

CONNYECTION

CONNECTICUT/NEW YORK DISTRICT

REV. JEREMIAH PARK, BISHOP

REV. JEANNETTE BASSINGER-ISHII, DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

DECEMBER 2004

REFLECTIONS FROM THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Friends,

I was reminded while attending church on Sunday that the lectionary readings for Advent are apocalyptic, and often disconcerting.

In my young days, I dreaded preaching the Advent lection. The God I believed in looked nothing like the cosmic destroyer depicted in so much of the material, and the humanity I believed in could change the world with greater knowledge, better laws, and enhanced peace-making skills.

As I age, I am more appreciative of the relevance and veracity of Christian apocalyptic eschatology. I am now too old and too experienced to believe that WE can rescue ourselves and our world from pervasive injustice and war. I now know that God must be part of the quest for a world of peace and justice, or we are lost.

I am now, also, certain that destruction must play a role in our hope. Idolatry is behind personal acts of selfishness and hatred, and also behind the social systems that breed injustice and war. The idols must be dislodged, but we are not easily rid of them. We trust them more than we trust God, and so we protect them - with our prejudice-sustaining myths; with our laws, made too often to protect the privileges of the privileged; and, of course, with our warring madness. If the idols do not fall, we are a world without hope.

Because only God has sufficient goodness and power to bring about the destruction of our idols, I now know we need our apocalyptic tradition. To be silent about this tradition is to embrace a Pollyanna heresy that ignores the tenacity, the strength, and the scope of sin. In an apocalyptic-free world, salvation can be merely a personal thing between me and my God, with no commentary at all on the structures and competing myths of our societies. An apocalyptic-free religion anesthetizes me to the horror that exists in this world, and easily becomes a cozy contract between me and the Almighty for my personal salvation.

The apocalyptic material reminds me that it is not just I who needs God, and that salvation is not just about the state of my soul. The material reminds me that the world needs God, and that the salvation promised is the salvation of the world.

And how shall God come to this world to root out evil? If the first coming is any indication, then God will probably not come on a white war horse. As Barbara Brown-Taylor puts it, God is more likely to come as a Bolivian peasant on a burro or as a Himalayan monk on a yak. Such a coming challenges every myth that supports the idols of wealth and violence.

It seems so very fitting to me, as I age, that the apocalyptic material should precede the good news of the arrival of the Child. Such preceding material elevates our Christmas good news beyond the maudlin to the level of idol-shattering proclamation.

I urge you, then, to resist the temptation to skip Advent, and to skip the apocalyptic. Do not rush past the promise of a new social order. The deep assurance of the incarnation does not ignore, but addresses our own sin, and the sin of the world, and then promises what we need most, and what we could never win on our own. The incarnation promises a world such as God would have it. Such is the real promise of Christmas.

In His name,

CT-NY District Training Workshops

Practical/ helpful info for church leaders & committee members

Two convenient locations:

- At Danbury UMC on Wednesday, January 12, 2005, 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.
- At First UMC in Stamford on Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2005, 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

Training Workshop	At Danbury UMC	At First Church Stamford
<p><u>Finance Workshop</u> – Targeted for Treasurers, Finance Committee Chairs, committee members, clergy, Trustees and others interested in auditing, apportionments, budgeting, clergy pensions, HealthFlex and other financial administrative matters of the local church.</p>	<p>Basics of Local Church Budgeting & Financial Management & Control, will address the issues concerning apportionments & HealthFlex, paying them on-time & annual audits. <i>Leader: Lum Lee (Dist. Lay Leader & Statistician)</i></p>	<p><i>Not Offered in Stamford</i></p>
<p><u>Staff-Parish Relations</u> – Targeted for SPR Committee Chairs, committee members and clergy with a focus on the process of filling open pastoral or staff positions and requirements to support them.</p>	<p>SPR responsibilities and open discussion of handling problems and issues between congregation and the pastor. <i>Leaders: Rev. Lori Miller (Pastor, Grace UMC Newburgh) and Rev. Jeannette Bassinger-Ishii (Dist. Superintendent)</i></p>	<p>SPR responsibilities and open discussion of handling problems and issues between congregation and the pastor. <i>Leaders: Rev. Lori Miller (Pastor, Grace UMC Newburgh) and Rev. Jeannette Bassinger-Ishii (Dist. Superintendent)</i></p>
<p><u>Trustees Workshop</u> – Targeted for Board of Trustee Chairs, board members and clergy with focus on the scope of Trustee authority & responsibilities.</p>	<p>Bd. of Trustee Responsibilities <i>Leader: Carolyn Beveridge (Member, Dist. Bd. of Trustees)</i></p>	<p>Bd. of Trustee Responsibilities <i>Leader: Carolyn Beveridge (Member, Dist. Bd. of Trustees)</i></p>
<p><u>Stewardship</u> - Targeted for Stewardship, Finance & Board of Trustee Chairs, committee members, clergy, and persons interested in planning, organizing and executing an effective stewardship program – i.e., the annual pledge campaign, capital campaign, & planned giving.</p>	<p>Basics of Stewardship with emphasis on planned giving efforts to secure the future of local churches. <i>Leader: Rev. Jeff Rarich (President & Exec Dir., United Methodist Frontier Foundation)</i></p>	<p>Basics of Stewardship with emphasis on planned giving efforts to secure the future of local churches. <i>Leader: Rev. Jeff Rarich (President & Exec Dir., United Methodist Frontier Foundation)</i></p>
<p><u>Church Archives & History</u>- Targeted for local church historians and persons responsible for gathering and storing invaluable local church artifacts and records.</p>	<p>Basics of archiving and records retention. Open discussion of what artifacts and records to retain, methods for storing them, and retention time. <i>Leader: Bette Sohm (Conference Archivist)</i></p>	<p>Basics of archiving and records retention. Open discussion of what artifacts and records to retain, methods for storing them, and retention time. <i>Leader: Bette Sohm (Conference Archivist)</i></p>
<p><u>Opportunities for the Laity</u>- Targeted for Lay Leaders, Certified Lay Speakers, members of Ad Council / Local Church Council, members of Committees on Lay Leadership, other interested laity and clergy.</p>	<p>Open discussion on the opportunities to actively use laity in worship, Christian Ed, & other local church functions who have experienced: Lay Speaker Training, Walk to Emmaus, Wellspring, Disciple</p>	<p>Open discussion on the opportunities to actively use laity in worship, Christian Ed, & other local church functions who have experienced: Lay Speaker Training, Walk to Emmaus, Wellspring, Disciple</p>

	Bible Study, etc. <i>Leaders: Jim Fleegal (Member, DCOM & Lay Speaker Training)</i>	Bible Study, etc. <i>Leaders: Jim Fleegal (Member, DCOM & Lay Speaker Training)</i>
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VIM TO BOLIVIA JANUARY 28, 2005

The fourth Volunteer in Mission trip to Bolivia will take place **January 28 to February 12, 2005** when we once again travel to this country to do whatever is required. You are encouraged to prayerfully consider whether you are being called to be part of this team. The cost is \$2000 which is all inclusive of expenses and also includes funds for supporting the mission work we will be engaged in. Limited scholarship help is available and often local churches have helped support those participating.

Contact team leaders, Bob and Ginny Stevenson at manofnotes@snet.net for an application and for more information.

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UMCOR TEAM RECOMMENDS AID EFFORTS FOR DARFUR

Restoration of farming and clean water is critical for residents in the arid savannahs of South Darfur even before civil conflict ends. From conversations within regions near Khartoum and Nyala, South Darfur's capital city, the UMCOR team is recommending short-term actions like distribution of buckets, plastic sheeting, blankets, and cooking utensils. Expected areas of focus for longer-term development initiatives include income-generating activity, water and sanitation projects, and restoration of farmlands and livestock. Your support is needed! Advance #150300, Sudan Emergency.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: HOSPITAL NEEDS BASIC NECESSITIES

The patients at a hospital in northwestern Bosnia-Herzegovina lack basic necessities. UMCOR will purchase locally items such as mattresses, wheelchairs, and new clothing for residents of the home for Children and Youth with Special Needs in Cirkin Poije, Republika Srpska. The Advance #333350, Bosnia Emergency, will assist the UMCOR staff to provide these necessities and improve conditions at the home. Please designate your gift "Republika Srpska Home."

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NEWS FROM BOLIVIA

HOUSING

CHIMBOATA - Residents finished 10 more houses, which will complete 95% of housing for that community. They are also working in the construction of the safe drinking water system, which they hope to finish by mid-December.

SAJPAYA - Residents continue to work on the housing, and expect to finish 12 more houses by the beginning of December, which will finish 90% of the houses.

In both communities they need to build storage areas for cereals and other food products. They have not been able to start on this project due to the growing impoverishment of the area related to the national economic crisis – people don't have enough for cash contributions to this project.

They also report a sharp increase in the cost of building materials, impacting the number of houses that can be built.

To support our mission in Bolivia, contribution opportunities are:

Encounter with Christ: Advance #025100 (Umbrella fund financing programs in Latin America and the Caribbean).

Boots Mission: Advance #00430A

Advances receiving special mission support by the CT/NY District & Central CT District (Payable to General Board of Global Ministries - should be sent by your local church or directly to CY/NY District, UMC, PO Box 3007, Stamford, CT 06905.

- Bolivia Central District Children's Programs: Advance #00430-A Bolivia General -Children - Central District (supports daycare and other children's program.
- Housing to prevent Chagas Disease: Advance #011243 - 7RA CIEMAL. Housing

Special Programs of the 2005 Bolivia VIM Team CT/NY and CT. Central Districts (Payable to CT/NY District, identified in the check memo or transmittal letter by the project description below, and sent to VIM Team Leaders Bob & Ginny Stevenson, 316-A South Trail, Stratford, CT 06614 or to the CT/NY District, PO Box 3007, Stamford, CT 06905.

- Funding to purchase School Supplies.
- Funding to purchase a Travel Pack of medications provided by MAP International to carry to Bolivia (approximately \$1,400 of prescription and non-prescription medications available to us for a cost of \$400).
- Funding to provide "seed" money to assist Bolivians in the Central District of Bolivia to establish or expand "self-help" programs (past funding has gone to establishment of a bakery to enable previously unemployed men to support their families; increase the capital of a credit union that finance women's small business activities and enables women to save for purchase of a home; and purchase commercial-grade sewing machines to enable a women's sewing cooperative to expand its product line.)

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OTHER MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

MISSIONARIES ON CALL

COSTA RICA - February 2005 (ten days) - Cost: \$1,500 per person

AMAZON JUNGLE - June 2005 (11 days) - Cost \$1,750 per person

For more information call: Roxana Bowgen, Missionaries on Call, 29 Sachem Lane, PO Box 4434, Greenwich, CT 06830; (203) 550-2222 or email: missionariesonc@optonline.net

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YOUTH MISSION AMBASSADORS

NYAC YOUTH MISSION TRIP TO GHANA, APRIL 14-23, 2005

The project is to help with construction on a local Methodist Church building in a poor village near Winneba, Ghana. The purpose is to provide HOPE for the village people and give our youth and young people a unique firsthand cross-cultural life-changing experience. Application & reservation Deadline Is December 15, 2004. For more information call: Rev. Joseph Ewoodzie at 888-696-6922, ext. 233 or go to Mission & Outreach Web site: <http://www.gbgm-umc.org/newyork/mission/index.html>.

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BE A YOUTH LEADER TRAINING WITH NEAL BOWES

Here is a training opportunity no leader of youth will want to miss! There will be three dates at three locations beginning **January 8** at Hempstead UMC, **February 5** at Poughkeepsie UMC and **March 12** at Newtown UMC. Click on [Be a Youth Leader](#). (Conference website).

NEW YEAR'S EVE FOR YOUTH

Camp Quinipet is hosting a Senior High Assembly. Click on NYAC Conference New Year's Eve website for details.

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING -UM youth are encouraged to participate in the *Souper Bowl of Caring* on February 6, Super Bowl Sunday, by collecting cans of food and donations at their local churches and donating the items directly to a local hunger ministry or charity of their choice. The theme for the day is "Souper Heroes: They've Come to Help," and young people from more than 15,000 congregations, schools and other organizations are expected to raise more than \$5 million. For details, go to www.souperbowl.org or call 1-800-358-SOUP (7687).

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Hudson North District United Methodist Women's *Winter Retreat*

Talking with God

January 28 – 30, 2005

A weekend of contemplation, reflection and renewal!

God created us in His image, both male and female. He gave us our five senses to experience the wonders of the creation, to feel and express our inner most joys and concerns. How many of these senses do we use when we converse with our Creator? How many ways do we experience God and how do we sense God's presence?

During this weekend explore the unique and wonderful ways we can know God; we can listen for God's words to us in the quiet of the moment or in the chaos of our world. God is there waiting for us to listen, to feel, to sense in every way the presence and the experience of our Creator.

Join us and be amazed at what God can do with 48 hours and a willing heart!

Donna L Jolly is currently active at the United Methodist Churches of Red Hook and Rowe. She is a graduate of NYAC's Wellspring; has completed three Disciple Bible Study courses, and continues to lead a healing prayer ministry, Grace Filled Hands, in the local church. She was honored to be a part of a Volunteer-In-Mission trip to Cambodia in 2001 and is helping to lead a Youth Ambassador VIM trip to Ghana in April. Donna is in her second year as Spiritual Growth Coordinator for the Hudson North District UMW.

She lives with her husband, Rev. David Jolly, and their daughter, Sarah, along with a dog and two cats. Their oldest child, Matthew, lives in Arizona. Donna is a Physical Therapist working in Woodstock, NY.

Where: St Joseph's Villa, 43 Spaulding Lane, Saugerties, NY

Cost: \$135.00 per person – due by January 10, 2005

This includes Friday's supper of soup and salad to Sunday's Brunch as well as individual rooms with shared baths.

Contacts: Mrs. Cindy Davis, 39 Grove School Road
Catskill, NY 12414 (518) 943 2269
Email Address – Cindyj@surferz.net

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CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES

RAISING MONEY FOR VIM TRIPS – Have you always wanted to go on a Volunteer in Mission trip but couldn't afford it? Are you looking for ways to rev up your mission program in your church? Then **Keys to Successful Fund Raising** is a workshop you won't want to miss! It will be held on January 29, 2005 at the Conference Center in White Plains.

TRAINING EVENTS FOR PERSONS INVOLVED IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES - "Let's Talk Lent" **Saturday, February 12 10-2 p.m.**

"Celebrating Children's Sunday" - **Saturday, March 12, 10-2 p.m.**

Events are held in the Learning Center.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **Congress on Evangelism, January 3-6, Atlanta**
- **Convocation for Pastors of African American Church, January 4-7**
- **Bishop's Convocation, January 25-27**
- **Confirmation Rally, May 14, 2005 Valhalla UMC**

Keeping in Touch:

Jeannette Bassinger-Ishii Superintendent

Chan Gillham, Adm. Assistant

PO Box 3007

Stamford, CT 06905

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<http://www.gbgm-umc.org/cnynyac/>

Conference Web Site: www.nyac.com

