

CONNECTICUT DISTRICT NEWS

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HAPPY NEW YEAR REFLECTIONS

For those with whom I have not had conversation yet this new year, I do wish you a most Happy New Year! May God provide us the faith to see holy provisions, provided to do what we are called to do, as promised by our Extravagantly Generous Shepherd, who does supply our needs.

I hope you have by now read the latest edition of THE VISION. There are some noteworthy stewardship articles there! One article notes that in hard economic times, people have continued to support the Church, because they know that this is the faith community which supports one another and is committed to provide for all in need. That should be a somewhat reassuring word for us as we wonder, maybe even worry, about financial giving in the year ahead.

This observation confirms my experience over the past weeks. The concern you have had in your own congregations about finances has also been a concern for the Conference. Bishop Park has again led us in reaffirming a commitment to meet our full obligation to the General Church. He asks, on behalf of us all, "How can we ask our churches to be faithful to the shared covenant if we are not?" And so, in the weeks leading up to Christmas, Bishop Park instructed the Cabinet to arrange for conversations with churches that are, perhaps for the first time in a long time, having difficulty making their full shared apportionment commitment this year.

Some of you who were involved in that conversation this past Sunday afternoon, and others who would have been, know that I had to issue the call amidst all of the holiday activities and celebration, that soon after the holidays, we would have to have that conversation with the Bishop. Please know, this was not a message I enjoyed having to give. But it was a necessary one, and it is part of my pastoral responsibility as Superintendent to attend to it as best I can. As it turned out, having to issue that call became in many ways a blessing! Which gets me back to the article in the VISION.

It has been amazing and heartening to have experienced the result of reminding faithful colleagues of our financial commitment to the Connection. Several of our pastors restated to their congregations what our connectional covenant accomplishes and how important it is, and in stepping out as the prime interpreters of our connectional ministry, brought their churches to fulfilling their connectional covenant, 100% by year's end. I know it has not been easy. In challenging times, great pastoral leadership shines even more impressively. So thanks and recognition to these colleagues who worked extra hard to keep faith with the covenant: Kregg Gabor, Eric Fjeldal, Laura Galbraith, Joseph Piccirillo, Iwy Patel Yatri, Heather Sinclair, and Ferdinand Serra. These are names we are not used to seeing among those who
Happy New Year Reflections continued -

really have to stretch to make it, but such are the times, and stretch they did! They, along with their congregations, have our recognition and gratitude. Now I know what I have risked in listing specific names! All others who made 100% or significant gains in 2008 will be recognized soon. But the above are clergy I had to "pester" over the holidays, and they came through in spite of it!!

Another wonderful outbreak of generosity that humbles and amazes me is the response congregations have made and are making to mission, even when budgets are tight. Christmas surely lingered for me when I returned home from a holiday visit with my daughter's family, and had the joy of opening letters from churches who sent support funds to our District Parish Development (DIMCHEX) and to the particular missions in Haiti and Mozambique we have adopted as a District. Thanks and recognition are extended to Avon, Bloomfield, Branford, Long Ridge, Meriden: South Trinity, Middlefield, Monroe, Wallingford and Yalesville for such meaningful extra mile sharing. As more come in, you will surely hear of them!

In good times and hard times, the Lord does provide! So let these times renew our dependence upon the God who is always faithful to divine promises, equipping us for the work entrusted to us. Amen!

Just a word about that second article in the VISION about a UM Church that publishes each quarter a financial report which includes the names of persons giving to the church, AND the amount they give! Not without controversy, the article says. I can hear the cry go up all around us, "That could never happen here!" And perhaps it's true, and there are good reasons why this may not be a good idea. However, our immediate negative reaction raises interesting questions worth considering. I offer this as number one: If each of us is proud of what we share, feeling blessed by our giving to the ministry of our church, why should we be adamantly against public disclosure

(Faith Witnessing) about the joy and spiritual discipline of giving that can be inspiring reassuring and helpful to others? I raise an issue about which I have spoken for many years: **If giving is sacredly secret in your church (rather than prudently confidential) then money is too important!** Think about it.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: Because we are especially hoping to make our full commitment to the General Church and be faithful in our giving, the deadline for receiving credit for payment of 2008 apportionments has been extended to Monday, January 19th. If you get your payments, even hand-delivered, into the Conference office by then, you will receive credit for 2008.

GE

MOZAMBIQUE

Last October I brought to your attention the need to complete the Conference Center that we started in Mozambique. It is nearly complete but the interior finishing work is not done. The center will house church leaders, provide hostel accommodations for traveling elders and others and will become a multi-purpose meeting place for coordinating many other mission projects.

We can finish the center by raising \$15,000. In our District this is about \$200 per church. We hope many of you will sign on as you did with the Haiti invitation. I started the campaign by pledging \$600. Since then, we have received from four churches a total of \$1,185. Can we raise the balance of \$13,215 by April 26 – District Conference? Let us know of your commitment and how you are funding it. **Send checks to the District Office, 20 Broadfield Rd., Hamden, CT 06517. Make checks out to: Connecticut District and note Mozambique in the lower left-hand corner. Thanks for being there. GE**

Pastoral Statement, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25, 2009

Mortal, take a stick and write on it, “For Judah”...then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph”...and join them together into one stick, in order that they may become one in your hand. [Ezekiel 37:16-17]

Christians in Korea this year have asked their brothers and sisters in every land to take from Ezekiel's vision a renewed commitment to the unity of both Church and world.* In their part of the world, so long divided by hostility and fear and scarred by war, they pray for healing. They are not alone. Here in this nation, we too are divided—not by armed forces, but by barriers no less real: the burden of war; discrimination by race, gender, and class; human rights and religious freedom denied or delayed. The financial crisis which has befallen our world weighs most heavily on those most vulnerable. More than ever, our Lord calls us to pray and seek unity in Christ.

In the Biblical book that bears the name of the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord beckons in visions: a valley of dry bones has new life breathed into it by the spirited word of the Lord; a kingdom divided is brought together in the hand of this prophet and priest. What is thereby revealed to Ezekiel is food for thought as we gather during this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. God is able, even in the face of our seeming death and brokenness, to bring forth healing and unity. We pray it may be so among us, here and now.

“Many hands make light work,” many of us were taught as children. In the fields of human endeavor this is a fitting call to share burdens, cooperate in tearing down unrighteous barriers, give generously to support the common good. These are good things for which to work and pray. But the healing unity Christ came to bring to this broken world is God's gift alone. The sinful divisions that rend the Body of Christ are of mortal origin. What God revealed to Ezekiel remains a lesson for us to take to heart. It is in the hand of Almighty God that we pray to be one.

It is our sacred calling to pause, during this 101st Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and rededicate ourselves, with a deepened awareness that the unity of the Church is ordained by God for the sake of a broken world. The hope of a new creation, forgiven and reconciled in Christ, shapes the heart of our calling. And so we pray for healing.

We ask your prayers: that the beauty and bounty of creation, which is God's good gift to all mortals, may be more justly shared, protected, and passed on to generations yet to come in a manner that gives glory to its Creator; that the gaping disparity of rich and poor may be closed; that those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit may be comforted; that we who are disciples of the Prince of Peace may bear fitting witness, that peace may come to all.

We, the Christian Conference of CT board of directors, pledge you our prayers in this calling. With humility, we ask your prayers for us who hereby recommit ourselves to work and pray together that God's will be done.

*See article, “The Ecumenical Situation in Korean,” at Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute website: www.geii.org/wpcu_ecumenical_situation.htm

UNITED METHODIST RETIRED CLERGY BREAKFAST

Thursdays, Jan. 15, Feb. 19, and March 19 - 9:30 a. m.
(Note the change from the fourth to the third Sunday of each month)
Denny's Restaurant, 621 Queen St., Southington (Route 10)
Just off exit 32 on I-84.
Please contact Ralph Roy if you have questions or suggestions at
Ralphroy@aol.com or 860-620-1711

**CONGRATULATIONS TO HAMDEN PLAINS UMC
WHO CELEBRATED THEIR 195TH ANNIVERSARY IN NOVEMBER!**

PERSONNEL UPDATES

Congratulations to:

Ron and Jeanie Cox (Rocky Hill) welcomed their newest granddaughter, Isabella Marie Bigda, to their family on November 6, 2008. Isabella's mother, Elizabeth, is Ron & Jeanie's youngest daughter and they live in Louisiana. Congratulations to all.

Prayers for:

Shirley Fell and her family on the loss of Robert Fell ® who died on November 19, 2008. Bob was 86. He retired from the United Churches of Durham in 1989 where he had been pastor for 24 years. He also had served in Clinton and New Haven: Summerfield churches in our District.

Ginny Wilcox (Derby) who is in Saint Raphael's Hospital.

Bishop's Convocation

January 20-22, 2009

Keynote Speaker: Bishop Scott Jones
Kansas East and West Conferences

Topic: "Living the Methodist Way"

**For more information and the brochure go to the Conference website:
www.nyac.com and click on Bishop's Convo 2009**

CONFERENCE PICTORIAL DIRECTORY ONLINE

The 2008 Conference Pictorial Directory has been published and is available for viewing on line for the next year or so. To access the directory, type in the URL address: <http://om349519.onlineolanmills.com> You type in the case sensitive password to view the directory: **EXgdgT**

**ATTENTION: SR HIGH YOUTH AND YOUTH LEADERS
TRIP TO SAINT JOHN THE DIVINE CHURCH
IN NEW YORK CITY
May 8, 2009**

To register for this trip, please e-mail Iwy Patel-Yatri at numcpastoriwy@snet.net with names and ages of those attending. There should be an adult for every 5 youth attending. (Please be mindful of safe sanctuaries, which might possible require both a male and female adult advisor.)

Registration fee is \$46 per person. Checks should be made payable to: Connecticut District with a memo in the lower left-hand corner "District Youth, May 8th, St. John Divine trip" and mailed to: The Connecticut District Office, Attn: Dorothy, 20 Broadfield Rd., Hamden, CT 06517.

Each church should have permission forms/medical information for your youth. Each youth group will be responsible for arranging transportation to and from St. John the Divine. Arrival time is 6:30 p.m. on Friday and departure time is 10 a.m. on Saturday. Feel free to car pool if your churches are in close proximity. For detailed information about items to bring (sleeping bags and toiletries) and food, please visit www.stjohndivine.org and look for Sr. High "nightwatch".

FROM HAITI -- WITH THANKS

The team that visited Haiti in the Fall came back energized and full of hope for the people of Haiti in Furcy. Although the hurricanes last fall created devastation for many, good things have come out of it. The Furcy Church formed a Farmer's Association which has 31 members and working collaboratively on Church properties to plant crops after the hurricanes. Seeds and fertilizer were available through donations received at the Haiti Event in Wethersfield. In addition, the donations helped buy farming tools and helped in completion of the community cistern. Through the clinic our donations helped provide a Mobile Clinic that visits other areas of Furcy in which the doctor visits families providing inoculations and family planning information. Pre-natal classes have been formed and a Lab technician provides services though a connection with a hospital in Port-au-Prince. Students receive free routine medical checkups. Our Task Force currently supports 46 students at the Furcy School. We hope to expand this work in the future. **Through our District's Haiti Initiative, we are providing, through early December, a doctor to visit the clinic weekly instead monthly.** It is a wonderful experience to go to Haiti and see what your donations are doing to help the people there. **Upcoming Trips: March 16-24** (Terrie & Mike Temple, Team Leaders - Approx. cost \$1,500), **April 17-24** (Tom and Wendy Vencuss, Team Leaders - Approx. cost \$1,300.), **May/June** (Terrie Cook and Matt Garcia Team Leaders) More details to follow. Teams are limited to 12 participants so early registration is important. **If you are interested in going on one of these trips, contact Tom or Wendy Vencuss at the Wethersfield UMC for more details (860-529-2025).** (Excerpted from an article by Tom & Wendy Vencuss)

DISTRICT RESOURCING DAY
JANUARY 25TH, 2009
3PM – 5PM
WATERBURY UMC
250 Country Club Road, WATERBURY CT

What is a District Resourcing Day? It is an opportunity to learn through various informative workshops relating to our work together in the church. Each workshop will be offered twice* (two 45 minute workshops each). You will have the opportunity to attend two workshops. ***Exception: Inviting People to Make a Difference.. This workshop is 90 minutes long so it will be offered only once.** Each Church is asked to e-mail the District Office (ccnyac@aol.com) or our DCOM Chairperson, Laura Perregaux (misslmp2@yahoo.com) with the number of people coming from your church and which workshops they will be attending.

LAY LEADERS: **Mary Brevigleiri**, District Lay Leader, will offer some helps to persons in Lay Leadership roles in their churches. Are you a new Lay Leader? Do you wonder what is expected of a Lay Leader? Are you a seasoned Lay Leader wondering what more you could be doing in your church? Come to this workshop and share and explore this wonderful gift bestowed on you to assist in the spiritual growth of your congregation.

SAVING ENERGY THROUGH MANAGEMENT: This workshop is led by **Carol Wilson** from Cheshire. Over the years, Carol has worked with a variety of institutions, including 98 churches, in training teams to find opportunities to save energy in their buildings. This is an especially relevant and useful offering, because following some of her suggestions does result in savings in energy costs.

TRUSTEES: **Chris Wilson**, Conference Trustee and our expert on church insurance will be with this group to talk about various insurance matters, including minimum coverages churches should have, dealing with misconduct, safe sanctuary and others.

George Engelhardt will spend some time sharing how local trustees can be helpful to the ministry of their churches in fulfilling their roles of responsibility for buildings, grounds, and trust assets.

INVITING PEOPLE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE; INVITING PEOPLE INTO A MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE: **Carolyn Hardin Engelhardt**, Consultant in Church Program Ministries and Director, Ministry Resource Center, Yale Divinity School will lead this workshop. Explore strategies that are guaranteed to produce results when you consider how to personally connect people with the congregation's unique opportunities in mission, ministry, and spiritual growth. Biblical basis and warranty can be provided! (90 minute workshop)

PASTOR/PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE: **Dennis Winkleblack**, Assistant to the Bishop and author of "Frequently Asked Questions" will lead this workshop for SPRC Chairs and members. Maintaining a healthy relationship with the pastor by keeping our Conference policies, and the appointment process will be covered.

MISSION OPORTUNITIES THROUGH OUR CONFERENCE VIM TEAMS. **Joseph Ewoodzie** will lead the workshop, detailing the many mission opportunities our Conference Volunteers in Mission teams offer and how to connect with them.

USING POWERPOINT IN WORSHIP: **Kregg Gabor** has been doing this very successfully for a long time. He shares how this technology can enhance worship for congregations.

SUPERINTENDENT'S CALENDAR JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009

January

- 4 Fairfield CC a.m.
 Apportionment Meeting Monroe 4 p.m.
- 7 Cabinet
- 8 Superintendency Mtg. Stratford 7:30 p.m.
- 10 Vision Table 10:30 a.m.
- 11 Meriden First CC a.m.
 Westville CC 2 p.m.
- 13 Bridgeport Cluster 12 p.m.
- 14 Cabinet
- 18 Hamden Plains CC
 Cabinet 6 p.m.
- 19-20 Cabinet
- 20-22 Bishop's Convocation
- 25 Forestville CC
 District Resourcing Day 3 p.m. Waterbury
- 26-28 BOOM Commissioning Event
- 29-31 U M Way Event

February

- 1 U M Way Event
- 3 Conference Personnel Committee
- 8 Clinton CC
- 9 Mentor Training
- 11-12 Cabinet
- 15 Bakerville CC
 Sharon CC
- 18-19 Cabinet
- 22 Wethersfield CC
- 24 District Committee on Ordained Ministry 9:30 a.m.
 CHRISCON Annual Meeting 3 p.m.
- 25- 26 Cabinet

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

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|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| April 21-24 | Elder's Spiritual Renewal Retreat |
| APRIL 26 (Sunday) | DISTRICT CONFERENCE |
| JUNE 10-13 | ANNUAL CONFERENCE |

**DEADLINE FOR MARCH/APRIL DISTRICT NEWS:
FEBRUARY 15, 2009**