

THE NEW YORK/CONNECTICUT DISTRICT CONNECTOR

A publication of
The New York/Connecticut District, of the
New York Annual Conference, of the
United Methodist Church

March, 2006 Edition

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Reflections of an Itinerant Preacher i.e., A Word from the D.S.

As I travel through the district, I am encouraged by the spiritual disciplines persons are following in order to become personally mindful of the omni-presence of God. An intimacy between Creator and creature becomes for such pilgrims a recognized gift from God to us, and makes all the difference in the world in our appreciation of life.

The disciplines practiced – Bible study, prayer, corporate worship, covenant groups, mission, evangelism and outreach work - are embraced. In the beginning, these are done “because Christians are supposed to do them”, “in order to help others”, “in order to please God”. Soon, however, we begin to realize that these disciplines, practiced faithfully when we feel like doing them, and when we don't, these disciplines, practiced faithfully, become our greatest joy.

While so many churches have begun – and continue – faithful work in the disciplines of bible study, prayer, corporate worship, outreach, there is a new frontier in the area of spiritual disciplines, yet to be fully appreciated by most of our church people. That new frontier is stewardship.

Too often, churches turn to stewardship only as a fund raising instrument, and, to be sure, when money is running low, it is difficult to be a completely healthy church.

Stewardship, however, is so much more than fund raising. Stewardship is an attitude toward God, and a discipline of faith, much the way prayer, study of scripture, and worship are.

Two areas of scripture support this attitude toward stewardship: one is in the places in the Hebrew Scriptures that talk about the burnt offerings. These offerings, given by a people on

the financial margins of their world, were given solely because the aroma was pleasing to God. These people could ill afford to burn up their offerings, but they did so anyway, because, to offer to God, whether out of abundance or out of scarcity, is to recall in a fundamental way our loyalty to, and dependence on God over and above our loyalty to, and dependence on mammon.

The second area in scripture that calls our attention to stewardship as a spiritual discipline is in the gospel, when Jesus affirmed the widow for offering a mite. Jesus wasn't praising the widow because she gave a little bit. He was calling her blessed because she gave everything she had. Jesus wasn't praising the woman for doing so much good with her money. Given what we know about the temple elite back in those days, her money was probably supporting a bloated hierarchy. No doubt Jesus called this woman blessed – which means happy – because her offering of all she had to God was such a profound demonstration of her love of, and trust in God. The giver was deemed blessed neither because her offering was large – though it was, indeed, extravagant, given her means – nor because it was useful. The giver was deemed blessed because the offering demonstrated that she understood, she “got it”, the “it” being the joyful conviction that she was loved better by God than by any of the other “gods” we think love us.

The questions I must ask myself, and which, perhaps, you must ask yourself, are these:

- 1) is my stewardship enough to be called a spiritual discipline? Is it extravagant and joyful? Is it given just to please God, and for no better reason?

-and-

- 2) am I so filled with joy about THIS spiritual discipline that I am recommending it to others the way I recommend prayer, bible study, corporate worship?

Honest answers suggest that I have more work to do on this discipline.

What about you?

Blessings,

Jeannette

Dates to Remember

Monday, March 27th, 7 – 8:30 p.m. – District Committee on Buildings & Locations
-at Diamond Hill UMC, Greenwich, CT-

Tuesday, March 28th, 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. – District Committee on Ordained Ministry
-Danbury-

Sunday, April 2nd, – Daylight Savings Time
-remember to set clocks ahead!-

Sunday, April 2nd, - Set your clocks ahead! Daylight savings time begins

Sunday, April 2nd, 5 – 8:30 p.m. – Lenten School & Lay Speakers' Training
-at Newburgh/Trinity Parish-
-pot luck dinner and conversation begins the evening-

Monday, April 3rd, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. – Local Pastors'/Probationers' Gathering
-at Highland Falls U.M.C.
-bring your own lunch
-Chapter 4, with reports on the work done on Chapter 3

Monday, April 3rd, 7 – 9 p.m. – Planning Committee for the District Conference
-at Danbury U.M.C.

Saturday, April 8th, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. – Stewardship Academy
-at Poughkeepsie UMC, \$5 per person/\$25 per church-
-bring your own lunch-
(for a fuller description, see "Opportunities" column)

Sunday, April 9th – Palm Sunday, and the Bishop's Special Offering for churches affected by Katrina.

Sunday, April 9th, 5 – 8:30 p.m. – Lenten School & Lay Speakers' Training
-at Newburgh/Trinity Parish-
-pot luck dinner and conversation begins the evening-

Tuesday, April 18th, 7 – 9 p.m. – DCOM
-at Danbury U.M.C.

Saturday, April 22nd, 9 – 11 a.m. – District Trustees
-at the District Parsonage

April 24th – April 28th – Order of Elders Event
-at Mount St. Alphonsus
-get your reservations to the committee (see the Conference web site)

NEW YORK/CONNECTICUT DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Sunday, May 21st

3 – 6 p.m.

Danbury U.M.C.

What is a stomp choir?

Come to the District Conference and find out.

What is a praise band, and what do they play?

Come to the District Conference and find out.

What is it like to be part of a Biloxi VIM Team?

Come to the District Conference and find out.

What can youth do when they are in mission?

Come to the District Conference and find out.

What can churches do together for Habitat for Humanity?

Come to the District Conference and find out.

What is a Lay Speaker?

Come to the District Conference and find out.

Who will be our new leaders in the District?

Come to the District Conference and find out.

What will be happening at Annual Conference?

Come to the District Conference and find out.

What does an old fashioned United Methodist hymn sing sound
like?

Come to the District Conference and find out!!!!!!!

Hear Ye!! Hear Ye!!

ORDER OF ELDERS' SPRING RETREAT

April 24th-28th, 2006

**SAVE THOSE DAYS
REGISTER NOW!!!**

THEME: "Spiritual Leadership for Such a Time as This"

PRESENTERS: Rev. Dr. Abena Safiyah Fosua, Director of Invitational
Preaching Ministries
Rev. Dr. Kwasi I. Kena, Director of Evangelism Ministries
at the General Board of Discipleship

DATE: From Monday, April 24th, 2006, Registration 3:00 p.m.
To Friday, April 28th, 2006, After Lunch

FEE: \$330 for registration Before Friday, March 24th, 2006, After: \$380

PLACE: Mt. Saint Alphonsus

ATTENTION: Many of us have gifts beyond preaching and teaching, so we are calling for Dancers, Singers, Musicians, Poets, Artists of all varieties. There will be a sharing of our talents night on Wednesday, April 26. Please let Evy McDonald (845) 561-0176 or Joyce Wilkerson at revwilkerson1@yahoo.com know of a talent you will share with all of us that evening.

** This event has been opened to clergy in all categories of service in the New York Annual Conference including those: appointed, retired, on extension ministries, those to be ordained/commissioned at our June Annual Conference 2006, Local Pastors and Deacons.*

** In addition to spiritual renewal, one may earn 1.6 points of continuing education credit.*



Stewardship **Financial Planning** **For**

Women Only

This NYAC conference-wide event is for both women pastors and women laity concerned about their finances.

Keynote Speaker: the Rev. Jeannette Bassinger-Ishii

There is no sales pitch – nothing will be sold at this seminar

Saturday, May 6th., 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM

NYAC - Conference Center

20 Soundview Ave., White Plains, NY 10606

DID YOU KNOW:

The average age of widowhood is 56!

25% of all women go through their husband's benefits in 2 months!

Women earn 30% less than men and take time off to raise children.

Women live 7 years longer than men – their money needs to last

Retirement Planning is more important for women than men

When women take charge of their finances, studies have shown, their investment results often outperform men's.

Pre-registration is necessary! Bring your own lunch

Call 888-696-6922, ext. 228 or 230, or e-mail smitchell@nyac.com

Serenity

Get away for a night or two!

Think, recharge, forget the stresses of everyday life

at

Camp Epworth in High Falls, New York

There is **no formal charge to clergy** and for a modest voluntary donation of your own choosing, you can walk in the peace and quiet of the woods, sit by a stream and ponder what you will, or just relax in the view of the mountains. Stay for a night or two, sleep undisturbed by the phone, enjoy some real solitude, chat with our Lord and Savior and be all the more ready to return to your charge. Camp Epworth is an all-season facility available 12 months of the year.

Private facilities are now available for one or two people. There are facilities for small groups of three or four. Larger groups can also be accommodated. The charges for groups are modest. For information and reservations call Terri and Karen Cianci at 845-687-0215, or write to United Methodist Camp Epworth, 6 Epworth Lane, High Falls, New York 12440.

Words of Appreciation:

- Thanks so much to Deborah Moore, and to the team that led the recently completed Lay Speakers' class for the Taconic East side of our district. Thanks, also, to all who participated and are now basic level lay speakers.

While they have not yet completed their classes, thanks to Jim Schoonmaker and team for the Lay Speakers' class for the Taconic West side of our district. Thanks, also to the whole team who planned and implemented the Lenten School!

Out and About on the District
i.e., What's happening in our churches

(The following is a report from Henry McCarter, one of our District Lay Leaders, and a member of the Warwick U.M.C. This is a report of a study done by several churches together, using *In Search of Security – The United Methodist Bishops' Study*)

Four sessions were used to go through the materials. Sessions were held on Wednesdays from 7:30 to 10:00 pm, and were led by Pastor Chris Yount January 11th, Pastor Mary Howell on the 18th, Pastor Don Heatley on the 25th, and Henry McCarter (NY – CT District Co-Lay Leader) on February 1. The group study group consisted of 13 individuals, seven of the 10 laypeople came from Warwick UMC, two from New Milford UMC, and one from Bellvale UMC. Each session had at least two clergy present.

Prior to each session, listings of over 50 “Insecuritizers” were posted around the room. These ranged from war and terrorism through hunger, diseases, and natural disasters. The more global approach went beyond the Bishop’s scope. It was an eye-opener for many to realize how many times people tune out messages that would give them insecurity. It is our duty as the church of Jesus Christ to search for the hurting regardless of cause, and to seek reconciliation for all of God’s children everywhere.

Each person was charged with praying for guidance in the Search for Security. They were challenged to think globally and act locally, within families, schools, neighborhoods, churches, all political levels, and internationally. We felt empowered by Christ to seek reconciliation and peace for all God’s children.

In closing remarks, it was suggested that Warwick UMC hold another series of this study in six to twelve months, so that more people may have the opportunity to experience this personal growth. There were indications that both Sugarloaf-Bellvale and New Milford would likely use the materials within the coming year.

Bottom Line:

The four sessions went well, with the best response for those sessions which relied more on discussions and personal understandings than heavy reliance on the booklet. All attendees participated freely.

Critique: There are still many grammatical errors and erroneous Bible citations that detracted from the material. The material is also political in nature, and we needed to focus on the processes such as reconciliation to avoid the nature of much of the rhetoric embedded in the booklet.

Henry McCarter (NY – CT District Co-Lay Leader)
845-258-4361 (cell 406-396-3695)
hmccarte@optonline.net

Opportunities:
To pray, worship, serve, enjoy

The Bishop's Walk for Missions

Bishop Jeremiah Park cordially invites Laity, Pastors, Youth and Seniors from **every New York Conference church** to join him in a 5K walk. Participants are asked to find sponsors to support them financially. The goal of this walk is to raise funds to support the **New York Annual Conference's** missions and ministries in **Mozambique**. Mozambique is an African country recovering from the effects of many years of colonialism and thirty years of war. This year's Volunteers in Mission team will help build facilities where faith will grow and hope will live.

Saturday, April 29, 2006, 10:00 AM
(Rain or Shine)

at

Riverbank in Riverside Park, New York, NY
(Near 145th Street and Riverside Drive)

Come for fun and fellowship
Bring a bag lunch and stay to enjoy
Post Walk Celebration ~ Awards Presentation ~ Entertainment

Plenty of Free Parking

Sponsor sheets will be available for download on the NYAC.com Connectional Ministries' newsletter link.

REMINDER: APPLICATION DEADLINE FOR JULY VIM TRIP IS MARCH 31st

Marilyn McCarter
Moz-NY Sister Conferences Connection publicity
34 Kelly Lane Pine Island NY 10969
845 258-4361 fax 845 258-4731
to be removed from this mailing list, please reply with "remove from list" in the subject line
to avoid spam filters, please add mccarte@optonline.net to your address book or allowed address list

STEWARDSHIP ACADEMY

Sponsored by the Council on Finance and Administration
of The New York Annual Conference

with special support from Rev. Ann Pearson, Director of Connectional Ministries, NYAC
and Rev. Jeffrey Ratich, Executive Director of The United Methodist Frontier Foundation

Saturday: 10 am - 3 pm

March 11 - Hanson Place March 18 Westbury April 8 - Poughkeepsie

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Lynda Byrd

*Assistant General Secretary,
Director of Development
General Board of Global
Ministries of The UMC*

Bring your own lunch.

Sharing God's Gifts



WORKSHOPS

Fun with Forms

An Attitude of Stewardship

The Local Church Stewardship Campaign

Funding for Faith in Local Congregations
(Part 1: Nuts & Bolts; Part 2: Communications)

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

REGISTRATION: Deadline - One week before each event. Fee - \$5 / person, or \$25 /church

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

FUN WITH FORMS

How many forms are there? How are they used? What information is needed? How can I avoid common pitfalls? We will provide guidance and answer questions about the forms every church is required to fill out annually: Table I (demographics & assets). Table II (expenditures) and the new Table III (receipts). Timely and accurate reporting is vital because the data are used for determining shared ministry apportionments and other important purposes.

AN ATTITUDE OF STEWARDSHIP

Two concepts are essential for maintaining an attitude of stewardship... 1-Stewardship must be a year-round emphasis in a local church and 2-it must be about "more than money". In this workshop participants will be exposed to "New Beginnings" (a published model for stewardship), "Give Me 5" (a local church model), and learnings from a national UM conference on finance and stewardship.

THE LOCAL CHURCH STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Tired of the same old fund-raising approach to the church budget? This workshop will explore how we can

be more effective in doing stewardship in the local church. Particular emphasis will be placed on creative approaches to the annual finance campaign. We will also cover issues of planned giving, appropriate use of endowments, and starting to do stewardship development work on a year-round basis. Various types of annual campaigns will be described and resource materials will be available.

FUNDRAISING FOR FAITH IN LOCAL CONGREGATIONS

PART 1: Nuts & Bolts

This module will provide the participant with the information needed to prepare a local church budget, both expense and income, in narrative budget format style and line budget format style. In addition participants will have tools to discuss and understand the Apportionment, Health Benefits and Pension components; the consequences of under-payment, late payment or no payment; accountability of church finances to the local church and beyond; other sources of income to the budget; a budget versus reality check point.

PART 2: Communications

This module will provide the participant with ways, both written and oral, to communicate the budget and financial matters to the congregation. In addition this session will review ways of doing income analysis; ways of receiving money and financial gifts; ideas of budget cycles versus giving cycles and how both can be used; and a review of ways to help congregations understand tithing and the joy of giving.

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

What would your church do with an additional \$50,000 income each year? If you think you could use this creatively, this workshop is for you. Jeff Rarich, Executive Director of the United Methodist Frontier Foundation, will explore ways to set up and grow an endowment fund for your church. Central to the presentation will be a discussion of many appropriate ways to invite parishioners to consider leaving a portion of their goods to support the ministry of their church in all the years ahead through a planned gift program.

STEWARDSHIP ACADEMY REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ Church: _____

Address: _____ Telephone # _____

of people attending _____ Date of seminar: (circle one): March 11 March 18 April 8

Please mail registrations to: The Hicksville United Methodist Church Attn: Stewardship Academy

130 West Old Country Road – Hicksville, NY 11801

OR E-mail this information to: umhicks@optonline.net

Etc.

- Would you like to attend **the World Methodist Council in Seoul, Korea?** This gathering of Methodists from around the world takes place this July, and we would be delighted to nominate you to be one of the members of the World Conference. Please be advised, however, that you must pay your own way over there. Sorry. On the other hand, what a marvelous, pentecostal experience to join with that great gathering of God's children! If you want to go, you must let Jeannette know.
- Are you, or do you know a lay person from your church who wishes to attend the great, wonderful celebration of **Annual Conference on Saturday**, when anyone who wishes to attend may do so? If you are one of those persons – if you would like to be part of our celebration of ordination, our celebration of VIM, our celebration of the diverse ministries we have in our conference – then you must Ann Pearson at the Conference office by May 25. This notification will entitle you to a box lunch, which is being arranged for visitors. Be sure to register today!
- Speaking of registering for that special day at Annual Conference, why not consider bringing your **Confirmation Classes** to this event. Can you imagine how special it will be for our youth to see our singing bishop, to be part of the ordination service, to see our volunteers in mission. They will truly feel like they are part of God's mighty enterprise! Just remember to register them with Ann Pearson by May 25!
- **Are you moving this year?** From time to time, the conference is asked if it can recommend a mover. Wheaton World Wide Moving moved GCFA from Evanston to Nashville, and has an agreement with them to give competitive rates for moving and packing services. Please note that churches pay only for moving. Packing is paid for by the pastors, if they need this service.

Because We Care:

- Marion Mitchell was recently hospitalized, and released. Please keep him in your prayers.

Help Wanted

- District Conference is around the corner, and we are looking for additional leadership for all of the district committees. If you can serve on the District Committee on Ministry (DCOM, roughly equivalent to the church's Council on Ministries, or Church Council, or on District Trustees, which cares for the District Parsonage, or on Parish Development, which provides oversight for churches applying for loans and/or grants from the Conference, etc., please contact the district office (203) 348-9181