

Christmas Gifts



**What is your Christmas gift to Christ?
How will you choose to share your life?
Sharing bread
For life instead
Choosing to live as Jesus said?**

**What is your gift for Mary's babe
To celebrate the love God gave?
Forgiving grace,
Mercy's embrace,
Sharing peace with the human race?**

**What will be your holy present
For the God who now is present?
Obedience,
Your repentance,
Your prayers as fragrant frankincense?**

**The gift that I bring at Christmas
Will cost me more as time will pass.
Down on my knees
God only sees
Giving Christ whatever He needs.**
(Words: Michael C. Johnson 2009; Meter: 88.44.8)

Michael and I hope that this Christmas will be a sacred time for you and your family. A time of spiritual renewal as you celebrate the gift that God has given you in his son Jesus Christ. Nothing is more important than God's Christmas gift to you.

The second most important part of Christmas is deciding the gift you are going to bestow upon Christ. Take time to think about your gift. What do you believe that Christ has on his Christmas list? What do you believe Jesus wants for his birthday?

Do you see malaria nets on his list?

How much joy will you see on Christ's face when he opens that gift on Christmas morning? How many babies will you save from death so they might grow up strong to serve the Lord?

Do you see missionary support on the Lord's list for Christmas? For only \$500 dollars you could be in covenant relationship with a United Methodist Missionary not only helping to bring the good news of the Gospel into the world, but also giving Christ a commitment to be in prayer with one who is on the front lines sacrificing their all for God.

Is scholarship aid for a seminarian on Christ's Christmas list this year? Christ is worried about the financial burden carried by those answering the call to pastoral ministry. I remember how blessed I was, when a saint of God, sent money my way to help me with my education. Who are you going to help for Jesus, so that scriptural holiness will continue to be preached throughout the land?

Christmas is not a season to celebrate greed. Christmas is not a time to satisfy our desires. Christmas is to celebrate Christ and to satisfy his

desires for our world. What is your gift for Christ? What is your gift for Mary's babe? What will be your present? May Jesus just love the birthday gifts YOU give him this year.

May God bless you and your families with grace and peace during this holy season.

Merry Christmas!

*Bishop Peggy A. Johnson
and Rev. Michael C. Johnson*

Southwest District rethinks "open" for Advent

BY ANDREA BROWN



A young visitor enjoys children's activities at Hope United Methodist Church's Advent Open House on December 5 in Ephrata, PA.

As the denomination rethinks church and encourages us to use *open* as a verb, the churches of the Southwest District teamed up to offer Lancaster and Lebanon Counties an interactive experience of what United Methodists do.

The district's Spirit Network Team encouraged all district churches to plan special open house events during the first weekend in December.

In all, 34 churches out of 80 district churches participated, offering curious neighbors a chance to sample the wide variety of flavors represented by various congregations throughout the area.

A tour-goer could feast on a hot turkey dinner in neo-Gothic Otterbein Church in Lancaster city Friday evening, then go for chocolate chip pan-

cakes atop a hill in Manheim at Ruhl's Church on Saturday morning, and swing down to the southern end of the county for a carol sing in Pleasant Grove's 1887 building Saturday afternoon. Then, Sunday afternoon, adults could wrap presents while watching football at Lampeter Church's modern facility.

Movies, ornament making, cookie sampling, historic tours, mission projects—even car detailing—were all part of what someone could experience as churches swung wide their doors.

Some events coincided with community events—a tree lighting in Bainbridge, the annual Winterfest in Mount Joy, the First Friday art gallery openings in downtown Lancaster.

Would someone interested in art also find it appealing to check out First Church's architecture? Would

Continued on page 6

December

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

Advent Festival Celebration "Welcome Emmanuel Rejoice" (A Vespers Concertante): 7:00 p.m., free and open to all. The program features the (adult) Tabernacle Choir, Youth Choir, Carillon Ringers, Festival Orchestra and the Christy Memorial Organ. The "Nativity Suites" by Benjamin Harlan is a featured work. Grove United Methodist Church, 490 W. Boot Road, West Chester, PA. For more information visit www.grovechurch.org or call Craig Rider, Director of Music, at (610) 692-6124.

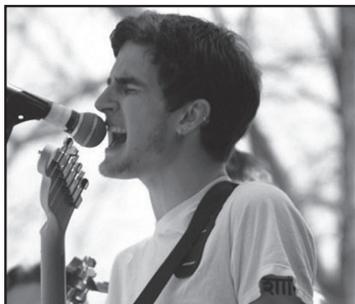
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

"What Can I Do - Sharing the Story": A Christmas Cantata written by Mary Smith. December 20, 2009 @ 7:00; Tabor UMC, 2209 Hendricks Station Road, Woxall, Pennsylvania 18979; Phone: (215)234-4852; www.tabor-umc.org

TUESDAY-THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29-31

Jr./Sr. High Retreat at Pocono Plateau Camp & Retreat Center: Grades 7-12; Cost is \$95/person. Pocono Plateau Camp & Retreat Center, Pocono Plateau Road, Cresco, PA 18326; 570-676-3665; <http://www.poconoplateau.org>

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29



Benefit Coffee House: Grove United Methodist Church, 490 W. Boot Road, West Chester. The event begins at 6:30. Sandwiches, snacks and soft beverages will be available for purchase—proceeds benefit the annual Appalachia Service Project summer trip for youth and adults. For more information see www.grovechurch.org, phone 484 639 4366, or email ichtoons@comcast.net.

January

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, JANUARY 2-3

Young Adult Retreat at Pocono Plateau Camp & Retreat Center: Cost \$80/person. Theme: Living with a Purpose- Exploring & discerning God's call in our life. Pocono Plateau Camp & Retreat Center; RR2 Box 2747, Pocono Plateau Road, Cresco, PA 18326; 570-676-3665; <http://www.poconoplateau.org>

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6

The Epiphany: Bishop Johnson's Summit on "Making Disciples and Responsible Stewardship for Pastors of Urban Churches". It will be held at Eastwick United Methodist Church (6630 Lindbergh Blvd, Philadelphia, PA) from 1:00 pm

until 4:00 pm. The guest keynote speaker for this afternoon will be Bishop Felton Edwin May. Other participants include Rev. Yvette Davis and Rev. Irving Cotto of the conference staff and the extended cabinet. All pastors serving in the urban ministries of EPA have been invited to this mandatory event however all clergy are welcome to attend this time of worship and holy conferencing.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10

Deadline to apply for Human Relations Day grant: Support ministries that respond to non-violent young offenders through education, advocacy or leadership training and development. Grant applications are available at <http://www.umc-gbcs.org/atf/cf/{689fea4c-8849-4c05-a89e-c9bc7fff64c}/PEACE%20WITH%20JUSTICE%20GRANT%20APPLICATION%202010.DOC>, or by contacting Marvlyn Scott, in the office of Education and Leadership Formation, (202) 488-5643.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10

Deadline to apply for Ethnic Local Church grant: The grants program is to strengthen ethnic minority local churches through education, advocacy or leadership training and development as they engage in social justice. Applications may be downloaded from <http://www.umc-gbcs.org/atf/cf/%7b689fea4c-8849-4c05-a89e-c9bc7fff64c%7d/2009-2012ELC.DOC> or may be obtained from Marvlyn Scott, (202) 488-5643.

TUESDAY-THURSDAY, JANUARY 12-14

2010 Midwinter Retreat for Clergy and Spouses: "Lord have mercy! Loving our enemies and practicing forgiveness, even in church."; Clarion Fontainebleau Hotel, 10100 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, MD 21842. www.epaumc.org

February

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Deadline to Apply for Peace With Justice Grant: Funding for this program is generated through the Peace with Justice Special Sunday offering of The United Methodist Church. Grant applicants must be either a United Methodist or other affiliated organization, or an ecumenical group working with and through at least one United Methodist agency or organization related to The United Methodist Church, then to first-time requests and, finally, to those including an advocacy component in their program or project. For more information or to request an application form also, contact Mark Harrison, GBCS dir of Peace with Justice, (202) 488-5645.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Tools for Ministry Training Event: Training will be held on each district for clergy and laity, and will cover a variety of ministry topics. Central District - Norristown: Haws Avenue UMC; East District - Hatboro: Lehman UMC; Northeast District - Bethlehem: Wesley; Northwest District - Johnstown: Lickdale UMC; Southeast District - West Grove UMC; Southwest District - Lititz UMC. More information: www.epaumc.org.

In Memoriam

Rev. Thomas E. Sligh

Word has been received of the death of the Rev. Thomas E. Sligh, elder in full connection, who passed away on the evening of Wednesday, November 25, 2009.

Rev. Sligh served three Philadelphia churches: Camphor Memorial, Mt. Airy, and Devereux Memorial.

A memorial service was held on Wednesday, December 2, 2009 at Devereux Memorial UMC, Philadelphia.

He is survived by his wife, Kathleen; his son, Thomas Sligh, Jr.; his daughter, Mrs. Kabrene Pittman; and his mother, who resides in South Carolina.

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to Mrs. Kathleen M. Sligh, 2435 W. Allegheny Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19132. <> In lieu of sending flowers, a monetary donation may be made to Devereux UMC Oil Fund, 2527 W Allegheny Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19132, or flowers may be sent for the memorial service in South Carolina to FB Pratt & Sons Funeral Home, 601 South Street, Newberry, SC 29108; 803-276-1206.

Mrs. Reta Barto

Mrs. Reta Barto died at the age of 93 on Saturday, October 31, 2009. She is believed to have been the first woman ever to have been elected a Conference Lay Leader in the United Methodist Church, serving in that capacity in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, 1978-86. She organized the first "School of Religion" for theological training of laity in cooperation with Albright College in Reading, PA, which is now as the Academy for Laity. Her service included the following: elected lay member to the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference for 31 consecutive years; twenty-eight years as a General and Jurisdictional Conference delegate; president of the Philadelphia Conference Women's Society of Christian Service (WSCS), 1964-1968; president of WSCS-Wesleyan Service Guild in the Northeastern Jurisdiction, 1969-72; member of the Board of Directors of the Women's Division, 1973-79. She taught at the UMW School of Christian Missions and provided dynamic leadership for her local unit of UMW at Holy Cross UMC. She served on the board of Cornwall Manor for nine years, 1979-84, and 1991-97. As a member of the General Conference Central Conference Committee, 1984-88, Mrs. Barto travelled to Zimbabwe to tour land in Mutare, and at General Conference in 1988 voted for the establishment of Africa University on the site.

Services were held on November 6 and 21.

Mrs. Barto is survived by her sister and brother-in-law, Ruth and Leonard Hritzko, and many nieces and nephews.

Condolences may be sent to Mrs. Ruth Hritzko, 1566 Northway Rd., Williamsport, PA 17701-2891.

Memorial contributions be made to either Memorial Church of the Holy Cross, 329 N. Fifth St., Reading, PA 19601 or Cornwall Manor, 1 Boyd St., P.O. Box 125, Cornwall, PA 17016.

Brighten the life of a child in your community

Plan now to send children to Summer Camp 2010 at one of our four Conference camps where they will get to know the love of Jesus Christ. Contact Jim Wilkin for more information at 610-666-9090, ext. 225 or jim.wilkin@epaumc.org.



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**Making Disciples
of Jesus Christ for the
Transformation of the World**

Rethinking Christmas

A knot settled in my stomach. On the side of a building was a sign with the following words, "Season's Greetings." Later the same day, I saw Christmas lights and decorations in various stores in the mall. Not three days after Halloween and way before Thanksgiving, the race to sell as many goods as possible by December 25, was on. Not to mention, although the plan is to sell and market for Christmas, the term Christmas is often politically incorrect, so everything should more appropriately be Happy Holidays. Certain carols are not to be sung in public. Oh, please.



Lillian Smith

The most troubling realization for me is that many of the merchants touting Christmas sales probably don't really know, love or serve Jesus.

Instead, they want to profit from Jesus' birth. And we are supporting them in the effort. Don't get me wrong. Everyone needs to earn a honest dollar. But something has got to change.

This year is going to be a challenge in the Smith-Cassidy home. Some rethinking is going on. Already the kids know not to speak to me about Santa Claus. If they want to talk to me about gifts, let's talk about Saint Nicholas and why he gave gifts. Let's also talk about what gift we will give to Christ. Unlike some Christians who no longer observe Christmas because of the commercialism, I'm striving to do things differently.

It just feels and seems that the whole reality that Jesus came into the world to save humanity from sin, often seems to be lost from the equation. In our busyness to purchase gifts for our loved ones, co-workers and some folk we really don't like, our schedules become crowded and challenged to schedule time for God. Christmas Eve Service? Maybe. Christmas Day Worship Celebration? No. No time. We have to open the gifts and get dinner ready. We talk about Jesus coming as a child in the manger, but forget to emphasize that he will come again to Judge the living and the dead.

This year, please join me in having a Christ Centered Christmas. Why not intentionally think of ways to invite unchurched or dechurched persons to attend various Advent or Christmas activities. In the article, "Your Christmas or Theirs," Christians are encouraged to intentionally reach people beyond the congregation. <http://evangelismconnections.org/> What better time to invite people of all walks of life to share in the life of the congregation? Families with

small children, Teens, Young Adults, Singles, People who are mourning the death of a loved one, Seasoned Saints. Everyone wants to belong to a community. Everyone wants to be loved. Why not invite people into an environment that shares God's love? One thing the article stresses is "once people have come for the first activity," have an invitation ready for the next gathering. Evangelism is an on-going effort. Rev. Monica Guepet, St. Paul United Methodist has a wonderful Wiggly Giggly Service Worship for Preschoolers and other little people. For information, contact her at Pastor.Monica@verizon.net.

Another article recommends inviting unchurched persons to share in a Christmas outreach or mission with you and your congregation. That is a non-threatening way to include people not currently in church, in the life of a congregation. It also facilitates a comfort level with members of your congregation even before they attend worship. <http://www.gbod.org/evangelism/programs/offeringchrist/doubt.html> Through the outreach or mission, that person may experience a new understanding of the true gift of Christmas - Jesus.

Ideas for outreach are numerous. You don't have create everything or reinvent the wheel. Here are some options:

Read "Who's Birthday Is It, Anyway?", is a resource that is designed to help families, small groups and churches prepare for Advent and Christmas. This resource is available from Alternatives for Simple Living, for a small fee. Their article, "10 Tips for a Simpler, More Meaningful Christmas," also has some suggestions to modify your Christmas traditions. <http://www.simpleliving.org>.

Host an Open House- Instead of having one in September, why not join some of our Lancaster churches and have it during Advent: www.rethinkchurch.org.

Get ideas from other congregations...

The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection will have a Family Advent Night and a "Christmas at Resurrection," Concert <http://www.cor.org/calendar>.

How about worshipping on Christmas morning? If a worship service outside the home is out of the question, here is a resource for family devotions: <http://www.gbod.org>.

In his book, "The Purpose of Christmas," Rick Warren details a family tradition of having a "Birthday party for Jesus." During that time all of the family members share what they are thankful for and what they are going to do for Jesus this year. Easy and doable without props. You can read the Christmas story

from your bible. (Luke 2: 1-21)

Let's Rethink Christmas this year! Let's find ways to make Jesus the focus of our celebration and invite others into our journey. The Gift of the Season has already been given, and cost us nothing. Let's celebrate God's goodness!

On the Christian journey with you,

Lillian C. Smith

Executive Director, Congregational Transformation/
Director, Connectional Ministries
Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, The United Methodist Church
lillian.smith@epaumc.org



A Place for All: Faith and Community for Persons with Disabilities



Bishop Peggy Johnson directed a week of camp for deaf and developmentally disabled young adults at Camp Innabah, July 12-18. Photo by Kathy Boyer.

Bishop Peggy Johnson of the Philadelphia Area of the United Methodist Church is one of several faith leaders who will appear

in a nationally televised documentary, *A Place for All: Faith and Community for Persons with Disabilities*.

A Place for All, which will air on ABC-TV affiliates beginning December 6, is presented by the Interfaith Broadcasting Commission (IBC) as part of ABC's 2009 Vision and Values series. The documentary explores the

inclusivity of persons with disabilities in faith communities.

Bishop Johnson was contacted to be part of the documentary by the show's

producer, Debra Gonsler Vinik, who has won three Emmys for her faith-related documentaries. Ms. Vinik said, "I could have done the Bishop Peggy show! She was so delightful. I was fortunate to have interviewed a number of people who were quite articulate. What Bishop Johnson had to say was made particularly meaningful considering her own story."

Bishop Johnson, who was born with one eye and has an artificial eye, was pastor of Christ UMC of the Deaf in Baltimore, MD prior to her election as a bishop. Early in her ministry she felt a deep calling to minister with Deaf persons and persons with disabilities. Bishop Johnson advocates for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, "not just to receive, but to be co-ministers with us in the priesthood of all believers."

In her interview for *A Place for All*, Bishop Johnson said, "Our culture tends to not value people with disabili-

ties as whole persons. But the goal, for any religious group, is to help people see with new eyes that people with disabilities are truly valuable and have skills and abilities that enhance the faith community."

Ms. Vinik interviewed Bishop Johnson while she was directing a week-long camp for Deaf Developmentally Disabled young adults at Innabah Camp and Retreat Center, one of four Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference camps. Bishop Johnson recently organized a team in the Philadelphia Area to encourage churches in their ministry with persons with disabilities. One of the team's projects has been to offer a recent workshop on ministry with Deaf persons.

According to a release from the Interfaith Broadcasting Commission, *A Place for All* "explores how faiths have moved toward inclusivity as they help ease the social isolation that often plagues

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Internet church engages in '21st century circuit riding



The Rev. Adam Hamilton

BY JOEY BUTLER

I don't think we're in Kansas any more." Dorothy from "The Wizard of Oz" may have said that about herself, but she could also have been talking about The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection.

While the church maintains its physical presence in three locations in Kansas, it has also gone worldwide with the launch of Resurrection Live!, an Internet-based worship experience.

The Rev. Andrew Conard is the pastor of the online campus, which began streaming services in November 2008.

"When we first launched, we didn't figure there would be a lot who would worship with us, but we found that there was significant interest among our current congregation," Conard said, adding that the online services average about 1,000 visitors.

"The Internet is a place where people feel comfortable coming to interact and find faith," he says. "One of the questions is how do we worship, give, grow in faith and serve together online?"

INCREASED INTERACTION

Two of Resurrection's five Sunday services are streamed on <http://live.cor.org>. Visitors are able to register their attendance, and Conard contacts them afterward and stays in touch.

The goal is increased methods of interaction. Conard says he hopes the site will allow him to interact live with online worshippers. There are likely to be more social media outlets on the site, allowing people to take notes online and maybe share those notes. The church also may offer online classes. Ultimately, Conard hopes to find ways for people to serve.

Conard is the right man for the job, says the Rev. Adam Hamilton, Resurrection's senior pastor.

"Andrew has a passion for blogging, Twitter. ... It was something that he already loved. We felt we had IT staff who could do the technical part, but among our pastors he was really the one who was most energized about it," Hamilton says.

Hamilton says the Internet services have been especially popular of late due to H1N1 virus concerns.

"School attendance has been down by 10 percent in our area because of the swine flu. Our Internet attendance has gone through the roof because people are home with sick kids. Instead of dismissing church, they're worshipping with us."

PLANTING CHURCHES ONLINE?

Streaming the services online has also revealed a possible new method for starting churches. Conard says an independent living facility in the area began regularly showing the services to a group of residents. This sparked the idea of the "microchurch."

"People might be able to gather and worship together in one place through an online service, be it people's homes or college dorms - wherever people might gather can be a place for worship," Conard says. "So we ask ourselves what ways we can equip the leaders of those groups and try to be the church in that way as well."

Hamilton cites the story of one member's unchurched relative in another state who is now a regular visitor to Resurrection Live!

"What would happen if he invited 12 of his friends to sit in his living room and to join us for worship that way? Maybe this guy who just six months ago was unchurched might start a congregation," he says.

Conard says he sees microchurches as a church-planting strategy. He envisions a network of microchurches with an elder appointed to a number of them to oversee and work with the local leaders. Hamilton calls it "21st century circuit-riding."

"In the long term, that could be a way of planting new faith communities in a little bit different way," Conard says.

Hamilton agrees.

"We're trying to figure out what does church look like in the next 20 or 30 years. And we feel like we're on the verge of this sort of revolution when it comes to how church looks for people in the future."

BUTLER IS EDITOR OF CONTENT for 18- to 34-year-olds at United Methodist Communications, Nashville, Tenn.

The Nation in Brief

UMS 'GOING GREEN'

UMs are "going green" at levels far beyond recycling church bulletins and eliminating Styrofoam cups at coffee hour. Throughout the country, congregations and communities are setting new standards of stewardship, said Tyler Edgar, assistant director of climate change and energy for the Eco-Justice Program of the National Council of Churches. "Churches are . . . engaging in local energy and sustainability initiatives that have the potential to define their communities in the coming years."

ADVENT AD CAMPAIGN

What if you went shopping for hope instead of giving in to hype this Christmas? How much difference could you make in the world? The UMC

is encouraging people to think "outside the gift box" to make Christmas more about substance and less about stuff as it launches its Advent advertising campaign airing on CNN Headline News Nov. 24-Dec. 27. The Rethink Church commercial features a homeless woman with a shopping cart. Christmas music is playing in the background. The message rolls across the screen: "This Christmas, remember those who are shopping for hope, acceptance and love." The commercial directs viewers to www.10thousanddoors.org.

UMTV: THANKSGIVING FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

ATHENS, GA (UMTV)--As most college kids head home for the holidays, some volunteers are opening their doors to young people far from home. International students are spending time with host families learning American

traditions. For some, this will be their first Thanksgiving and first taste of a turkey dinner. Members of Athens First UMC started the International Student Ministry because statistics have shown that 75 percent of international students never receive an invitation to an American home and as many as 85 percent will never be invited to an American church. Through the ministry, more than 100 "friendship partners" make these visitors feel welcome in the U.S. during the holidays and year-round. UMTV's "Thanksgiving for International Students" is available to view at www.umtv.org.

METHODISTS MARK DEFINING MOMENT IN CHURCH HISTORY

On a bright November Sunday, 125 United Methodists gathered to thank and praise God at the spot where, 225 years earlier, the course of American Methodism took

shape. The setting was Barratt's Chapel at Frederica, Del., the oldest Methodist Church in the United States originally built as a church. Bishop Peggy A. Johnson of the Philadelphia Area preached at the special service commemorating a meeting between two early leaders, Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke, who together laid the organizational foundations for U.S. Methodism.

UMM START MENTORING PROGRAM

At least 70 boys whose fathers are in jail or prison will be mentored by big brothers as the result of a \$7,200 grant to UM Men from the UM Board of Church and Society. Nationally, 7.3 million children have at least one parent in jail or prison, and these children are five times more likely than their peers to commit crimes. Funds for the program come from Human Relations Day of

ferings received in local United Methodist churches on the Sunday nearest the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. The effort to secure big brothers in 11 annual conferences will begin in 2010.

YOUNG ADULTS URGED TO EMBRACE CALL TO MINISTRY

At a time when the number of young elders is not keeping pace with clergy entering retirement age, United Methodist leaders urged more than 500 young adults at EXPLORATION 2009 to trust God in considering their own call to service in the church. And 170 of the 535 high school seniors and young adults in attendance said yes to that call to ordained ministry. They signed commitment cards indicating they are ready to serve the church as ordained elders and deacons. Another 96 said God was calling them to ministry other than ordination.

Typhoons leave Filipinos 'reeling,' bishop says

BY UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

Filipinos are "reeling" from the impact of multiple typhoons this fall, says United Methodist Bishop Leo Soriano of the Davao area of the Philippines.

Just one week after Tropical Storm Ketsana struck Sept. 26, Typhoon Parma hovered over the country for five days. "You can just imagine (how) it added to the floods," he said while visiting United Methodist Communications on Nov. 16.

In all, 25 provinces in the Manila area, Baguio area and part of Davao area were flooded.

Flash floods from the typhoons caused major property damage, according to the bishop. Less substantial homes were washed away and concrete structures were submerged in water for a long period. Part of Manila, the capital city, is still under water.

"Some of the animals, many of them died," the bishop said. "They were drowned—dogs, cats, pigs and even pests like rats. ... The stench is terrible."

Some people, he added, have become infected with leptospirosis, a disease caused by bacteria from rat urine that has contaminated the floodwaters.

Soriano happened to be in the United States, attending a meeting in Nashville, when the first typhoon struck. He returned home to find church members organizing for the relief process.

"The district superintendents, the deaconesses, some lay leaders, in cooperation with UMCOR-Philippines, they tried to do some rescue and (provide) relief goods," Soriano said. "Even at this time, they are still doing it."

After the first typhoon struck, the denomination's



Bishop Leo Soriano

Manila area, led by Bishop Lito C. Tangonan, organized relief operations and issued a letter appealing for support and donations to church members at home and abroad. United Methodist institutions and local churches distributed relief supplies and assisted with shelter.

Using church members and other local volunteers, the United Methodist Committee on Relief is distributing emergency supplies to more than 11,000 displaced families. Melissa Crutchfield, who coordinates the agency's international disaster response, said UMCOR has just received a \$40,000 grant from Muslim Aid for its relief work in the Philippines.

Long-term recovery will mean rebuilding livelihoods as well as homes, Soriano explained. Many flood victims "simply have only the shirt on their back ... so you have to help them rehabilitate and many of them will be relocated because they could not build again where they were before."

Soriano expects this Christmas to be "a very bleak one" in the Philippines, but hopes other United Methodists will pray for them and contribute financially to the recovery.

"The meaning of Christmas is Immanuel, God with us," the bishop said. "If we could be together in tragedy, in peace and joy, and in pain, then that could be Immanuel and merry Christmas to all of us."

Donations to support ongoing relief work in the Philippines can be made to Philippines Emergency, UMCOR Advance #240235.

THIS STORY IS WRITTEN BY LINDA BLOOM and based on an interview conducted with Bishop Leo Soriano by Susan Passi-Klaus, a public relations writer with United Methodist Communications.



The World in Brief

MEMBERS TO CLAMOR FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

As world leaders grapple with the issue of global warming in December, churches will be ringing their bells to remind them of the need for action. At 3 p.m. local time on Dec. 13 -- about halfway through the Dec. 7-18 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen -- churches and religious groups will sound bells, drums, gongs or other instruments 350 times to symbolize the 350 parts per million that mark what many scientists say is the safe upper limit for carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

CAMPAIGN FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM LAUNCHED

WASHINGTON (UMNS) — Houses of worship in Arkan-

sas, Iowa, Ohio and Texas are holding special prayer services in November and December to press Congress to pass immigration reform that keeps families together. The personal effort is part of a larger campaign that organizers hope will deliver 250,000 postcards to members of Congress by Jan. 4.

UM BISHOPS LAUNCH APPEAL FOR PHILIPPINES

The UM Council of Bishops has issued a Churchwide Appeal for Philippines Disasters in response to the multiple typhoons that struck the country. The appeal, which was announced Nov. 19, will provide humanitarian relief and support for the ministries of The United Methodist Church in the Philippines. In late September and October, four typhoons—Ketsana, Parma, Lupit and Mirinae—hit the Philippines, leaving more

than a thousand dead and an estimated 1.3 million people displaced.

METHODISTS IN PUERTO RICO ELECT NEW BISHOP

A clergyman who is also a trained musician will be the next spiritual leader of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico. The Rev. Rafael Moreno Rivas, pastor of the University Methodist Church in Rio Piedras since 2000, was elected bishop Nov. 14 at a special session of the church's General Conference. He will take office on Jan. 1, when the term of Bishop Juan A. Vera expires. Bishops in the Puerto Rican Methodist Church serve six-year terms.

DEC. 31 DEADLINE ON LEGISLATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S EVENT

The deadline for submitting legislation to the Global Young People's Convocation and Leg-

islative Assembly in Berlin is Dec. 31. The event is July 21-26, 2010, but it's already crunch time, said Elizabeth-Ann Rowilson, coordinator of the event for Young People's Ministries, a division of the United Methodist Board of Discipleship. Guidelines for legislation and general information about the convocation and how to support it can be found at www.globalyoungpeople.org.

AFRICA UNIV. DONORS MATCH GIFTS FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — Africa University's Honorary Alumni Association is trying to raise \$20,000 or more by Dec. 15 for its endowed scholarship fund. Two members of the association are participating in a dollar-for-dollar match, up to \$10,000, for all gifts by that date. The scholarship fund makes it possible for students who cannot pay tuition to be educated at

the United Methodist-related university, located in Mutare, Zimbabwe. Giving information is available online at www.support-africauniversity.org.

TRANSLATORS SOUGHT FOR GLOBAL YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONVOCATION

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) -- Organizers of the Global Young People's Convocation and Legislative Assembly are seeking a team of translators who can help during the time leading up to the event and during the event. As many as 500 young people are expected to come from all over the world for the event July 21-26 in Berlin. Everything from the registration Web site to event packets must be translated into five languages. Anyone interested can contact Rowilson (erowlison@gbod.org, 303-947-3825) for more information.

Southwest District

Continued on page 1

someone shivering in the cold of a town celebration gladly open their mouth to a steaming cup of hot chocolate inside St. Mark's open doors—and then open their hearts and minds, as well?

The choice of Advent as a time to make the joint effort proved challenging for many congregations, which already have their own December traditions and many events on crowded calendars.

The timing was chosen, however, not for the convenience of hosts but for the benefit of guests. Our buildings tend to look especially appealing when they are decked out in their Christmas finest. Visitors who might otherwise be wary of entering a strange church might be drawn in for a glimpse.

"I have already heard some success stories," said District Superintendent Jim Todd. "Salem United Methodist had forty-five children come to their activity, only one of which was from the church. They had posted stars all over the community to attract people's attention. If you followed the stars, it led you to the church and its star-related activities. It was a creative and fun way to attract people's attention, and it could possibly have long-lasting effects for the church, if those people who attended the event continue to be involved in the church."

He added, "On the other side of the district, Christiana UMC had 52 people attend their open house, including a couple who came back for worship on Sunday. Many of the churches had people attend the open house who had never been in their church before."

December is a time of year when even people without a church home often feel more comfortable entering a church building. Churches were encouraged to provide tour-goers with a printed invitation to other Advent and Christmas events, including Christmas Eve worship services.

The district's Spirit Network team had decided in advance that the measure of success of the event would not be a high number of new members or even large number of guests (though that would be wonderful!) but that the event would have value if it simply let neighbors of different faiths, and no faith at all, feel more welcome and at home among us—and if it made us more open to them!

Training sessions leading up to the event brought laity and clergy together for discussions of Dan Kimball's book and video series They Like Jesus but Not the Church as well as insights from David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons' unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity and Why It Matters.

The joint effort allowed for joint publicity for the events in local newspapers and on radio and TV, as well as on web-based events calendars. Publicity directed people to the district's website, www.southwestdistrict.us for full details about the many different events and locations.

ANDREA BROWN IS ASSOCIATE PASTOR of Grandview United Methodist Church.

Two perspectives on Healing the Wounds of Racism

Brenda Tildon is a Christ Servant Minister and member of St. Daniel's UMC. She decided to attend the Healing the Wounds of Racism training since she recommends it for the Certified Lay Minister program. (Individuals pursuing this program must be recommended by a pastor and then come before the District Committee on Ministry. The ministry process takes 6 months to 3 years to complete.)



Brenda Tildon

What was the most important portion of the workshop? *I believe the clarifications of historical facts and getting reacquainted with the facts were very important.*

Also observing the reactions and listening to the responses of others in the class was enlightening

Why do you think persons of color are reluctant to attend the workshop? *They feel this training is for those who are considered capable of being racist. We all need to come to terms with being able to say, "This is how I feel." It's easy to say what my strengths are, but to disclose weaknesses is very difficult. Then, afterwards, you must decide to do something about them.*

How will you be able to emphasize the importance of attendance? *It is an opportunity to look at self and better understand how and what our brothers and sisters experience and the differences of those from the Euro-American culture. You could say it was a class for only Euro-Americans but we need to work out differences together, must accept that racism exist and it needs to be a diverse group setting to work on our difficult concerns.*

What could local church and conference leadership do to encourage the willing and productive participation of congregants? *Pay more attention to follow-up. Ongoing work is required; people must be called to make a difference in their daily actions.*

I really appreciated the experience. Even though it is mandatory for all pastors and for a portion of Eastern Pennsylvania Conference leadership, we need to be more conscious and intentional in sharing the need to attend and inform other People of Color that the Healing the Wounds of Racism training is very important. Rev. Chris Brady encouraged me to join the list of 'Healers' (a title given after attending the training) by highlighting the historical facts given during the three-day informative, relational building session. It is extremely important for all to participate in this much needed process to be effective in Kingdom Building for God.

Rev. Hannah Adair Bonner, a 2008 graduate of Duke, who worked at a Historically Black United Methodist Church from 2007-2009, was recently appointed to an interim position in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference. During her attendance at Healing the Wounds training she shared a positive outlook regarding the training.

What was the most important portion of the workshop? *The opportunity to connect with others,*



Hannah Bonner

share stories and meals together while learning about a difficult topic was important.

Why do you think persons of color are reluctant to attend the workshop? *Considering the pain and discomfort of revisiting race circumstances and situations, persons of color feel it is useless. When "white people" come to the table it is to move to reconciling, and persons of color are apprehensive of the constant starting over, without actual changes being witnessed.*

How will you be able to emphasize the importance of workshop attendance? *I have shared with others that this has been the best experience and preparation to work on issues of justice. I believe I have been called to a ministry of reconcili-*

ation, but can't do this work outside of authentic communal justice. For some people reconciliation becomes another act of violence, because of the demand to do it without changes in action. It must be loved into existence instead of demanded.

What could local church and conference leadership do to encourage the willing and productive participation of congregants? *The first step is to be willing and productive participants themselves, if this is going to be done correctly, it must be more than just lip service. Speaking positively is important, and engagement of appropriate persons with constructive criticism is a must. Making negative comments is non-productive.*

Most Euro-American people don't have to enter situations without having the power and if they do, they are unsettled about not having the power. I think that attending brings anxiety due to being on the hot seat. Racism and racist are trigger terms that cause defenses to go up and shut-downs productive dialogue. The acceptance of that title causes alarm, it's necessary to confess when living in a world that is structured to give privileges to select persons. It's difficult to avoid the temptation to accept the privilege. As voiced in the training, there is no way to be a passive Anti-racist and it's not easy to live as an active Anti-racist, yet it's necessary.

2010 Healing the Wounds of Racism Workshop dates

April 9-11 or 11-13, 2010 - Camp Innabah, Spring City, PA

Tentative, Please call the office with your preferred date

March 13, 10am-3pm - Healers Session - St. Matthews UMC, Valley Forge, PA

Bring own lunch, we'll supply drinks and dessert.

Aug. 9-11 - Daylesford Abbey, Paoli, PA Level II

Aug. 13-15 - Daylesford Abbey, Paoli, PA Introductory session

Sept. 17-19 - Gretna Glen, Lebanon, PA Introductory session

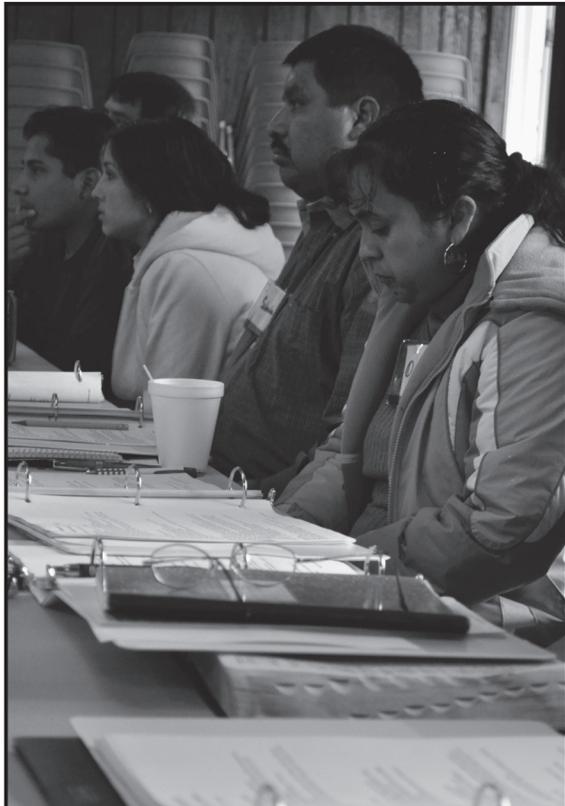
Oct. 22-24 - Pocono Plateau, Cresco, PA Introductory session

OPPORTUNITY: There will be a one-day Healing the Wounds of Racism session shared by two churches, Haws Avenue UMC and Open Arms UMC, in Norristown on January 23, 2010 from 9am to 4pm.

WANTED: Two persons interested in working on each district as Healing the Wounds of Racism liason partners. This will be an opportunity for committed persons to work on an active, effective ministry of reconciliation, and to serve as a "Go-to Team" for issues of concerns.

For more information, contact: Rev. Hilda Campbell, Human Relations & Leadership, Hilda.campbell@epaumc.org or 610-666-9090, ext. 224.

Lay missionaries trained to start new faith communities



Lay members from La Iglesia Metodista Unida El Buen Samaritano in West Chester prepare to become lay missionaries.

BY IRVING COTTO

The Eastern Pennsylvania has thirty new lay persons and pastors who have completed Module I for Lay Missioners according to the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries. An integral part of the Office of Congregational Development, the purpose for this training is to lead local churches in starting new faith communities in nearby areas primarily among persons who have not become a part of the membership and who may have never had a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Who are Lay Missioners? They are "committed laypersons, mostly volunteers, who are willing to be trained and work in a team with a pastor-mentor to develop faith communities, establish community ministries, develop church school extension programs, and engage in congrega-

tional development." (The 2008 Book of Discipline, para. 270)

Held over two weekends at Blue Mountain Retreat in New Ringgold and at Black Rock Retreat in Quarryville these participants went through a total of 40 hours aimed at developing faith communities and community ministries in their respective neighborhoods. Participants came from Allentown, Lancaster, Reading, Hatboro and Lebanon. The team of trained facilitators included The Revs. Bruni Martinez, Lilian Cotto, Lydia Munoz, Elena Ortiz and Irving Cotto.

During each weekend the training involved worship, bible study, role playing and group discussion on contextual evangelization and holistic mission. Participants were given a bilingual manual which is the main training tool through the entire experience. This tool consists of teaching guides and worksheets that guide many of the group activities such as skits, musical presentations, poetry, reports or panels.

What are faith communities? Faith communities are not limited to 12 people, which is the usual size of a small group, and are intentionally inclusive of all family members - it is about being the church in a different way. Faith communities involve worship, study, fellowship and mission. Many of their constituents will see the faith community as their primary worshipping community and their primary caring commu-

nity. In the Spring these participants will attend Module II for Lay Missioners which is the second basic training required to qualify for certification as a Lay Missioner. It is anticipated that these new Lay Missioners and Pastor-Mentors will be presented at Annual Conference and receive their certificate directly from the hands of Bishop Peggy Johnson.

Our new Lay Missioners will be pioneers in the development of new places for new people, some of which will become local churches. In addition, as has been the case throughout the nation, some of these Lay Missioners may hear the call to become pastors in the United Methodist Church. Please pray for our trainees that God will lead them into unexplored missional territories.

IRVING COTTO IS THE DIRECTOR of Congregational Development for the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

A Place for All

Continued from page 3

the one out of five Americans with disabilities. This program highlights the stories of people with disabilities who have been welcomed as valued members of their religious communities and celebrated baptisms, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, and annual events as well as the stories of those who have found strength in their faith allowing them and others to see past their disabilities."

The IBC is a coalition of four major faith groups: the National Council of Churches, a consortium of Jewish Organizations, the Islamic Society of North America, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. It is a major source

of programming on faith and religion on the three major broadcast TV stations: ABC, CBS, and NBC.

Other faith leaders contributing interviews include Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Executive Vice President, New York Board of Rabbis; Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary, National Council of Churches; Dr. Ingrid Mattson, President, ISNA; Rev. Bill Gaventa, Director, Community and Congregational Supports at The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. The documentary explores inclusivity with Rabbi Darby Jared Leigh, a rabbi at Congregation Bnai Keshet in New Jersey, who is one

of the handful of deaf rabbis in the world; with members of Evangelical Lutheran Church's Definitely Aabled Youth; with Max Rubin, a five year old boy with cerebral palsy; and with Rev. Beth Lockard, pastor of Christ the King Deaf Church in West Chester, PA.

To check when *A Place for All: Faith and Community for Persons with Disabilities* is playing in your area: www.interfaithbroadcasting.com. The documentary will be closed-captioned for the Deaf and hard of hearing. To watch a trailer of the documentary, go to www.divacommunications.com/aplace. Locally: WPVI TV06 ABC, Philadelphia, PA, Dec. 13, 2009 at 4:30 a.m.

Pastoral Letter from the Bishops: God's Renewed Creation

The Council of Bishops recently adopted a new pastoral letter entitled "God's Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action." This statement explains our United Methodist vision for being better stewards of creation.

In it the bishops have pledged 9 action steps:

1. We as your bishops pledge to answer God's call to deepen our spiritual consciousness as just stewards of creation. We commit ourselves to faithful and effective leadership on these issues, in our denomination and in our communities and nations.
2. We pledge to make God's vision of renewal our goal. With every evaluation and decision, we will ask; "Does this contribute to God's renewal of creation?" Ever aware of the difference between what is and what must be, we pledge to practice Wesleyan "holy dissatisfaction."
3. We pledge to practice dialogue with those whose life experience differs dramatically from our own, and we pledge to practice prayerful self-examination. For example, in the Council of Bishops, the fifty active bishops in the United States are committed to listening and learning with the nineteen active bishops in Africa, Asia and Europe. And the bishops representing the United States conferences will prayerfully examine the fact that their nation consumes more than its fair share of the world's resources, generates the most waste, and produces the most weapons.
4. We pledge ourselves to make common cause with religious leaders and people of good will worldwide who share these concerns. We will connect and collaborate with Ecumene, European and interreligious partners and with community and faith organizations to that we may strengthen our common efforts.
5. We pledge to advocate for justice and peace in the halls of power in our respective nations and international organizations.
6. We pledge to measure the "carbon footprint" of our Episcopal and denominational offices, determine how to reduce it, and implement those changes. We will urge our congregations, schools and settings of ministry to do the same.
7. We pledge, to the best of our ability, to provide the resources needed by our conferences to reduce dramatically our collective exploitation of the planet, peoples and communities, including technical assistance with buildings and programs, education and training, young people's and online networking resources.
8. We pledge to practice hope as we engage and continue supporting the many transforming ministries of our denomination. Every day we thank God for fruit produced through the work of The United Methodist church and through each of you.
9. We pledge more effective use of church and community webpages to inspire and share what we learn. We celebrate the communications efforts that tell the stories of struggle and transformation within our denomination.

There is a website that gives the full letter with a foundation document as well as a pastoral letter in a liturgical setting for church use. It can be found at www.hopeandaction.org. This same website gives further resources on how to make your church more friendly to our created world. In addition there will be a study guide posted on line by early January.

An adult study proposed for use in Lent 2010 is also anticipated (6 sessions). I hope you will take advantage of this teaching moment in the life of the church and do what you can to find ways to improve our world by the environmental choices we make.

Grace UMC attends Changing Our World Conference



Pastors and lay persons from four Eastern Pennsylvania churches attended the Change the World Conference: Hatboro: Lehman Memorial, Lebanon: Covenant, Phila.: Grace, Shamokin: St. John's, Lincoln Park: Community. Connectional Ministry Funds, approved by the Congregational Transformation Team, provided stipends for the High Potential Churches to attend either the School for Congregational Development or the Change the World Conference. The group was joined by Rev. Michael Slaughter, pastor of Ginghamburg UMC. Photo by Daniel Herner.

BY GRANT JOHNSON

Four lay persons and the pastor from Grace United Methodist Church in Philadelphia attended the "Changing Our World Conference" at Ginghamburg UMC in Tipp City, Ohio held October 21-23, 2009. Attending from Grace were Joyce Gailliard, Lesma Miller, Margaret Trice, Carol Scott, and Rev. Grant Johnson.

October 21 there was an Urban Ministries intensive for which we spent the day at the new Mt. McKin-

ley Campus. Mt. McKinley UMC is located in an economically depressed area of Dayton, Ohio. The church had served in that community for over 100 years, but because of an aging membership and dwindling resources it merged with the Ginghamburg Congregation.

With a new vitality and mission-focus that congregation went from 30 worshippers to over 200 in less than one year. The newest members came from the surrounding neighborhood. About 30 former members of Mt. McKinley UMC and a group of urban missionaries from the Ginghamburg congregation make up the new worshipping community. This congregation provides a dynamic worship service which features music to which the neighbor can relate. They provide a free breakfast every Sunday morning with made to order waffles and omelets.

The Church features a comprehensive social work ministries department called New Path, Inc. It features a food pantry in which people select food items from the shelf as in a supermarket, a dinner on Monday nights in a café style, furniture, financial assistance, cars and other services.

The Congregation's focus is on Project Neighborhood in which a defined area is designated as the church's mission area. In order to reach the community they have regular prayer walks. They are always looking for ways to connect with the community. One Sunday each member brought a rake to church and

after services went out into the neighborhood and raked leaves wherever they saw a need.

The Changing Our World Conference was held on the Ginghamburg UMC campus. Several dynamic keynote speakers shared with us including Mike Slaughter, lead pastor and Chief Dreamer, Dr. Ron Sider, Dr. Ruby Payne and Rev. Trevor Hudson. They all spoke in their unique styles to convey a message of ministering to and with people living in poverty in ways to change the world. During the rest of the conference we attended workshops that featured various ministries of the church. Everything focused on the mission statement:

Celebration - Bring - bringing people into life connection with Jesus

Cell - Grow - in relationship with God

Call - Serve - the needs of others and the world

The Ginghamburg church has a clear focus on missions. The church staff and operating budget is "bare-bones". The annual budget for care of the massive building and maintenance needs is approx \$700,000. In 2008 the congregation gave over 1.1 million in direct aid to Darfur, the church's missional focus.

Disciples are called "unpaid servants." Much of the work done to sustain this ministry is by "unpaid servants." People want and need to share their gifts to change the world and the church is intentional about helping people to "dream" - to find their unique ministry call and to live into it.

I came out of this Conference with a fresh understanding of servant ministry. In order to change our world we need to nurture our call to serve.

We give thanks to the High Potential Church Initiative sponsored by the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference for helping to fund this endeavor which will help to re-vitalize our ministry at Grace.

GRANT JOHNSON IS PASTOR of Grace United Methodist Church.

Bishop's Midwinter Retreat

for clergy and spouses

Theme: "Lord have mercy!
Loving our enemies and
practicing forgiveness,
even in church."

January 12-14, 2010

Keynote Speakers from
Duke Divinity School:
Rev. Dr. L. Gregory Jones, Dean
and Rev. Susan Pendleton Jones,
Director of Field Education

Clarion Fontainebleau Hotel
10100 Coastal Highway
Ocean City, MD 21842

Register online: www.epaumc.org
For more information contact: Mrs. Amy Botti
1-800-828-9093, ext. 233 or email at amy.botti@epaumc.org



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"Making Christians in the
21st Century: Christ,
Culture, Conversion"
Lecturer: Dr. Kendall K. McCabe

Monday, February 1, 2010,
8 a.m.-3 p.m.
Willow Valley Conference Center
Lancaster, PA

Contact Rev. Timothy Smith,
717-872-5331 or TS3707@aol.com or visit
www.united.edu

Cost: \$25, meals extra, CEU's available
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