastor to and a member of the Lumbee tribe in Pembroke, NC. Rev. Locklear works with the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries’ Native American Cooperative of 14 congregations of Native Americans in the North Carolina Conference. He is active in youth vocation guidance, food distribution, and mission projects within the Coop.

Gary was born in North Carolina and attended NC State University, graduating in 1970. He worked as a sports training director both in private industry and in schools. In 1996, Gary participated in a UM mission experience in Bolivia, South America. There he did local service projects, renovating buildings with new roofs and interior dry wall. He “met God on the roof” in Bolivia and now sees this encounter as his mission to his own people.

Gary and wife, Pantthia, have 3 children and a grandchild. He serves on UMC committees at the church, district and conference levels. He received the Denman Award for Evangelism in 2006.

Bishop Johnson

Continued from page 1

try and mission.”

She spoke of hospitals in Zimbabwe where there is no medicine because there is no money. And she spoke of Haiti where people are making mud pies and eating dirt because of their extreme poverty. “I hope you seek out ministry with those in prison,” Bishop Johnson said. “The U.S. has the highest percentage of persons in prison!” Illustrating leadership by example, she quoted St. Francis of Assisi, “Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.”

Bishop Johnson emphasized that heaven is not just a reward for those who are nice - that the point of compassion is “not to get points, but done out of love for Christ, who gave us grace and redemption when we didn’t deserve it!”

The offering, received prior to communion, will be given to the Global AIDS Fund in honor of Bishop Johnson.

Bishop Johnson signs “Amen”.

www.epaumc.org
Conference churches attend School of Congregational Development

Starting in the 1980s The General Board of Discipleship and The General Board of Global Ministries partnered to create an experience to train new church pastors, the School of Congregational Development. Today, the School of Congregational Development has grown to include training for Bishops, District Superintendents, Conference Staff, pastors, and church teams. Held annually to help clergy and laity to work together to become catalysts for church renewal and growth, the event is sponsored by the United Methodist Boards of Discipleship and Global Ministries.

“As part of its disciple-making effort, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference helped to fund the attendance of three high-potential churches at the School of Congregational Development, which was held July 31 – August 5: Mother African Zoar, West Grove, and Thorndale,” said the Rev. Lillian Smith, director of Connectional Ministries. “Through a pool of funds from the Congregational Transformation Team, these monies helped make this extraordinary experience possible for congregations that are making strides to reach out in new ways in mission and ministry and to make disciples of Jesus Christ.”

The three churches attended in two locations – Mother African Zoar and West Grove in Orlando, FL and Thorndale in Grand Rapids, MI. Presentations were linked by satellite from both locations.

The Rev. David Cassidy, pastor of Mother African Zoar said, “The School of Congregational Development provided an opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue concerning issues related to turning around existing congregations. What we learned in those sessions gave us ideas on how to focus our energies and efforts for transformation. We the opportunities to go to churches that have accomplished or are accomplishing recovery or revitalization, who have combined congregations successfully.” He reflected on where these learnings will take his church: “What happened for me was re-visioning. It allowed me to take another look and question if we are properly aligned and staffed and budgeted for growth, team development, and to truly advance the need for a strategic plan. However I found that strategic planning on top of a poorly laid foundation will likely fail, so we are working on that foundation. There was a lot of information jam-packed into those few days.”

The Rev. Wendy Hudson-Jacoby, pastor of West Grove UMC, expressed her thanks to the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference for making it possible for her team to attend in Orlando. “Without the grant, we never could have attended a conference of this magnitude. Being able to take a team enhanced our learning and will make it easier for us to translate what we learned and to share it with the congregation and our leaders in concrete, tangible ways. We came away from our time in Orlando renewed and rejuvenated for ministry. We gleaned so many ideas and best practices from the workshops, the plenary sessions, and our Sunday afternoon teaching congregation. We have started formulating a ministry action plan that combines the best of what we learned with the ministry opportunities God has already placed before us in Southern Chester County.”

Scott Holland, layperson from Thorndale United Methodist Church was moved by “the fervor and passion with which the presenters from both Orlando and Grand Rapids spoke. The Holy Spirit has touched the hearts of Christ’s followers in the Methodist Church and has given them a spirit of boldness and a fresh vision for the future.” His hope is “that this zeal ignites a flame in the hearts of the pastors and laity who were present so that they in turn may go back to their respective congregations and inspire them to share the love of Christ in dynamic and innovative ways to a disillusioned world.” Cheryl Faust, also a member of Thorndale UMC, and its lay pastor of ministries reflected, “The School of Congregational Development was a wonderful, yet intense experience. Our team definitely came back re-charged to do the work God has called us to do in Thorndale.”

All three teams expressed a desire to return to the 2009 School of Congregational Development, which will be held in Chicago, IL. Rev. Tom Davis-Shappell from Thorndale said, “I want to say a word of appreciation to Lillian Smith and our Conference for their support. And I would highly recommend to my colleagues and sister churches their consideration and attendance at the next offering of the School of Congregational Development.”
Making Disciples of Jesus Christ

Remix

What next? Monthly sessions for “Making Disciples for Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World,” have ended. We now have a new Episcopal leader, Bishop Peggy Ann Johnson. What is next for congregations in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference as they engage in ministry on behalf of Christ? Now, as in the past four years, Eastern Pennsylvania Conference will continue to be invited to reach, nurture and disciple even more people for Jesus Christ.

For the past two years, this conference has focused intentional attention on congregational and leadership development through the effort, “Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World.” Targeting and inviting the participation of every congregation in the conference, the effort was designed to help refocus attention to reaching goals established by the Strategic Plan. Through this initial effort, every congregation was invited to participate in a process that would strengthen lay and clergy leadership, and help to transform existing congregations so that the churches could reach more people for Jesus Christ.

Much of this emphasis focused on Goal 1 and Action Plans of the Strategic Plan/Review. Goal 1 of the Strategic Review called for the identification of seven (7) congregations per district which are ready for transformation and create an Individualized Revitalization Plan for each congregation.

More than 200 congregations participated in this effort for congregational transformation and 138 congregations activated the Congregational Vitality Indicator Assessment. Previously, 100 congregations had engaged in the Natural Church Development Assessment through Project 6:15 and other efforts. To date, more than 238 congregations have started the process that would lead to the Individualized Revitalization Plan/Ministry Action Plan. More than the target number of 42 congregations are in various stages of creating and or implementing a Ministry Action Plan/Individualized Revitalization Plan.

For the remainder of 2008 and through 2009, continued focus will be given to Goals 1 and 4 of the Strategic Plan/Review. New focus will be given to Goals 2, 5, and 10. In the coming months, training and coaching for transformation will target specific constituencies – plateaued/declining congregations, urban churches, new church starts/restarts, small membership churches, mobilization of Latino congregations, high potential churches and racial ethnic congregations.

Continued focus…

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. (Congregations that have used CVI or NCD will be the first congregations targeted for this goal.)

Goal 4: Work, by God’s grace, to dismantle racism by confronting behaviors both individual and institutional that perpetuate the sin of racism. The following Action Steps relate to the Level 1 Workshop on “Healing the Wounds of Racism.”

New focus

Goal 2: By June 2004, identify, resource and activate at least seven (7) Eastern Pennsylvania Conference congregations as “Teaching Churches” and identify other congregations which demonstrate expertise or competency in a specific transformational ministry (i.e. small groups, youth ministry, etc.)

Goal 5: All District Superintendents will be directly resourcing and supporting the local church to be in mission.

Goal 10: In keeping with the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 18-20), the strategic emphasis of calling our local congregations to transformation, and our critical value of being about mission not survival, together we will, by July 2010, demonstrate sustained conference wide trends of numerical and spiritual growth…. This goal includes plans for new church starts/restarts.


As we go forward to implement the various goals, the Congregational Transformation Team will work to review and revise deadlines for goals that had been created in the 1993 Strategic Plan and the 2003 Strategic Review (November 2003). More information about specifics will be forthcoming. As we go forward to reach more people for Jesus Christ, the best is yet to come! Next month’s NEWSpirit will feature new articles and information on new ministry initiatives including ministry with persons with disabilities, small church ministry, mobilization of Latino congregations, plateaued/declining congregations, new church starts/restarts and high potential churches.

Until then, may God richly bless you as you minister in the world. On the Christian journey with you, I am,

Sincerely,

The Rev. Lillian C. Smith
Director of Connectional Ministries

Disaster response

by Lillian Smith

Floods. Hurricanes. Fires. Tornadoes. Terrorism. Disaster can change our lives without notice. United Methodist Congregations in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference are situated to provide assistance and support to people and communities in the most challenging of times. The Disaster Response Team of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference has created, “The EPA Disaster Relief Response,” to be adapted for use by each congregation.


“Preparedness for disaster is the key to surviving the disaster when it comes,” explained Debra DePrinzio, Coordinator, EPA Disaster Response Committee.

“For most congregations and people, filling these forms out helps them think about ways they can help their congregation and community in times of disaster.”

“We think about disaster as being hurricanes and tornadoes,” DePrinzio continued. “In our area most disasters are flooding, fire or man-made disasters like Nickel Mines.” It is in those situations where we as a church body can respond in connectedness as a church family,” she added.

Congregations that prepare for disaster can assist in times of disaster. DePrinzio explained that as Hurricane Gustav was preparing to hit the Gulf Coast, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Disaster Response Committee was working to facilitate the hosting of evacuees from various hurricane locations. Completing and returning the forms to the Disaster Response Committee would have made the identification of host churches easier. PEMA, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, works closely with faith-based organizations that can provide services and assistance in emergencies.

Even now, the Disaster Response Committee is in action. A member of the team is now in the Allen-town area assessing the needs of community members affected by the recent tornado and we as United Methodists can respond. “We can reach out beyond the church walls to be a force for the Lord in the midst of disaster,” DePrinzio added. The resource not only prepares the congregation for natural and other disasters but also for instances such as a fire in the church or an incident which will result in a church evacuation. For more information, and to download the materials, please visit http://www.epaumc.org/Disaster.asp.
Bishop’s Days

September 30
Bishop’s Day on the East District
9:30 a.m. – Clergy Gathering with Bishop Johnson at The UMC of Huntington Valley, 3470 Huntington Pike, Huntington Valley 19006
7:00 p.m. – Laity Gathering with Bishop Johnson at The UMC of Huntington Valley, with hymn sing starting at 6:30 p.m.

There will be no food served at either gathering, no registration is necessary. For more information, call the East District Office at 215-914-2130 or email clarita.kralil@epaumc.org.

October 7
Bishop’s Day on the West Central District
8:30 a.m. – Clergy Gathering Registration, followed by Breakfast & Program: 9:00-11:30 at Asbury UMC, 1533 Springhouse Road, Allentown, PA 18104; 610-398-2577. For registration, contact Sheila Hyun at nesuper@rcn.com or call 610-395-6661.
7:00 p.m. – Laity Session with Bishop Johnson at Wesley UMC, 2540 Center Street, Bethlehem, PA 18017; 610-865-5715.

October 8
Bishop’s Day on the Southwest District
8:30-11:30 a.m. – for Clergy of District - Family Style Breakfast at Yoder’s Restaurant and Buffet, 14 S. Tower Road, New Holland.
7:00–8:30 p.m. – Laity Meeting at Evangelical UMC, 276 W. Main Street (by the Getty Station), New Holland.

October 13
Bishop’s Day on the Southeast District
8:30 a.m. 10:00 a.m. – Clergy breakfast meeting. The registration fee for pastors’ breakfast meeting will be $5. At Broomall: St. Mark’s UMC, 2220 S. Sproul Road, Broomall, PA 19008; Phone 610-356-1199.
6:30 pm – Laity gathering at Grove UMC, 490 Boot Road, West Chester, PA 19380 with refreshments at 6:30 and hymn sing to begin at 6:50.

For more information call the district office at 610-436-4277 or email at southeasterndistrict@gmail.com.

October 14
Bishop’s Day on the Central District
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 Noon – Clergy Breakfast – Full breakfast, no cost. RSVP by Wed., Oct. 1st to the Central District Office at jennifer.smith@epaumc.org or call 215-878-4607.
7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. – Laity Gathering – Light refreshments served. No registration necessary.
Both events will be in the Fellowship Hall at Valley Forge: St. Matthew’s UMC, 600 Walker Road, Wayne, PA 19087.

November 13
Bishop’s Day on the Northeast District
Morning – Clergy Breakfast
Evening – Laity Gathering
Schuylkill Haven: First UMC, 420 Saylor Street, Schuylkill Haven, PA
More details will follow.

Classified Ads

NATIONAL COORDINATOR - Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century REPORTS TO: Coordinating Committee of Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century and The General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church. To provide staff support for Strengthening the Black Church Coordinating Committee as it implements its Plan of Action. This position has a job tenure until December 31, 2012. Position requires the incumbent to be a person of hope and vision, deeply rooted in Christian faith and practice and have a profound sense of the importance of the making of Christian disciples; demonstrated proficiency in planning, flexibility, organizing, leadership development, team building, decision making; motivational skills and administrative/organizational skills; experience working in a vital congregation of The United Methodist Church; knowledge of The United Methodist church structure and theology and membership in The United Methodist Church; demonstrated ability to work collaboratively and sensitively with culturally diverse groups and individuals; visionary, creative and critical thinking skills; knowledge about budgeting and fundraising; verbal and written communication skills, ability to express faith/personal commitment to growing in faith; personal passion for the needs of and issues related to the Black Church; computer and electronic media skills. Must have a Master’s Degree or equivalent experience. Interested? Please contact the Office of Human Resources, 615-340-7100. The General Board of Discipleship is an Affirmative Action Employer. M/F/D/V EO:

CUSTODIAN NEEDED – 30 hours/week (Core hours: 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., Monday – Friday) for Drexel Hill United Methodist Church, 600 Burmont Road, Drexel Hill, PA 19026. For more information about this position or to apply, please contact Dr. Jack Neigh at 610-622-3435. Dr. Neigh’s mailing address is: 520 Fairfield Road, Drexel Hill, PA 19026.

SEEKING POSITION OR PREACHING OPPORTUNITIES - Ordained Methodist pastor of the Methodist Church of the Caribbean, who has ministered in Jamaica and who has worked extensively in hurricane relief work, available for speaking for groups, preaching, or position in church. Please contact Rev. Serge Brevert, connect@thegardenchurch.org or 336-416-8512.

The Urban Academy

The Office of Urban and Global Ministries (UGO) will sponsor an Urban Academy in 2008 and 2009. The purpose of the academy is to encourage urban congregations in making disciples of Jesus Christ, and to support ministry and partnerships in the cities in which they are located. The Academy will enable urban churches to be centers of wholeness of mind, body, and spirit for all people in their neighborhoods and beyond.

The dates for the Urban Academy are:

November 14 & 15, 2008 – Session I
February 20 & 21, 2009 – Session II
April 24 & 25, 2009 – Session III
May 15 & 16, 2009 – Session IV

Each session is scheduled for Friday and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The locations will be throughout the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and will be announced soon. The pastor, as well as three or four lay persons of urban congregations are invited to attend the Academy.

The Urban Academy is specifically for those congregations located in the following urban areas: Allentown, Bethlehem, Chester, Coatesville, Doylestown, Easton, Hazleton, Lancaster, Lebanon, Levittown, Norristown, Philadelphia, Pottstown, Pottsville, Quakertown, Reading, Shamokin, Stroudsburg and West Chester.

For more information, contact The Rev. Dr. Dorothy Watson Tatem, Director of Urban and Global Ministries, 800-866-6855 or Dorothy.watsonatem@epaumc.org.

EPA Conference offers funding for ministry

Office of Urban and Global Ministries

Local Church Grants for Program Ministry – for Urban Churches:
Deadlines: May 15 and November 15
(Applications may be obtained from the office or online).

Academic Scholarship dates for undergraduates and seminarians:
Deadlines: March 1 and November 1
(Applications may be obtained from the office or online).

Clergy and lay scholarships to attend Conferences/trainings
Scholarships may be requested at any time by formal written request.
Please call Urban/Global Office for particulars.

Contact: Dr. Dorothy Watson Tatem
Office of Urban and Global Ministries, Simpson House, 2101 Belmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19131;
215-878-8054; 215-878-8342 (fax); dorothy.watsonatem@epaumc.org
The Big Event
for ages 13-30

Transformers:
More than Meets the Eye!

October 4 & 5, 2008
On the campus of Eastern University

Saturday, October 4, 2008
9:00 -10:00 a.m. - Registration
10:00 a.m. - Opening Worship
(sessions through 5:00 p.m. followed by Dinner then attendance at Harvest '08 at the Wachovia Center)

Sunday, October 5, 2008
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon - Sessions

Cost:
$50.00 per person
Price includes: all activities Saturday and Sunday at Eastern University [music, speakers, workshops and lunch and dinner on Saturday] and transportation to and from Wachovia Center on Saturday evening. Price does NOT include overnight accommodations. There are numerous hotels and motels within 10 minutes of the campus in the Valley Forge/King of Prussia area.

For more information:
www.epaumc.org
Email: youth@epaumc.org
Phone: Lydia Munoz - (717) 824-9640
Jim Wilkin (610) 666-9090 ext. 225

Music
Tina J

Saline

Worship

Speakers
Include:
Rev. Armando Iraheta
of El Fuente de Amor UMC

Workshops

Fun & Fellowship

Includes attendance at Harvest '08 at the Wachovia Center on Saturday evening featuring TobyMac, Kutless and Katinas live!

“Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out.”
- Romans 12:2 (The Message)
Nothing But Nets Week in Philadelphia Area
Philadelphia Community Unites to Fight Malaria
September 29 – October 6, 2008

Officially proclaimed “Nothing But Nets Week” in Philadelphia Area

The United Nations Foundation’s Nothing But Nets campaign will join Philadelphia community leaders in co-hosting a series of events from October 1-3, 2008, as part of the campaign’s national effort to raise funds and awareness to prevent malaria – a leading killer of children in Africa. Throughout the week, the United Nations Foundation, The People of The United Methodist Church, the National Basketball Association and the University of Pennsylvania will work together to engage the local Philadelphia community in Nothing But Nets and the global effort to send nets and save lives.

Wednesday, October 1, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Nothing But Nets Press Conference
Dilworth Plaza, 15th and Market Streets
West side of City Hall, Philadelphia, PA

Mayor Michael Nutter’s Office of Faith-Based Initiatives will co-host a public gathering outside in Dilworth Plaza to launch the Nothing But Nets city tour and highlight the week’s events. Elizabeth McKee Gore, executive director of Nothing But Nets, Nan Feyler, Chief of Staff of the Philadelphia Department of Health, and Bishop Peggy Johnson will proclaim the week “Nothing But Nets Week” and will speak about the serious issue of malaria and the Philadelphia area’s commitment to preventing the deadly disease. Lynda Commale, a member of Hopewell UMC in Downingtown, will speak on her effort to raise over $60,000 for Nothing But Nets.

Thursday, October 2, 4:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Nothing But Nets Malaria Seminar
University of Pennsylvania
Steinhardt Hall, 215 So. 39th Street, Philadelphia, PA

Learn how you can make an impact on this disease. Help save millions of lives in Africa. Develop the skills to effect change. Connect with global Health Experts. Confirmed speakers include: Dr. David Ross, Professor of Biology, University of Pennsylvania, and Dr. Akhil Vaidya, Professor of Microbiology and Immunology, Drexel University.

Friday, October 3, 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Nothing But Nets Youth Workshop
Mann Elementary School, 54th and Berks Streets, Philadelphia, PA

Nothing But Nets will spend a morning with the students and teachers of Mann Elementary School who have been actively fund-raising for Nothing But Nets for two consecutive years. The students will receive official certificates of appreciation from Nothing But Nets spokespeople and will participate in a series of activities aimed at further educating and engaging the students on the serious issue of malaria.

Friday, October 3, 5:45 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Nothing But Nets United Methodist Church Dinner
Hopewell United Methodist Church,
852 Hopewell Road, Downingtown, PA

Nothing But Nets will join local faith leaders and community members to discuss the current issues posed by malaria, and to highlight the work that has been done for Nothing But Nets on behalf of United Methodist churches throughout the country. Speakers include the Executive Director of Nothing But Nets, Elizabeth Gore, as well as Bishop Peggy Johnson and Lynda Commale, a local supporter and member of the church who has worked with her 7-year old daughter to raise over $60,000 for Nothing But Nets.

About Nothing But Nets

Nothing But Nets is a global, grassroots campaign to save lives by preventing malaria, a leading killer of children in Africa. Inspired by sports columnist Rick Reilly, tens of thousands of people have joined the campaign that was created by the United Nations Foundation in May 2006. Founding campaign partners include the National Basketball Association’s NBA Cares, the People of The United Methodist Church, and Sports Illustrated. It only costs $10 to provide a long-lasting insecticide-treated bed net that can prevent this deadly disease. Visit www.NothingButNets.net to send a net and save a life.