



January-February 2009

The Courier

**Catskill Hudson District
New York Annual Conference**

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A Word from Your DS: “Living with a Holy, Expectant Curiosity”

As Epiphany has come, and we have again remembered the story of the three magi, I find myself thinking about the remarkable response of the religious scholars who were consulted with regard to the Messiah’s birthplace. As you may remember, the wise men had seen a star that prompted them to make a long and costly journey in search of a newborn king, but when they arrived in Israel they needed to stop and ask for directions. (Please resist making comparisons with any males you know who will never do that!) “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?” they asked. “We observed his star at its rising and we have come to pay him homage.” King Herod summoned the religious authorities and they had an answer, found in the book of the prophet Micah: “In Bethlehem in Judah, for so it has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means the least among the rulers of Israel, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

Here’s the remarkable part of the story for me: What do these religious leaders do, having heard the wise men’s claim that the Messiah has been born, and having concluded that the birthplace is just a few miles down the road? Nothing! They apparently rolled up their scrolls and went back to business as usual. It was these foreigners, these men who had never been a part of the household of Israel, who continued on their journey – assisted once again by the star they had seen in the East – and they were blessed to meet the long-awaited, long-sought Messiah.

Wouldn’t it seem logical that at least one of those chief priests and scribes might have said, “This could be it! This might in fact be the fulfillment of all that we’ve waited for! Just in case, let’s go down to Bethlehem and check things out. This could be the moment when God’s promises come true.” As far as we know, none of them did – which sounds a significant warning to me about the dangers of a religious life that has lots of information and tradition but very little curiosity, and precious little expectation that God might actually be doing something in the here and now.

That’s one of the hazards for a pastor or a church leader or anyone who has been an active Christian for a long time. We can lose our sense of wonder, our capacity to be amazed, and the realization that God may act in innumerable surprising and mysterious ways ... We may get to the point where over-familiarity with the Bible blunts the expectation that God will continue to speak through it ... We may be gun-shy because of prior disappointments, and find ourselves less likely to live with a risk-taking faith ... We may think we know for certain the way that life will unfold, and create a self-fulfilling prophecy in which we never seem to see God doing anything new ... We may get to the point of being satisfied with living by a bland but safe set of traditions, instead of the eager and joyful encounters with life that faith can make possible.

I know those hazards because I’ve experienced them, but I don’t want them to be the norm for my life. I suspect that some who read this will identify with at least some of those mind-sets, and I hope and pray that you will struggle against them. How sad to find our mirror image in those placid religious folks, apparently inoculated against any sense of wonder – but how wonderful it can be to take as our model those magi!

As 2009 is unfolding we don’t know for sure where we are going in our church’s missions or our individual lives. We know we’re on a journey of faith, for at some point in the past we all saw a star of some sort that motivated us to follow and to seek God’s way. But what about now? Are you curious about what God may be doing, and about what God may reveal to you? Are you traveling with the expectation that scripture (along with reason, experience and tradition, those other means of discerning God’s truth) will speak to you with some current and compelling direction? Are you willing to move – to act on the inspirations God has sent you?

Those wise men of the scriptures weren't necessarily smarter, more moral or more "spiritual" than the religious scholars. But they were more curious, and more ready to act on the inspirations they'd been given, and what a difference it made in their lives. That's the way I want to live, and my hope and prayer is that there will be many wise men and wise women around us who move into 2009 with this kind of joyful, expectant curiosity. Who knows where we will be led, what opportunities we will find for offering our gifts, and in what ways we may discover the One that God has sent?

Your Superintendent and Friend,
Jim Moore

Save the Date and Plan to Attend: Camp Meeting, May 16th

Plans are being made for a very special district event, which we hope will be attended by hundreds of children, youth, and adults of all ages. It's our first (perhaps "first annual") Camp Meeting, to be held at Camp Epworth on May 16th.

What's a Camp Meeting? In pioneer days a camp meeting was a gathering that went on for several days – so people literally camped there – at which folks found inspiration, friendship and fun as they shared in music, games, food, and listening to inspirational speakers. Our camp meeting will be just an afternoon, possibly stretching into the evening, but we hope it will accomplish some of those same things, and people of all ages will come to the end of the day saying, "It was great to spend the day with all those Methodists!"

What will be happening? Plans are still being worked on, but we expect that we'll gather in the early afternoon and spend the first hour or so beneath a big tent as we share in music and inspiration. "Glory Road", the band from St. James UMC, has been asked to come, and we are hoping that other groups, of various kinds, will also join us ... Bishop Park will bring us a word of inspiration, and we know that his enthusiasm and joy will be infectious ... Toward the end of this first period of time we will also have "The Fastest District Conference in History," a very brief meeting in which we take care of a few necessary items of business.

The remaining 2 or 2 ½ hours of the afternoon will be spent in a variety of fun activities. The kids and all kid-like adults will be invited to explore Epworth's caves, take part in their ropes course, and play kickball and/or softball ... Canoeing on the Rondout Creek will be available, along with tours of the camp, an introduction to Epworth's ecologically-minded gardens and buildings, a Bible-based scavenger hunt, a work project, and many other activities led by Epworth staff members and volunteers from our district ... Just walking around the beautiful campus and talking with new and old friends will be another pleasant activity.

Our mission focus for the day will be PETs ("Personal Energy Transport) the hand-cranked scooters made for people who have lost their limbs because of illness, accidents, or mine explosions. Our church in East Jewett is a major center for building PETs and several years ago the district agreed that we would encourage every church to contribute \$250, the cost for building one PET. Some PETs will be at the Camp Meeting, and there will be an obstacle course so people can try navigating their way along on one. Perhaps a station for working on a PET will be set up that day too.

After an afternoon of inspiration and fun we will come together again for a barbeque, perhaps more music, and perhaps an evening campfire. We are still in the planning stages, and welcome volunteers and ideas from all our churches and people. We hope that such an event, bringing together people of all ages for fun and inspiration, will help us experience our faith and our identity as United Methodist Christians in a very special way.

The Camp Meeting is being planned by our District Council on Ministries, and the subgroup that has begun the initial planning includes these folks: Karen Ogborn, Gene Knoth, Fran Reed, Lynne Taylor, and Jim Moore. If you have ideas, or a desire to join the team, please call Jim at 845-679-6350 or write at cathudnyac@aol.com.

In the event of a monsoon-like storm we will postpone the Camp Meeting until May 23rd, but we are hoping and praying for a beautiful day. More details will be shared in the coming weeks and months. Set aside the day now!

For more information about Camp Epworth visit <http://www.epworthcenter.com/>

District Missions: Let's Get Rolling!

There are 21,000,000 people sitting, waiting. No, they aren't stuck in traffic or stranded at an airport. They are disabled persons who cannot move from place to place without help. They are on a waiting list at PET International.

PET is a faith-based, volunteer-powered, humanitarian and worldwide 501c3 (tax exempt) organization. PET Project history and assembly sites began in 1995 as a ministry for those in greatest need of mobility. The PET Project ministry continues growing to serve the overwhelming needs in some of the most desperate places in the world. The majority of the gifts of mobility have been the three-wheeled, hand-cranked wheelchairs now affectionately called "PETs."



At our annual District Conference some years ago, we voted to adopt the Personal Energy Transportation Project as our District Mission. We made a commitment that each year, every Charge in our District would raise enough money for this project to fund at least one of these devices for a person on that long waiting list. Most of the work to build these machines is done by volunteers, including a very dedicated group of United Methodists based locally in East Jewett under the leadership of Don Muth and Robert Lawrence. The cost of each unit, including overseas shipping is just \$250.

As we begin this New Year and set our priorities, let's remember the people waiting to receive the gift of mobility. The PET Project is a part of the ministry of Jesus Christ, whose disciples said, **"In the name of Jesus Christ, arise and walk."** (Acts 3:6) All things are possible with God. Let's make this the year that every Charge meets the commitment to provide one machine. It's money well spent.

Lay Speaking Ministries Corner

It is hard to believe it is January as I am writing this on January 6th – Epiphany – Three King’s Day – the arrival of the Wise Men with their gifts. It makes me think about what my gifts will be this year to my church, my community, my friends and family, and myself ... the question was asked of me ‘what gifts do I bring?’; ‘what gifts does my church bring?’ ... and I have been pondering this.

One of the gifts of this Catskill Hudson District is the opportunities that are offered by the Lay Speaking Ministries. Since the fall we have been refocusing our efforts and some of our plans were not fulfilled ... we were dreaming bigger than what we were able to accomplish ... however big dreams are good and staying focused will often mean they will be fruitful.

It is the desire of the Committee to have the Lay Speaking icon on the District Website as the focal point for information about Lay Speaking Ministries. We will very soon have information ready to give to the Web Master. This site will have material about upcoming courses, registration forms, list of local and certified lay speakers ... and more ... so watch for it.

Again in 2009 the Lay Speaking Ministries will be holding its third annual Youth Lay Speaking Day at Camp Epworth – May 2. If you are interested in helping and/or attending this event please let us know as soon as possible. The planning process has begun!

We will be holding a series of Lay Speaking Courses on four Saturdays between Easter and Pentecost at St. Mark’s Church in Napanoch – a location that is easily accessible for the Sullivan County area. We had to wait until after Easter so we could use the building – to save fuel dollars the church consolidates its space in the winter months. Watch for the list of courses and details.

Any questions or concerns relating to the lay Speaking Ministries can be referred to Margaret Howe at howemarg@aol.com or Gene Knoth at knothheat@yahoo.com.

Blessings for 2009,
Margaret Howe
Co-director Lay Speaking Ministries

Spring Ahead Events are coming to a location near you this March!

Your District Council on Ministry is planning two identical training events for our District this spring, modeled on the great success of our Jump Start the Year programs last September. Much like the former District Training Day, these days are opportunities to learn new information, to fellowship and network with fellow United Methodists, to worship together. The DCOM has carefully selected two locations in different parts of our Catskill Hudson District so that participants will not have to drive too far. Participants will take one class that meets for 2 ½ hours, studying a subject in depth, rather than taking two shorter classes.

Watch for more specific information on the content of the classes offered and registration materials.

Catskill Hudson District Council on Ministry

Spring Ahead

Coming
March 7th at Margaretville UMC
and
March 8th at New Paltz UMC

Workshops for Clergy and Laity

Workshop Topics being defined include

Caring Ministries
Enhancing Worship Space/Centers
Leading a Meeting That's Worth Going To
Technology and Music in Worship
Vacation Bible School Opportunities

Saturday, March 7, 2009

Margaretville UMC
1:30 Gathering
2:00 Worship
2:30 – 5:00 Workshop

Sunday, March 8, 2009

New Paltz UMC
1:30 Gathering
2:00 Worship
2:30 – 5:00 Workshop

Come to the location that is best for you!

Same workshops at each location

Watch for directions, details and registration forms!

Questions: howemarg@aol.com or cathudnyac@aol.com or call the District Office at 845-679-6350.

This Worked for Us: Angel Food Ministry

For the last four months our church, Colchester Community UMC, in Downsville, NY, has been participating in the Angel Food Ministry. This ministry was begun in Georgia when a Pastor and his family began handing out food on their back porch to local people who had been laid off from their jobs. Then as now the need became more than anyone could handle and so the Angel Food Ministry was born.

The simple premise of the ministry is giving people a hand up rather than a hand out. People are given the opportunity to purchase \$60 worth of food for \$30. The monthly menus contain about 17 items, mostly frozen meat and vegetables, that are meant to last about a week for a family of four, but obviously longer for couples or retired folks. There are “specials” of meats and vegetables and fruits that can be purchased in addition to the regular or senior box menu. In this time of economic hardships any little bit helps, and we are finding that everyone needs a little help once in a while.

It's a simple ministry. We take orders on 3 different days during the first week of the month. Payment is required when ordering. Then we call in our compiled order to the warehouse in Georgia, send in our payment and then we pick up at a local distribution center and distribute the order the following week. We have about 6 volunteers who do the heavy lifting and another group of volunteers (about 6 or 7) who help with the distribution. The youth group and the local scout troops help the older folks carry their boxes and coolers out to their cars.

We began with 22 orders and have tripled our numbers with the expectation of increasing our orders again this month. This is a simple ministry that brings many blessings for all of us who are involved with it. For more information you can go online to www.angelfoodministries.com or you can call me, Toni Vessey at 607-363-7363. Offering people a hand up rather than a hand out keeps their dignity intact and allows us to love one another and feed the hungry as we are called to do.

(The United Ministry of Delhi also takes part on Angel Food Ministries.)

Sunday School Resources

Do you work with children and youth in your church? Could you use some inspiration, encouragement, and learning? A monthly email newsletter for Sunday School teachers and leaders is archived at <http://www.gbod.org/education/iteach/archives/default.asp>. Interested persons can also sign up to have it sent monthly to their email address by responding to the sign-up line at the very bottom of any of the articles.

District UMW

Please save these important dates:

May 2- District UMW Day Apart

July 23-26- Cooperative School of Christian Mission - Location to be announced.

September 26- District Annual Meeting

October 31- Conference UMW Annual Meeting – First UMC, Mt. Vernon, NY – Guest Speaker
Bishop Jeremiah Park

Youth News

Visit the website of the Youth Ministry of the NY Annual Conference at <http://www.umyouth.com/> for the latest Youth news from our Conference!



Ignite '09 is almost here!

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

I want to tell you about IGNITE, our Conference-wide youth event coming up on January 23, 24, and 25, at the Crowne Plaza in White Plains, NY.

Last year's IGNITE was a fun and faithful experience, and we expect even bigger and better this year. We have been planning and praying for January's event since last March, and we have felt God's presence in our efforts.

IGNITE will feature worship experiences that will be both meaningful and engaging. There will be several workshops to choose from. Participants will have many opportunities to interact with other youth from around the Conference, and there will be time for individual groups to meet and grow together as well.

We are very excited to have the HYPE Praise Band as our music leaders again this year. They were such a hit with the group last year that we rehired them on the spot. We will also have comedian Ken Kington with us on Saturday. The weekend rounds out with some great speakers, dance groups, a steel pan performance, and more.

IGNITE is a faithful experience, and truly a can't-miss event. For registration information go to www.UMYouth.com.

Peace,
Neal Bowes
on behalf of the Conference Council on Youth Ministry

For Youth Leaders: Do you work in the life-changing, soul-shaping work of God with young adults and youth in your church and need help and encouragement for your ministry? If so, you might be interested in “The Source”, which is a networking and training opportunity for all who work with young adults and youth. For registration and more information about the event, visit www.gbod.org/thesource.

The Souper Bowl of Caring



Celebrate 20 years of caring with youth across the nation to raise money to fight hunger on February 1, 2009. The fundraisers take place on the weekend of the Super Bowl, and is a way for youth to call to our attention the urgent needs of those who are hungry in their own communities. 100% of all money raised is given to the charity chosen by the youth. For more information and an abundance of resources and ideas, go the Souper Bowl of Caring web site at <http://www.souperbowl.org>.

Pictorial Directory Online

The 2008 Pictorial Directory for the New York Annual Conference has been published and is available for viewing online. To access the directory, type in the URL address: <http://om349519.onlineolanmills.com>. Select “Photo Directory” from the navigation bar at the top and then type in the case-sensitive password to view the directory: EXgdgT.

Property and Casualty Trust (PACT) has scheduled monthly webinar sessions of interest to local churches, particularly the trustees. The January topic is Real Property Management Overview. Other topics in 2009 will include Safe Sanctuaries, Cyber Safety, Daycare/Child Care Safety, Handling Media/Crisis Management, and more. To find out the dates of upcoming webinars and to sign up for reminders and login details, email [PACT Webinars](mailto:PACTWebinars). More information of interest to church trustees is on our conference web site at <http://nyac.com>. Go to the Business and Administration menu and select Church Trustees.

The 2009 Intercessory Prayer Calendar is available for download by clicking on [Prayer Calendar](#).

Worship Planning - Dean McIntyre from the General Board of Discipleship, has prepared planning calendars for worship. These planning calendars for 2009 and 2010 contain the Revised Common Lectionary citations for every Sunday and major day of the church year, as well as United Methodist observances and special days and holidays from the secular and civil calendars. They are available for use to all our pastors and musicians, worship leaders and planners, choir directors and members, Sunday School teachers, and committee members. To download the calendar for 2009, click on [Worship Calendar 2009](#) and for 2010 [Worship Calendar 2010](#).



Round and About the District



- The **UMC of Monticello** decorated a Chrismon Tree during Advent season. They also participated in Project Snowman, a United Way program that helps provide Christmas gifts for needy children.
- The **St. James Kingston** UMW bought toys and games for children served by the Rural and Migrant Ministry and also adopted a family from the Domestic Violence Shelter. The women also provide rolls of plastic envelopes in which to place used ink jet cartridges for recycling.
- **St. James** sponsored a new Christmas event this year: an All is Calm night. Realizing that many struggle with the chaos of the season and have little time for the reflection of what the season really means, the church sanctuary was open from 4 to 8 p.m. to anyone in the community to come and enjoy the “calm” provided. There was a small pamphlet of readings and poems for individuals to silently enjoy.
- **Walton UMC** collected unwrapped gifts for Operation Dalmatian and also “White Gifts”, new gloves, scarves and mittens wrapped in white tissue paper.
- This summer the **Walden UMC** will be participating in a new mission initiative through Heifer Project International at their Overlook Farm in Rutland, Massachusetts. The group that goes to the farm will learn about the prevalence of, root causes, and solutions of global hunger and poverty and gain an understanding of Heifer’s unique approach to empowering developing communities to lift themselves out of poverty. The group will engage in various hands-on activities and will also work on service projects there. Walden UMC is selling stock in this mission trip, knowing that it will pay big dividends.
- The **Greenville-Norton Hill UMC** Sunday School Christmas program was “A Night in Bethlehem”. From 6-8 p.m. the village of Bethlehem was recreated, complete with Live Nativity, merchants, the temple teachers, shepherds, and music. There was time to hear the prophecies of the coming king, to sing carols together, and to mingle and enjoy being part of remembering that wondrous first Christmas.
- The Daycare and School Age Program at **Greenville-Norton Hill** offered a Parent’s Night Out so parents could have a date, do some Christmas shopping, or just take a break during the busy holiday season.
- The **Catskill UMC** participated in an adopt-a-family program for the Greene County Mental Health Association. Also, parishioners saved and brought coins to church on January 4th for the PET program (Personal Energy Transportation vehicle). This was representative of gifts brought to the Christ child by the Kings on Epiphany.
- **Lexington-Westkill and Prattsville** churches brought gifts to the Albany VA Hospital this holiday season. **Prattsville** sponsored a toy drive. The **Lexington-Westkill** Sunday School made Thanksgiving apple pies for those in need or unable to make their own. They will be sponsoring a Pancake Breakfast to benefit Greene County youth.
- The **Walton UMC** Youth Fellowship put on a Living Nativity, including live Alpacas in the barn yard. This was followed by a lasagna/spaghetti dinner and collection of items for the Food Bank. The **Walton UMC** hosted a free Christmas Community Baked Ham Dinner at the fire station, inviting any and all in the community to come.

- **Hobart and Township** churches collected items for children and donated them to the Delaware County Jail Ministry. They also brought White Gifts to church, packages on non-perishable food wrapped in white tissue paper.
- **Saugerties UMC** has a Parenting Class which meets during the Sunday School hour. They are currently studying *The Gift of Forgiveness*. Sunday School students collected gifts for the Native American children living on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. The **Saugerties** church will participate in the annual Advent Walk sponsored by the Saugerties Council of Churches. This is a meaningful traveling church service going from the Lutheran Church to the Congregational Church, to the Reformed Church, to the Methodist Church, and then ending at the Catholic Church.
- After the early snowstorm that hit Delaware County on Oct. 21, the **Andes United Methodist Church's** fellowship hall and kitchen were designated as a place where those without power could come for shelter and food. Volunteers from the American Red Cross staffed the center from Wednesday morning until Friday morning, with two different four-person crews from offices in Endicott and Elmira. Church officials were on hand after the first group came in, to familiarize the Red Cross staffers with their surroundings, and offer any assistance they might need. Although the shelter was available, no area residents decided to take advantage of it.



Shown here is the second group — Sharon Lowery, Carole Williams and Ronald and Elaine Smith.

- The **United Ministry of Delhi** hosted the Thanksgiving Dinner for their community which was free and open to the public.
- **Town of Esopus UMC** participated in Operation Christmas Child, filling shoeboxes with items for needy children. They also contribute to Caring Hands. The church held two Taize Worship Services in November. These special services are quiet and meditative in nature, and are centered around softly singing beautiful chants.
- **Grand Gorge UMC** held a Christmas Parade of the Animals. Participants sang Christmas carols as they walked along the street, along with their pets.
- The UMW at **St. Paul's Middletown** is planning an overnight retreat at Camp Epworth. The MYF had a Haunted House for which the admission was a non-perishable food item to be donated to the food pantry.
- **Overlook UMC in Woodstock** collects and distributes presents for children in the Angel Tree Program. Families who have a mother or father in prison are beneficiaries of the program coordinated by Prison Ministries. The gifts are given in the name of their incarcerated parent.
- **Maybrook UMC** has participated in a junk car donation program. Ten cars have been donated which raised a total of \$1,743 for the Trustees Building Fund. The donations are tax deductible. **Maybrook** is part of the Methodist Build with Habitat for Humanity.

- **East Branch/Harvard UMC** has been running a program to send care packages to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's a way to let out military know that they are not forgotten and that we are thinking of them and praying for them. **Colchester Community UMC** participates in a Release Time for second and third graders. The children walk from school to the church from 11:15 to 12:15 on Monday mornings.
- **Colchester Community UMC (Downsville)** is working on the main findings from their last Natural Church Development survey. They have begun a new way of sharing God's presence in their daily lives with each other. Each person is asked to share the ways that they have seen God during the week by writing down the experience and posting it on a hallway bulletin board. Members of the congregation are asked to read the cards before or after the service. The more you see God ... the more you will see God.

Calendar

Your DS, along with a number of leaders from the Conference, will be attending a national convocation on "Living the United Methodist Way" from Jan 29th till Feb. 1st. He will then be taking the first week of February as vacation.

January 13: District Committee on Ministry, 10:00, Saugerties UMC

January 17: District Council on Ministries, (place to be announced), 2:00

January 20-22: 2009 Bishop's Convocation

See <http://www.nyac.com/resources/pdfs/BishopsConvo.pdf>

January 23-25: District UMW Annual Retreat, St. Joseph's Villa, Saugerties

January 26-28: Board of Ordained Ministry

Feb. 4: Training for Clergy Mentors, 10:00-3:00, Town of Esopus UMC

March 7 and 8: "Spring Ahead" events (District Training Seminars)

April 21-24: Order of Elders Retreat at Mt. St. Alphonsus

May 16: District Camp Meeting, District Conference at Camp Epworth
Rain Date, May 23

June 10-13: Annual Conference, Hofstra University



How to Keep Warm in Church

- Rush up to the front of the sanctuary. That will warm you up, and you'll avoid the draft in the back of the church.
- Invite your neighbors and friends, and sit 12 people to a pew.
- Wear thermal underwear (in the appropriate liturgical colors, of course).
- Wait for an unfamiliar hymn – and then watch the sparks fly!

(from Reservoir UMC's Loaves and Fishes newsletter)

Please freely **post** and **distribute** this copy of the COURIER. Contact the District Office (cathudnyac@aol.com) if you would like to delete yourself from or add yourself to our database for receiving the COURIER online.

The deadline for the March-April 2009 Courier will be February 21st. Thank you.