

CONNNECTION

CONNECTICUT/NEW YORK DISTRICT

REV. JEREMIAH PARK, BISHOP

REV. JEANNETTE BASSINGER-ISHII, DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

JANUARY 2005

REFLECTIONS FROM THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Friends,

I can think of no better use of this space than to pay tribute to my partners in ministry. The partners I am referring to are not clergy and pastors, though they certainly do deserve a tribute, which will come another time.

This tribute is to the laity of this district and conference. I pay this tribute gladly because I have been so moved by the commitment of the people I have met on the district, and so impressed by their dedication and skill.

What has prompted this reflection is the move by the annual conference to move toward a one hundred percent implementation of the six-district model. In the process of this move, I must send to the Connecticut Central District a large number of lay people who have been the backbone of our district leadership. One cannot easily measure the impact of Bob Asman, Jim Fleegal, Chuck Loppacker (lost not to the redistricting, but to relocation to warmer climes), Bob and Ginny Stevenson, Bonnie Shepherd, Barbara Stinson. Over their years of service to the CT/NY District, they have organized outstanding leadership training events, implemented imaginative District Conferences, developed a model Lay Speakers' system, given extraordinarily skilled advice and observations to churches that wanted to add onto their buildings or purchase or sell property, led five trips to Bolivia, challenged congregations to develop new ways of reaching persons, who, heretofore, were not much interested in church, and edited our district newsletter. Too numerous to name are the lay persons who give countless hours to be part of Vitality Assessment Teams, the District Committee on Ordained Ministry, the Parish Development Committee, and on and on.

I am fortunate that some very skilled and dedicated lay persons are remaining in my district. These people will help me interpret to congregations the need to pay apportionments. They will be even better than I am at urging persons to consider new ministries, new missions, new efforts. Where I have identified vacancies in leadership because of the new district configuration, pastors have suggested persons in their congregations who are ready and able to take on a new leadership challenge.

I am not as familiar with the lay persons from the old Delaware Hudson District, or from the Hudson North District, who will now be part of our new district, but I am learning by meeting them, and by hearing stories about them, that these, too, are people who work diligently in service to our Lord. These are people who organize mission trips to Mozambique, and who keep our attention focused on Cambodia. These are people who organize snow camps, and who find exciting new Sunday School curricula. These are people who dig deeper into the resources of Igniting Ministry, and who develop an after-school kids care program.

On behalf of the whole church, I thank you. Our church is a more exciting place to be because you have so clearly demonstrated your commitment to the work of our Lord.

God bless you.

SEND SOME OF YOUR LOVE TO BOLIVIA!

On January 28th a Volunteer in Mission team of twenty-two people of varying talents and capabilities will be traveling to Bolivia for an “Encounter With Christ” as we continue making a difference in the lives of people whose hopes and dreams are being realized through their strong faith, with a little help from the north. This will be the fourth annual trip for teams from the Connecticut and New York area, and THE TEAM NEEDS HELP FROM YOU AND YOUR CONGREGATION!! WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO SHARE WITH OUR BOLIVIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS SOME OF THE LOVE AND BLESSINGS ALL OF US HAVE RECEIVED FROM GOD by:

- **Donating school supplies (or money to buy paper school supplies)**
- **Donating “seed money” to help start new, or expand existing, self-help programs**

School supplies needed: pencils, crayons, colored markers, rulers, protractors, erasers, pens, glue/glue sticks, tape, scissors, pencil sharpeners, etc.! We do not want to take paper too bulky) but would willingly accept cash donations to purchase paper there. Monetary contributions for paper supplies and “seed money” should be made by checks payable to CT/NY District and should be sent to VIM Team Leaders Bob & Ginny Stevenson, 316-A South Trail, Stratford, CT 06614.

Collections Points: Brewster UMC, First UMC, Norwalk, Sharon UMC, Pawling UMC, Drien UMC, Community UMC (Jackson Heights) and Golden Hill UMC.

WHAT WILL SHARING GOD’S LOVE WITH BOLIVIA ACCOMPLISH?

Sharing God’s love is what “Encounter with Christ” is all about.

- **Imagine a poor community with a credit union for women, a bakery, a day care center and children having pencils and rulers for school. This sounds like everyday life in the United States, but in Bolivia this is considered extraordinary.**
- **Also, imagine us—the many UM churches in the CT/NY and Connecticut Central Districts, and elsewhere in the New York Annual Conference, some with little in the way of financial resources and some with greater amounts. We have helped the extraordinary happen in Bolivia because we have met the challenge of maintaining a presence for Christ both at home and in Bolivia.**

We have carried the good news of Christ into the world, to this far away place, and by participating in this 2005 VIM program we will continue to do so.

WHAT ABOUT THE “SEED MONEY”?

For example:

- ***Two years ago, the VIM team sowed seed money of \$600, which was used to establish a bakery at the Emmanuel Church that now employs several people whose lives are being transformed, because all previously were without work (a condition which contributes to serious problems in domestic and other relationships.***
- ***Last year the VIM team sowed \$3,000 of seed money used to recapitalize the Women's Credit Union. The credit union enables things not possible through any other means of credit in Bolivian society for women in their circumstances—new business start-ups, education, and a way to save for such dreams as home/ property ownership. The women's group at Emmanuel Methodist Church provides training in business practices and budgeting and they have a very strict strategy for full collection of loans – each member is part of a group and should she default the rest of the group must repay the loan. This program has been so successful that it made it possible for five women to achieve the “impossible dream” of making a down payment toward the purchase of land.***

Monies also have been given in the past to purchase a few commercial-grade sewing machines, enabling the Emmanuel Methodist Church Women's Cooperative to expand its product line. These hand-sewn products (vests, shirts, handbags, clergy stoles, dolls etc.) are brought back to the churches of the New York Conference for sale, bringing monetary gains for the people working in the Cooperative, the church (a tithe) and the daycare program (30%), as well as joy to those here who received these gorgeous, high quality items. See what a little help can do?

What programs will the “Seed Money” help in 2005? The Holy Spirit will guide the Bolivians and the VIM team as it has in prior years, but you can be sure the money will help deserving people help themselves to a better future.

**MAY THE SPIRIT ALSO GUIDE YOU IN YOUR SUPPORT OF THESE
MISSION PROGRAMS**

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SUPER BOWL OF CARING

United Methodist Youth are encouraged to participate in the *Souper Bowl of Caring* on Sunday, February 6th - 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. Young people from more than 15,000 congregations, schools and other organization are expected to raise more than \$5 million dollars.

For more details go to “<http://www.superbowl.org/>” or call 1-800-358-SOUP (7687). If your group is planning to do this project, let Ann Pearson know how much your raised. E-mail her the total amount at : apearson@nyac.com.

GLOBAL JUSTICE VOLUNTEERS

Short term volunteer program for young adults ages 18-25. Next term May 29 - August 13, 2005. GO SOMEWHERE - Africa, Europe, Asia, Latin America or the Caribbean. DO SOMETHING - Work with youth advocacy, human rights, or worker justice. CHALLENGE YOURSELF - Live and work in grassroots communities around the world, exploring the links between faith and justice.

The Global Justice Volunteers Program provides students and young adults the opportunity for short-term mission, traveling to another country to live and learn alongside people who are working for change within their communities.

2005 TERMS AND APPLICATION DEADLINES:

May 29-August 13, 2005 (Applications due January 15, 2005)

September 18-December 10, 2005 (Applications due June 1, 2005)

An application is available online at "<http://www.gjv.info>" Need based scholarships are available. For more information contact Kim at the GJV Program at (212) 870-3825.

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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).

Here are some things you're going to learn:

Help! I'm in a neighborhood with loads of teens and not one of them come to church. What do I do?

What is the purpose of a youth group?

How do we create a youth ministry that kids actually will come to?

How can the church offer what kids really need?

Why do some teens feel distanced from the Bible?

What do I do when only 2 or 3 youth show up?

What are some proven resources that I should consider using? Click on "<http://www.nyac.com/2005BeAYouthLeaderFlyer.pdf>" Pre-registration is necessary. E-mail to: smitchell@nyac.com with the date and location you are planning to attend.

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DUKE YOUTH ACADEMY

Duke Divinity School is offering a two week experience for youth to explore what Christ means when he offers us abundant life. Participants will talk together about such questions as :

How do Christians think about the future?

How do Christians practice their faith?
How do Christians react?

Participants will study with faculty, discussing concepts and concerns of being a Christian. Participants will meet young people who are committed to their faith, and will spend time in covenant groups imagining your Christian vocation. You will pray, worship, create, serve - and, of course, play - in the name of Jesus Christ.

Each student receives a full-tuition scholarship, thanks to the generosity of the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Room and board for the two week program is \$650. Need-based financial aid for room and board is available. The program dates are July 10-23, 2005. Application deadline is February 18, 2005. Program acceptances and financial awards will be mailed March 24, 2005.

Learn more and get applications by logging on to "<http://www.duyouth.duke.edu>" or contact Duke Youth Academy for Christian Formation, Duke Divinity School, Box 90966, Durham, NC27708-0966, (919) 660-3542.

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BISHOP'S CONVOCATION

What a wonderful opportunity to spend some quality time with both colleagues of long standing and our newly appointed Bishop, Jeremiah Park. The convocation will be held **January 25-27, 2005** at Villa Roma Resort, Calicoon, NY. Something for everyone: Worship, Learning, Nurture, Recreation, Rest and Renewal. Speakers are: Randy Nugent and Gloria Dharmaraj.

If you are planning to attend, get your reservation in the mail by January 5, 2005 or there will be a late registration fee of \$55. Make checks payable to New York Bishop's Convocation and mail to: Rev. Barbara Schaffer, 75 Clintonville Road, North Haven, CT 06473. Questions: Call Barbara at (203) 239-2469 or e-mail her at faithumc1955@juno.com. Please put Bishop's Convo in subject line.

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LAY SPEAKER'S TRAINING

The Lay Speaker's Training will begin on Saturday, January 15, 2005 at 9 a.m. at the Jesse Lee Memorial UMC, Ridgefield, CT. This course is for persons interested in becoming Local Church Lay Speakers. The class is held every other Saturday through March 19.

This class is for all lay persons who want to be equipped for service in the United Methodist Church. Lay Speakers are invaluable resources to their pastors and local churches. If you are interested contact Jim Fleegal at (203) 261-9265.

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Winter 2005 CT/NY District Workshop

“A Christian View of Aging”

Aging is part of life's journey.
How we respond to it is an individual matter.
This workshop will discuss how media
and other perceptions
effect our attitudes toward aging and
what is the “Christian” response to aging.

*The Rev. Jim Stinson, Director of Spiritual Life,
who has first-hand experience working with the elderly,
will share his insights in a workshop, open to both clergy and lay people,
on the contemporary issue concerning aging.*

*This workshop will help you to understand how society's view
has shaped your perceptions of aging.
Jim will discuss the realities of aging today and prepare you
to think and respond differently... from a Christian point of view.*

When: Sunday, February 13th

*Where: The Golden Hill UMC, Bridgeport, CT
For directions visit <http://www.gbgm-umc.org/goldenhill/>
or phone (203) 336-0152*

*Time: The worship service starts at 10:30 am
You are highly encouraged to attend the 10:30 Worship Service -
as the message will tie into the theme of the workshops*

*The workshop starts gathering at 11:45 (12:00 noon – 2:00 pm)
A small lunch will be provided.*

Cost: There will be a free-will offering to help cover the cost of food.

*Attention Lay Speakers who want to obtain credit for this session:
You are required to attend*

- the 10:30 am worship service,
- the workshop,
- and a short meeting after the workshop where lay leadership training skills will be discussed regarding presenting the “aging” topic to your church.

Be sure to sign in and register at the Workshop

Questions?

Please contact Jim Stinson by email: jstinson@optonline.net
or call the Golden Hill UMC office at (203) 336-0152

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. This workshop is for Council on Ministries people, Mission Committees, Stewardship Committees, pastors and anyone else who would like to attend. For details call 888-696-6922, ext. 230.

NEW YORK CONFERENCE SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY

The NY Annual Conference Safe Sanctuaries Policy for local churches consists of a number of documents for local church screening of children and youth workers. These documents have been carefully prepared by Lawrence McGaughey, our Conference Chancellor. Please visit the NY Conference website at "<http://www.nyac.com/SafeSanctuaries/1READMEFIRST.htm>" to download the information you need. The Learning Center also has the new 3-segment training DVD "Safe Sanctuaries for Children and Youth: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church." Call Ann Pearson to borrow the DVD - 888-696-6922, ext. 230.

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:

- **Convocation for Pastors of African American Church, January 4-7**
- **Bishop's Convocation, January 25-27**
- **Ministries with Older Adults - February 13, Golden Hill UMC**
- **Cambodia Mission Trip 2005 - February 20-March 4, 2005**
- **Biblical Story Telling - Saturday, March 12 at Poughkeepsie UMC**
- **Confirmation Rally, May 14, 2005 Valhalla UMC**

Keeping in Touch:

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