

## Newark United Methodists Plan New Day of Mission and Ministry

On a clear, crisp winter day, two United Methodist bishops spearheaded a mission trip within the Gateway North District. Their purpose was to bring churches together to plan an overall strategy of mission and ministry for Newark and its adjacent suburbs.

The two Bishops, Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar and Bishop Felton May met with Newark Pastors at the headquarters of the Episcopal Diocese on 31 Mulberry Street January 21. The meeting brought together the Rev. Lloyd P. Terrell, senior minister of the Franklin-St. John's Church and overseeing pastor of St. Matthew's; the Rev. José Rivera-Bocanegra, pastor of St. Paul-Centenary Church; the Rev. Durwin Johnson, pastor of Trinity Church on Clinton Avenue; as well as the district superintendent, the Rev. Robert Costello; Mrs. Phyllis May, Bishop May's wife; Ressie Fuller, conference lay leader; and conference staff members, the Rev. Erica Munoz, Jack Shaw, and the Rev. Doug Ruffle.

Bishop May reflecting on the tragedy of the recent earthquake in Haiti, noted the great price the people of Haiti have paid for the world to take notice of this poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

"There are also social earthquakes that occur in our midst," continued Bishop May. "They are as close to us as our largest cities. The challenge is to gather forces from our churches and to work together in concert to make a difference in the city of Newark and its surrounding area."

The January 21 mission trip was organized by Gateway North District Superintendent Costello and was a follow up to an initial visit held last December. Bishop Devadhar extended an invitation to Bishop Felton May to help energize a new vision for ministry for Newark and the surrounding area.

"We have begun to take steps to



**BISHOPS, PASTORS and conference leaders meet in Newark, January 21 to plan a strategy for mission and ministry. Leading the group are Bishop Felton May, lower left, and Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar, at the far end of table.**

coordinate ministry in the greater Newark area and to do so in bolder ways," said Mr. Costello. "No one church can address the needs of Newark alone," he continued. "Bishop May has been invited into our midst to help us expand our vision of mission."

In December, Mr. Costello organized visits to the four United Methodist Churches in the city. Bishop May met with leaders and clergy at each of the churches to listen to them and encourage cooperation in a bold new venture to address the issues of human need.

Over one quarter of Newark's population lives below the poverty line. Of those families, nearly 37 percent are children. Drug use, prostitution, murder and other crime have given this city the unfavorable distinction of being the 24th most dangerous in the nation, according to 2008 statistics. Of the population of Newark, 73 percent is

non-white.

Seeing the needs of the city, Superintendent Costello and Bishop Devadhar initiated a movement to re-engage United Methodist churches in significant mission. They called upon Bishop May to give inspiration and impetus to the movement.

At each church, Bishop May raised a burning question: "Does your church have a future?" Those present responded resoundingly in the affirmative. Then came the follow-up question: "What will you do to assure that future and make an impact on this city?"

Clergy and laity of the four churches have met twice to work on an overall strategy. They have decided to include churches in towns adjacent to Newark. There are now sixteen congregations involved.

Bishop Devadhar has given his time and commitment to the endeavor,

which he sees as an important action step related to several of the four areas of focus articulated by the Council of Bishops and embraced by The United Methodist Church, namely, to engage in ministry with the poor, to create new places for new people and revitalize existing congregations and to develop principled Christian leaders for the church and the world.

"Our task is to meet human need in the name of Jesus Christ," said Bishop May to a gathering of clergy and laity on Friday, January 22. "Bishop Devadhar has invited me to serve as an agitator. Like an old fashioned washing machine, I serve to agitate the waters."

Speaking the next day to a gathering of 300 clergy and laity, Bishop May urged his hearers to "go beyond the stained glass windows of our churches and into the neighborhoods of the poor and the needy in our midst."

As a next step, the churches convened by the bishops and district superintendent will use Sunday, March 14, "One Great Hour of Sharing," to share the good news of ministry they are currently undertaking and to forge the first steps for more cooperating ministry to address human need.

Among the churches involved are Portuguese language, Spanish language, Creole (Haitian), African American and multi-cultural congregations.

One of the predecessor names of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference was the Newark Annual Conference, which existed from 1857 through 1964. Newark, New Jersey's largest city, was the hub of the conference. The city and the towns surrounding it formed its own district of 23 churches giving witness to the mission of Jesus Christ. Now fast-forward to 2010. There are four United Methodist Churches in the city of Newark, only

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Before and After the Earthquake, GNJ Visitors Share in the Sadness



St. Joseph's Home for Boys in Port au Prince was to have been the primary guesthouse of the Hackettstown Trinity Church mission team for their week in Haiti, except for one night — January 12 — the night of the earthquake. This is how it appeared after the upheaval. Another guest — a seminary student from the US — was killed when this guesthouse fell. Team Leader Frank Fowler recounts his reflections on the team's experience in his article, "A Faith not Shaken" on page 5. Pastor Fowler and team members will lead a memorial service for earthquake victims at Trinity Church on March 7.



"Andre loves Jesus and Haiti" reads the inscription witnessing to the faith and affection of its anonymous carver on a tree in the mini-park outside the Port au Prince airport where mission team members wait for flight home. (Above)

Trinity mission team members (center) tour the Light and Peace School, one of the Hackettstown church's partners in ministry, guided by Pastor Ron LeFranc (left) and his youth pastor. (right)

A CNN reporting crew (right) outside the Port au Prince airport the day after the quake where reporter Chris Lawrence interviewed team members whose pictures were seen by anxious family members back home.



## UNREQUITED LOVE

“O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!”

Jesus still contemplates the city that he loves,  
divided and threatened  
with violence on every side,  
as Jew and Arab jockey for position,  
turning the Holy City into a battleground  
of uneven forces,  
where fear and suspicion and desperation reign,  
along with death.  
How often would he have spread his arms,  
gathering the fearful in loving embrace,  
like a mother hen gathers her chicks.  
“And you were not willing.”

O Camden! Camden!

How often he would spread his arms  
inviting the poor and powerless,  
the unemployed, the undocumented;  
and those of power who look the other way.  
O Newark and Paterson and Jersey City!  
O Trenton and New Brunswick!  
O Atlantic City! City of exuberant excess.  
The Mother-hen wings still spread  
over the landscape,  
embracing every city  
and all the places in between,  
your place and mine,  
yearning, longing  
to bring new life and love and hope.  
And we, caught as we are  
in our everyday stresses,  
distracted by our pain and pleasure,  
have spurned his love.

Come, Lord,  
Come in the midst of our desolation.  
We want to return your embracing love.  
Draw us together.  
Make all things new.

rvc

*This selection first appeared on Relay Online, UMRelay.org, as the Gospel Lesson for March 4, 2007 and was reprised on the second Sunday in Lent this year, February 28. You may enter your e-mail subscription to these weekly reflections on the Gospel lesson for the week by logging on to UMRelay.org, clicking on Email subscription list and typing in your e-mail address.*

## Stewardship Tips

### Build a Culture of High Expectation

By Rich Hendrickson

GNJAC Coordinator of Stewardship Education and Development

J. Clif Christopher, in his book, **Not Your Parent's Offering Plate**, offers the following model for bringing new members into the life of the church. “Before anyone joined my church, I would have that person come forward with a pledge card and a service sheet filled out to show where he or she wanted to give himself or herself away. I would take that card and sheet...and tell the church that I had received a financial commitment and then read where this person was interested in serving... Each member then would reaffirm his or her own vows of commitment to the church.” (pg. 86)

This approach may, in fact, cause fewer to join as members, however, on the upside, those who do join are prepared to contribute their time, talent, and treasure to the work of God through the ministries of the local congregation they're joining.

Statistics show that growing churches across America, even in the Northeast, are “high expectancy” churches. Most begin by articulating four sets of expectations from those who would be members. If one is to become a member one should expect to: (1) attend worship every week unless ill or traveling, (2) participate in at least one community service organization outside the church, (3) attend at least one small group or class on Christian Discipleship per year, and (4) give at least 10 percent of your income. Of course, if someone is not ready to make this kind of commitment they are still welcome in the life of the church, still able to participate in the activities and events of the church, and would still receive the full measure of pastoral care.

This season of Lent may be the perfect time to re-examine just what it is that God expects from us and is counting on from us as disciples of Jesus Christ.



## VITAL CONGREGATIONS

### Keeping Sabbath

By Douglas Ruffle

Coordinator of Congregational Development, GNJAC

The Lenten season offers an opportunity to reflect on our faith journey as we retrace the steps Jesus took toward Jerusalem and Calvary. One of the questions our churches need to reflect on is: How do we keep the Sabbath?

Keeping the Sabbath poses a challenge for the fast-paced world in which we live. Yet, it is central to our Judeo-Christian tradition. The fourth commandment reads, *Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work — you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it. (Exodus 20:8-11 NRSV)*

In one of my pastorates I lived in a town with a 40% Jewish population. On Saturday mornings, hundreds of the faithful walked to synagogues. Somehow these believers found a way to keep the Sabbath despite living in the frenetic pace of the New York metropolitan area. Their witness put me to shame as often I found myself working or shopping on the Lord's day.

“Sabbath observance is not merely a leisurely add-on to balance out an otherwise busy or frantic week” writes Norman Wirzba, in *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006) “but rather the key that opens life to its fullest and best potential.”

Wirzba follows an old rabbinic tradition that the divine work of creation was not fully complete until the day of rest on the seventh day. What the first six days lacked “was the *menuha*, the rest, tranquility, serenity, and peace of God.” Thus, the crowning achievement of creation was not the creation of human beings but rather a deep sense of shalom that gives life the capacity for happiness and delight. Thus Sabbath is much more than stopping activity for one day of the week, but has to do with the celebration of all that is, all that God created. In this way, Sabbath observance is inextricably linked with the environment, the care for all of God's creation.

Keeping the Sabbath has to do with setting aside one day for rest. It has to do with community worship. It has to do with the way we think about and care for God's creation. How will we keep Sabbath this Lenten season? How will we strive to observe keeping the fourth commandment? How we keep Sabbath says a lot about our priorities. In a world that too often seems to be lived at a frenetic pace, it makes good sense to deepen our understanding of what it means to keep the Sabbath — as individuals and as communities of faith.



Serving the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference

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# 'Transforming the World Through Our Presence'

That was the theme of the Bishop's Convocation at Willow Valley in Lancaster, Pa, January 25-27, where nearly 350 GNJ clergy and spouses gathered for three days of inspiration and instruction, fellowship and fun. By the numbers, here is a rundown of some of the persons and activities.



Staff and volunteers make ready for arrival of clergy and spouses.



Mike at the Mike — Presenter Mike Slaughter addresses the plenary session.



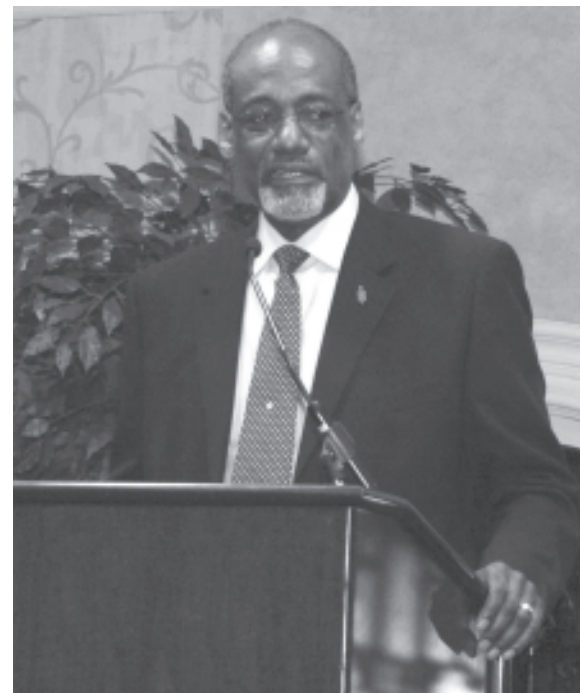
Gwen White leads spouses program.



Three Bishops: Devadhar, Lyght and White.



St. John's (Hazlet) pastor Lanie Price engages in colloquy with Bishop Devadhar during one of two evening sessions with the Bishop.



Bishop Lyght addresses the assembly.



Jack Shaw assists Michael Pollard in PowerPoint presentation. Pollard is technical director at Slaughter's Ginghamburg (Ohio) Church.



Convocation Chair Jean McMullen exhibits her enthusiasm.



Tuesday's Talent Night entertainment included Sung Hoon Ahn's vocal with guitar, Karen Merrill, soprano and Glenn Chaplin showing off his virtuosity on the bones.



(Photos by Jack Shaw and Robin Van Cleef)

## Annual Conference Registration Packets Available Online

After trying the system and working out a few glitches on the process at the Bishop's Convocation, the GNJAC Sessions Team expressed excitement as it announced that online registration for Annual Conference will be available this year.

"If you've visited the conference website recently, you may have noticed that the registration packet and online registration process are already there," explained a Session Team member. Those who receive the packet by regular mail can still register the traditional way, but they are encouraged to try the new system if they can.

"You may also download the forms and register by mail if you choose," said the team spokesperson. "The online registration process saves time, work, and pa-

per." The registration deadline is April 12. Payment for online registration can be with credit card (Mastercard, Visa, Discover, or American Express), debit card, or checking account.

**Display Table Request Forms** - Those who wish to have a table at Annual Conference for display purposes should see the conference website for the forms to download and submit. The deadline for submission of such requests is May 8.

**Special Group Luncheons at Annual Conference** - Those who are in charge of arranging for special group luncheons (Drew Alumni, for example) are invited to visit the conference website to download the appropriate form and submit it also by May 8.

## Tex Sample Workshop Dates Shifted

There is a significant date change in the Tex Sample workshop at Trinity Church, Ewing, announced in last month's *Relay*. The workshop will actually be held on April 17-18, 2010.

Dr. Sample will lead a two day workshop on the theme "The Craft of Disciple-

ship" addressing the topics "Reading the Bible as a Church", "The Craft of Witness, and "The Craft of Justice". He will also preach at the Sunday morning worship service at Trinity. Brochures and further information available by calling 609-883-9160 or 609-306-6403.

## Denman Award Nominations Sought

The Conference Board of Discipleship is seeking nominations for the Harry Denman Evangelism Award to be presented at the 2010 Annual Conference in June. The Board is seeking lay, clergy, and youth nominations. One lay, one clergy, and one youth award will be presented.

The deadline for nominations is April 19, 2010.

Information about Harry Denman,

the Harry Denman Evangelism Award, and nomination forms can be obtained at [www.foundationforevangelism.org](http://www.foundationforevangelism.org). For those who do not have internet access, they can contact Rev. Doug Spencer by phone at 856-629-6459 for forms.

All nominations should be sent to the Rev. Doug Spencer, 159 South Main Street, Williamstown, NJ 08094, or emailed to: [dspencer1umc@comcast.net](mailto:dspencer1umc@comcast.net).

## New Day of Mission and Ministry

(Continued from page 1)

one of which is strong and vital enough to sustain ministry on its own without conference subsidy.

For Bishop Devadhar, forging a comprehensive strategy for the greater Newark area is vital to the future of our United Methodist churches. "They will endeavor to live out their calling boldly to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," he explained.

Bishop Devadhar expressed grati-

tude for the leadership of Bishop May as he serves as a catalyst to inspire clergy and laity toward a preferred future for United Methodism in this area while addressing human need.

As human needs are met, the Bishop envisions the congregations themselves becoming re-energized and revitalized. We look forward to that day when the city of Newark once again will be the hub of ministry and mission for United Methodists.



# Global Relay

Brief Reports from around the world  
via United Methodist News  
Service and Newscope

## UMCOR Field Office Opens in Haiti

NASHVILLE — The United Methodist Committee on Relief has opened a field office in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and is hiring full-time staff as part of a five-year plan to help rebuild Haiti after the Jan. 12 earthquake.

## Haiti Methodists Offer 'Healing Love' to Survivors

PETIT GOAVE, Haiti — "You have your 9/11, now we have our 1/12." That is how the Rev. Ralph Denizard of the Methodist Church of Haiti described the way people in his nation feel after the massive January 12 earthquake. Meeting with members of the United Methodist Committee on Relief to tell them about the damage in their area, Denizard and associates told of the trauma faced by people of his circuit outside of Port-au-Prince. Petit Goave has a population of about 119,000. Many of the survivors are living outside because either their homes were destroyed, or they are too afraid to live in them.

## Fallen Colleagues Remembered at Hotel Montana

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Methodists in Haiti held a memorial service at the ruins of Hotel Montana where Clint Rabb and Sam Dixon, staff executives with the General Board of Global Ministries, died from injuries suffered in the collapse of the hotel. The Jan. 22 memorial service occurred at the same time a funeral service for Dixon was taking place in Raleigh, N.C. Rabb was remembered in a Jan. 23 service in Austin, Texas.

## UMCOR Partnership Gives Haitians Keys to Clean Water

GRESSIER, Haiti — In 20 minutes, Sharlene Jean learned how to save her community. Jean, one of the thousands of Haitians living out in the open since the earthquake destroyed their homes Jan. 12, learned to take muddy river water and turn it into clean drinking water with a commercial water purifying powder. The United Methodist Committee on Relief, working with GlobalMedic, brought the key to life-saving water to Jean's community, which was sleeping in an open field.

## Haitian Church Members Distribute UMCOR Food

MELLIER, Haiti — Louis and Madame Felix, 74 and 76, were the first to receive a white plastic bag containing 18 pounds of rice, three pounds of beans, a quart of cooking oil and a one-pound bag of salt from the United Methodist Committee on Relief Jan. 29. Ten church members organized the food distribution and kept order. One hundred and seventy households were served.

## Lake Junaluska Sponsors 'Caring for Creation' Retreat

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C. — Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center's fifth annual "Caring for Creation" seminar, on April 8-11, will offer plenary presentations and 20 workshops to help members of the faith community learn how they can become caretakers of the Earth. On-site and off-site tours include visits to a solar farm, an oil-to-biodiesel conversion facility, a green-built home, the Junaluska Wetlands and the Corneille Bryan Native Garden. A grant from the United Methodist Board of Church and Society will provide scholarships for ethnic young adults aged 18-35 years.

## Faith Groups Urge Congress to Finish Health Care Reform

WASHINGTON — Fifty-six faith organizations, including the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, sent a Jan. 26 letter to members of Congress asking them to "take heart and move meaningful health care reform forward." The letter coincides with an "Interfaith Virtual Vigil of Prayer, Hope and Action." Faith organizations from across the country have taken part in a variety of actions such as sending prayers, sponsoring a vigil or calling members of Congress. Additional information is available online at <http://www.faithfulreform.org>.

## Dakotas and Minnesota to Become New Episcopal Area in 2012

CHICAGO — Four of the five U.S. jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church will have to reduce the number of bishops by one prior to Sept. 1, 2012, the date new bishops assume their assignments. The Southeastern Jurisdiction presently has one bishop less than it is entitled to, so no reduction is required in that jurisdiction. The North Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops decided, Jan. 26, to reduce the number of episcopal areas from 10 to nine by linking the Dakotas Annual Conference and Minnesota Annual Conference into one episcopal area. Conference boundaries will not change, but the two conferences will be served by one bishop.

## 'Truth Commission' Looks at Conscience in War

NEW YORK — The United Methodist Board of Church and Society is a co-sponsor of the "Truth Commission on Conscience in War," which will meet March 21-22, at Riverside Church in New York City. Interfaith leaders want to launch a nationwide conversation aimed at changing the current conscientious objection law to include the conscience of soldiers and "just war" tradition in religion in the regulations.

## New Worship and Song Collections Planned for 2011

NASHVILLE — Although work on a new denominational hymnal was suspended in May 2009, the United Methodist Publishing House and the United Methodist Board of Discipleship are developing a shorter, different type of resource — "Worship & Song" — to be published in February 2011. "The forthcoming 'Worship & Song' collection," said Gary Alan Smith, general editor, "will offer the best of the best of the newest worship resources to The United Methodist Church and beyond." The new collection will include separate volumes for singing and worship.

**The April Issue Deadline  
is March 5, 2010**

## The Bishop's Message

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As we continue our journey in the Lenten season, on the fourth Sunday of Lent we celebrate the ministry of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), through our prayers, gifts, and other support.

In a recent issue of the *New World Outlook*, Melissa Hinnen, writes, "In the midst of war and destruction UMCOR serves as a 'voice of conscience among Methodists to act in the relief of human suffering without distinction of race, color or creed.' So said Bishop Herbert Welch at the General Conference of the Methodist Church on April 26, 1940. With the outbreak of World War II, Bishop Welch called on the General Conference to respond to the needs of human suffering around the world. On June 2, 1940, Methodists observed a day of prayer and sacrifice, with the offering being used to support the newly formed Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief (MCOR)" (Melissa Hinnen, "UMCOR 70 Years of Hope", *New World Outlook*, January/February 2010, p.14).

Later, in 1972, the name of the MCOR (Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief) was changed to UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief). As we reflect on the ministry and mission of UMCOR on the fourth Sunday of Lent, the gospel reading for the day challenges us to reflect on the parable of the prodigal son. Luke writes, "But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

The American Heritage College Dictionary defines compassion as, "Deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it." Elsewhere, in the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, referring to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Mark writes, "... he had compassion for them" (Mark 6:34).

As we celebrate the ministry of UMCOR, particularly as we journey under the shadow of the Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the larger question we need to ask is, "Am I a compassionate Christian?" Christians not only make themselves aware of the suffering of the children of God but also make every effort to relieve it.

The compassionate spirit of Jesus Christ challenged the disciples to respond by feeding thousands of people who came to hear Jesus.

The compassionate spirit of the father in the parable of the prodigal son nudged him to run after the needs of a son who was approaching.

The compassionate spirit of Bishop Welch energized the General Conference of our denomination to respond to the "needs of the human suffering around the world."

Today, the ministry of UMCOR takes us to places where we cannot go ourselves in times of hurt and suffering. Though many of us were not there in person to relieve the pain and suffering of the victims of the recent earthquake in Haiti, we were there in spirit and resources through the ministry and mission of UMCOR.

Though we take an offering for the ministry and mission of UMCOR through One Great Hour of Sharing on the fourth Sunday during Lent, UMCOR is in ministry on our behalf 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in the United States of America and around the world.

May God enable all of us to call for self-examination and to raise a question, "Do we have the compassionate spirit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in us?"

May we all experience a blessed and spiritual Lenten season,

In Christ's love,

*Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar*

## Four United Methodists Take Part in Newly-formed Faith and Light Community

FREEHOLD — Faith and Light International, a Christian ecumenical movement for people with disabilities, has its first community within the geographical bounds of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, following formation of the group at Hope Lutheran Church here January 14.

Faith and Light International, a ministry associated with L'Arch Communities, was "born of a desire to help people with an intellectual disability and their families find their place within the Church and society." Its communities are non-residential, with members meeting once a month to share their joys and concerns and grow deeper in faith. They are interdenominational.

Of the 13 people present at the formation meeting here, four were United Methodists from the GNJ Conference. They are Linda Barton (Allies Inc.), Walter Mander (pastor, Hightstown UMC), Jackie Burgess (Chair of GNJAC Special Needs Committee and pastor of the Avon Church) and Ian Burgess-Linden. Other denominations represented were: Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran Church and Baptist.

The group's first time of worship and fellowship will be on March 6, at 6:00 p.m. also at Hope Lutheran Church.

"We will meet on the first Saturday of each month following," explained Ms. Burgess. "Worship and fellowship are open to all persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families."

Founded in 1968 by Jean Vanier and Marie Helen Mathieu, Faith and Light was originally established to plan a pilgrimage to Lourdes for persons with disabilities. Since then it has grown to a worldwide movement with a broader goal.

For more information about Faith and Light Communities see [www.foietlumiere.org/site/english](http://www.foietlumiere.org/site/english).

# VIEWPOINT

## A FAITH NOT SHAKEN Reflections after an Earthquake

by Frank Fowler

The disbelief of the first days is over.

The sudden drama of disorientation, crisis management, emergency travel, and thankful reunion are behind me.....placed in an oft-visited file marked "Did that really happen to us?"

What is left is the sadness — a quiet, deep grief for a place and a people of faith that I have come to love in over 30 years of caring and communicating, visiting and visioning, learning and serving.

It is a grief both general and very specific, for people who have died, for places which have been destroyed, for ministries which have been devastated.

I have long said that on my first visit to Haiti I left a portion of my heart there, and I must return every so often to visit it.

Now, that heart piece has grown.....demanding more visits when the time is right.

A sage Haitian leader has described Haiti as " a place which brings together the shattered pieces of your soul." Ironic now that the land where that has happened for so many Haiti lovers has itself been shattered.

Yet what stands unshaken is the faith of a people who have long endured much suffering, and that faith will lead the way in the rebuilding. The only question is how long the international community and the Church will make Haitians wait for that rebuilding.....for it is directly connected to whether or not Haiti's tragedy fades in the public memory, or remains a priority in the hearts of those who understand that people and nations cannot be abandoned.

Jesus went looking for the least and the lost.

The great question of the ages has been called "the problem of suffering". Put simply, how can a loving God allow His children to suffer? It was a question that was shouted in Haiti before the quake.....now, louder than ever. Of all the places for such devastation by nature, I ponder, why upon those who have been suffered so much for so long from human evil, political rape and international apathy and manipulation.

Then I further ponder something I DO know about this matter of suffering — that our loving Heavenly Father enters into our suffering.....is with us IN the suffering.....indeed suffers with us. Such is the message of the cross.

And Psalm 46 proclaims it.....which is where our 15 member mission team went in our devotional time the morning after the quake, sitting around a mango tree after "sleeping" outdoors all night: "God is a very present help in trouble - therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change."

And if these things be so, then God is indeed very much a part of the community that is Haiti. And perhaps that is why so many Christians are drawn again and again to this people and place.

The Sunday before the quake I preached in the Duplan Methodist Church, a lovely mountain congregation outside of Port au Prince, where I had baptized a child some 20 years ago. My text was our mission teams' scripture theme for the week: "I am the vine and you are the branches — by this my Father is glorified, that you go and bear much fruit". Part of that passage includes the truth of pruning a tree that does not bear fruit, in order to help the tree bear MORE fruit. I spoke to that attentive congregation about how suffering in life is a part of the pruning Jesus spoke about.

In ways that I trust God will reveal to me, I feel like I have been pruned by this earthquake experience. Surely there are many of my branches that needed it.

### Update on Allen Project's Homeless Prevention

When a home is lost to fire, foreclosure, job loss or medical bills, what does one do? How does one get help; who can one turn to? Allen Project Inc. in Asbury Park is developing a model to lead an individual or family through the maze of agencies and the loss of one's possessions into a new beginning.

Funds are still needed to continue the restoration of the former parsonage of the Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church into a temporary home for suddenly homeless persons. For a limited time anonymous donors have committed to match donations to double any size gift. Donations may be sent to "Allen Project, Inc.," 214 DeWitt Avenue, Asbury Park, NJ 07712.

This project is being supported and encouraged by many individuals, churches and denominations including First United Methodist Church of Asbury Park, St. Paul's Church of Ocean Grove, Jackson, Avon and West Belmar churches and Faith Community in Bayville.

For more information or a program speaker contact Deaconess Helen McCahill at (732) 988-0305 or [helenmccahill0305@aol.com](mailto:helenmccahill0305@aol.com).



### Concerts Scheduled

#### Piano Recital to Benefit Missions at Leonia

LEONIA — Soyeon Park, concert pianist and music director of the Leonia Church will present a concert March 6, benefitting the missions of the church.

Featured will be the works of Chopin, Beethoven and Ginastera. Ticket prices for the 7:30 p.m. event will be adults \$20, children \$10.

#### Making Music in Delair

DELAIR — St. Matthew's Church here will host a concert March 12 featuring Paulette Gissendanner, soprano and assistant professor of choral and vocal music at California State University.

Ms. Gissendanner's performance experience includes work on the operatic as well as the solo vocal stage. She has served as vocal coach for several musical theatre productions.

A freewill offering will be received for admission to the 7 p.m. concert. For more information call (856) 662-3610.



**HEART TO HEART.** Taken the morning of the disastrous January 12 earthquake, this picture shows Vivienne Joseph, a student at the Light and Peace School in Bon Repos in stricken Haiti with the Rev. Frank Fowler, pastor of Trinity Church, Hackettstown, who 'left a portion of my heart' on his first mission to Haiti 30 years ago.

Vivienne is sponsored by the Fowler family.

For myself, I can only pray that God will help this poor tree bear more fruit.

And for my friends in Haiti I pray strength and courage in the midst of their suffering.

But I need not pray that they remember that God is with them.

They already know that.

They always have.

*(The Rev. Frank Fowler is pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church, Hackettstown, and leader of the Trinity mission team whose ministry to Haiti was cut short by the January 12 earthquake. Dr. Fowler is a former associate editor of the Relay. A report on the mission team's dramatic departure following the earthquake is found in last month's Relay.)*

### Memorial Service for Haiti Earthquake Victims

HACKETTSTOWN — A memorial service for those who died in the Haiti earthquake will be held at Trinity Church here March 7 at 3:00 p.m.

Leading the service will be the Rev. Frank Fowler, Trinity pastor, as-

sisted by members of the mission team who were with him in Haiti when the earthquake struck.

The Trinity sanctuary is located at 213 Main St, Hackettstown. All are welcome.

## Raise your spirits at our Open Houses!



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[www.umh-nj.org](http://www.umh-nj.org)

**Bristol Glen**  
Saturday, March 20  
Saturday, April 10  
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
Newton, NJ  
973.300.5788

**Pitman Manor**  
Saturday, March 6  
Saturday, April 3  
1 p.m. – 4 p.m.  
Pitman, NJ  
856.589.7800

**Collingswood Manor**  
Monday, March 8  
Saturday, April 17  
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
Collingswood, NJ  
856.854.4331

**The Shores at Wesley Manor**  
Sunday, March 21  
Sunday, April 18  
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.  
Ocean City, NJ  
609.399.8505

**Francis Asbury Manor**  
Sunday, March 21  
Sunday, April 18  
12 noon – 4 p.m.  
Ocean Grove, NJ  
732.774.1316



## Youth Service Fund

Youth Service Fund Grants are now available through the Greater New Jersey Conference and also the General Board of Discipleship Youth Organization in Nashville. The Youth Service Fund is created by youth for youth. Grants will be given only to projects that are YOUTH-RELATED. Priority will be given to projects that are YOUTH-LED. Completed applications must be postmarked by **June 1, 2010**. More information can be found at [www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org)



In light of the tragedy in Haiti a special Advance number for Haitian relief efforts has been created, and if your group would like to donate to that project as a part of their B1 event, you can do so. The link to our 2010 projects highlighted in the B1 student handbook can be found at [www.fasttodaychangetomorrow.com](http://www.fasttodaychangetomorrow.com). B1 is a 24-hour fasting event for youth which raises money to empower the poor and disempowered unjust systems sustaining poverty in our world. B1 is a ministry of The Advance, a project arm of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. B1... Connect: One Being, Being One.

B1 stands for "one being, being one." This program seeks to connect youth to the issues facing their sisters and brothers both in their immediate communities and around the world.

To hold a B1 Fasting event this Lenten Season contact Rev. Erica Munoz at [emunoz@gnjumc.org](mailto:emunoz@gnjumc.org).

## 2010 Basic Lay Speaking for Youth

**Who Should Attend?** Any youth ages 14-18

**When?** March 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010

**Where?** Pinelands Center, Browns Mills, NJ

**Cost?** \$35 (meals, lodging, and resources included)

**To Register or for more information?**

Visit [www.faithgarden.org](http://www.faithgarden.org) or [www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org)

## Reflection on the Mission of Peace 2010 India

Change, Patience, and Flexibility. These were some of the most important guidelines of the Mission of Peace. The goal of the Mission of Peace (MOP) was to grow in a Christian and global community while expanding our horizons, building an understanding between our diverse cultures by expressing God's love. The time in India was spent worshipping with our brothers and sisters in Christ in India. The bonds and connections made between them and all those who traveled with me will never be forgotten. The Mission of Peace was an eye opening experience to the diverse cultures that coexist within this planet, the greater world. The faces of the children I encountered in India will



GNJAC DELEGATES on the Mission of Peace to India 2010. Amir Holland - Macedonia UMC, Ocean City; Libby Holland - Green Village; Angeliz Rivera - Asbury, Camden; Keila Santiago - St. Paul's Newark; Rev. Erica Munoz - Children, Youth and Young Adult Coordinator; and Bishop Devadhar.

never leave my mind.

There was the boy in the church: his small body, thin clothes and over jubilant personality. He smiled at me, made faces at me like young children do, and opened my heart to the loving people of India in that one face, one glance. Looking back on that time, he embodied everything I envisioned India to be; accepting, wonderful, and yet so different and so close to our own society in America. His smile and happiness was that of the American children but his love of life despite his poverty was something so many here do not have. He was so happy just to be there with me. At that time, I was one with the child and one with India.

The few minutes, those few moments I spent with that child are something to last a lifetime. It was then I realized that his culture needed to be heard, his voice needed to be heard and brought back to the United States. These are the moments that are so hard to describe when I think back to India.

How many people take the time to listen to my individual experiences with people or really care what I am saying? Other moments like this occurred; each person on the Mission of Peace has their own tales to tell. Some tell of the story of building bridges of peace with people in the Muslim faith, while others made new relationships with youth from the cities in India. Some of us held the hand of a sick child in one of the hospitals we visited, while others played with children in the empty playgrounds of the orphanages. I



am so grateful for the opportunity that I was given and I would never trade it in for anything in the world. Thank you Greater NJ Annual Conference. Written by Libby Holland-GNJ Youth on the MOP

The Mission of Peace is a yearly pilgrimage sponsored by the Northeast Jurisdictional Council of Youth Ministries. Started in 1984 by Bishop Dale White, the Mission of Peace has traveled to over ten countries spreading the love of Jesus Christ, and has built bridges of hope and peace by forming relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. Each year the Annual Conference selects three youth to represent the conference in jurisdiction to travel on the Mission of Peace.

If you would like Libby or one of the other GNJ youth who traveled to India come and speak at your church or for information about the 2011 Mission of Peace to China contact Erica Munoz at [Emunoz@gnjumc.org](mailto:Emunoz@gnjumc.org) or visit [www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org).

## Welcome to the Camper's Corner

The time has come to start making your summer plans. The 2010 summer camp brochure is hot off the press! For the children and teens, we have several new camp events planned and, of course, we continue with many of the favorite camping programs at the Aldersgate Center and the Pinelands Center at Mt Misery.

For adults and families we have reopened the family camping options for Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends at both camps, each includes a newly designed program with fun, fellowship, and worship (this will be limited to space available, so be sure to register early!). Also new for 2010, we have opened the family campgrounds at the Aldersgate Center where you may design your own unique summer vacation package. Contact the camp office for more information: 609-893-3354.

[www.pinelandscenter.org](http://www.pinelandscenter.org) or [www.aldersgatenj.com](http://www.aldersgatenj.com)

We are excited to announce the camp web pages are back online with a fresh new look. You will find more information about each camp event on these web pages. Fill out the online "contact us" form and let us know what you think! This is an exciting time, as we see many signs and wonders around us; we are reminded of God's great gift of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Greater New Jersey United Methodist Camps are places where children and families learn about God's love and what Jesus has done for everyone who will believe in Him. Open positions for Committed Christians who would like to help lead children to Christ are available. We are looking to fill both volunteer and paid positions. Can you give us a week to help with one of the special event programs? Would you or someone you know make an excellent Christian role model for children and families? Please contact Timothy Goodwin by email ([tgoodwin@gnjumc.org](mailto:tgoodwin@gnjumc.org)) if you can help or with contact information for someone you feel would be a good fit for this ministry. We are looking forward to an awesome summer in 2010. Join with us as we celebrate open hearts, open minds, and open doors through Christian Camping with the Greater New Jersey United Methodist Camping Ministries, Inc.

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For All Girls in 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades

Cost is \$40 a girl



More information and registration details found at [www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org)

Deadline: March 19<sup>th</sup>!

**It's more than just a makeover! All Girls: All God**

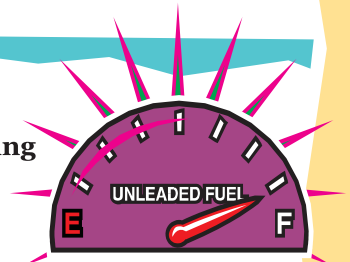
*Sponsored By the Raritan Valley District Youth Team of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church*

Speaker and Worship Leader - Margaret Cottrell Keefer from Grace Again Ministries

**F.U.E.L. Faith Unites Every Leader Youth and Youth Worker Leadership Training**  
Saturday, March 20, 2010  
9:00am - 5:00pm

**St. Johns UMC in Hazlet, NJ**

FUEL is a leadership training for youth and youth workers. All workshops will be lead by "experts" in their fields. Workshop will include topics such as Camping ministries, everyday faith, Youth Ministry help, Rethink Church, Taize and so much more. Our guest speaker will be Terry Carty, Director of the Youth Worker Movement and co-author of Five Practices of Fruitful Youth Ministry with Bishop Robert Schnase. Lunch and fun provided. Registration forms and descriptions of the workshops are available at [www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org).



Door Opener No. 9

Lambertville's Kitchen Door Welcomes Community into Church



**RETHINK CHURCH**  
10,000 Doors —  
Only 9,991 to go

Like many other churches, Centenary United Methodist was on a search for a mission. Centenary is in Lambertville, a New Jersey community in the 'antique area' that includes New Hope, Pa., just across the Delaware River. It is essentially a suburban community, close to an urban center and yet with a very distinct small town neighborhood feeling.

The congregation was looking for a way to express its appreciation for always having been supported by the community since the 1830's; to find a way to give back and maintain a presence in the community. The idea they came up with is the Community Kitchen.

The Lambertville Community Kitchen is what the cynics claim doesn't exist... a free lunch. Every Wednesday and Sunday the church offers a spread of balanced and nutritious food to anyone who wants it. No strings attached.

The genesis of this concept was the economic downturn. According to Pastor Judith Gehrig, "God had placed a few people with the inclination and expertise here, forming a perfect storm of people and enthusiasm."

"This church," she said, "had need of a mission for a while and this fit." The first week lunch was offered saw two guests and twelve volunteers. But the idea caught on, and now, one year later, they're serving between 100 and 125 people from 11:30 to 1:30 pm each Wednesday. They had 145 people there for Thanksgiving where they served the big traditional meal.

How did it catch on? According to Gehrig they used a number of publicity methods. They placed local newspaper articles and put flyers in both Spanish and English in the Delaware Valley Interfaith Council food pantry which has been around for years. But the publicity has been mostly word of mouth.

Judith and her husband Mike were excited about the project and talked about it everywhere. They made sure each new volunteer was passionate about what they wanted to do.

"Everybody is still at it that started," relates Judith. "Our vision was that it be a safe, comfortable, attractive environment where people can come and meet people from diverse types of life. We have lawyers, architects, homeless people and business people and Black and White and Hispanic and elderly and disabled, the local crossing guard and the postman. It is the place to be on Wednesday. It is the place you

come to see your neighbors. There really isn't any other place. It is comfortable. Here is where world peace starts when people come together and find they want and need the same things. We're all human family."

The Community Kitchen has grown in many ways. A true ecumenical effort, five churches are now involved, including several Episcopalian, some in Pennsylvania in the New Hope vicinity. Most weeks at the Community Kitchen are 'sponsored' by someone,



(Photos by Jack Shaw)

either other churches bringing food, volunteers, cash or any combination.

The sponsors are a true reflection of the community as well including the local Rotary, Kiwanis, Starbucks and others. The designated host church always supplies the basics for each meal which features hot and cold entrees, salads, homemade soups and always fresh fruit. The attendance ratio is described as about 50 percent people who need the meal, 30 percent elderly and those there for the social aspects and 20 percent local professionals who are there for the ministry. The Sunday brunch after church includes more than the Centenary church-goers. It doesn't draw quite as many but is important to those guests, particularly the elderly.

The Community Kitchen has grown to be more than just the kitchen however. They also offer a free coat to anyone that needs one. At this point they've given away over 900 coats and have had donated over 1,100. Their most recent newsletter indicates they're looking to send some of these 'extra' coats to other churches or organizations. They now serve a light meal and open their nursery for child care on Monday and Thursday evenings in association with an English-as-a-Second-Language class hosted at



**"CHOW DOWN," or "Dinner is served." The invitation may vary but the effect is the same as Lambertville residents, from community leaders to homeless, gather for free lunch at Lambertville Church, their way of opening the doors wider. At left Pastor Judith Gehrig and husband Mike greet guests at Wednesday's free lunch.**

primary focus. "It is a small town with six churches, says Pastor Gehrig. "It only takes a few new people to make a difference. The object is not to compare to other churches where the demographics are vastly different. You have to find your identity and appeal to the demographic you're given."

This ministry has given this church an identity. They've gone from a situation best described as "Oh, is that church still open?" to "Oh, that's the church that's always doing something for the community."

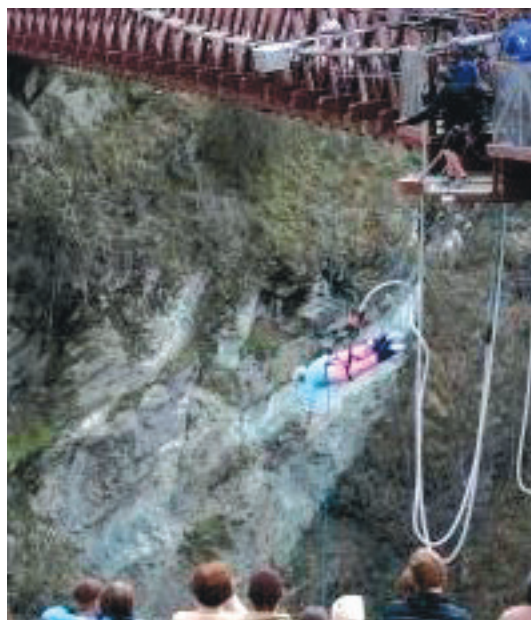
According to Pastor Gehrig, when they were first considering opening this one of the 10,000 doors, "There was a little resistance, but the money keeps coming and the volunteers keep coming. The meal itself is the message. If you are welcoming people and feeding them, that is the message. That is the gospel. Do they come to church? They are in church."

— Jack Shaw



**DELICIOUS AND NUTRITIOUS** is the fare at the Lambertville Church's free lunch open to all comers every Sunday and Wednesday. The novel way of "rethinking church" has spawned other ministries including a coat giveaway, child care and English-as-a-second language classes.

Leap of Faith



A funny thing happened to Bishop Violet Fisher on her way to the annual pre-Lenten gathering of Greater New Jersey Conference clergy at St. John's Church, Hazlet, February 16.

She went bungee jumping.

Following her address, the retired bishop spoke of the impact of her athleticism, performed sometime previously.

**"Being the Word"** in today's world was the theme of the retired

Bishop Fisher, guest speaker, as she addressed the conference clergy. The day's focus was Psalm 119:105, "Your Word is a Lamp to my feet and a Light for my path" (NIV); the bishop's text, 2 Timothy 2: 8-15, emphasizing the importance of presenting ourselves to "... God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (NIV).

In the discussion following the service, Bishop Fisher shared how, as a cancer survivor, she feared the possibility of relapse until her unlikely decision to try bungee jumping. She related that in the air she was blessed with relief from that fear. She took that illustration to urge everyone to realize that there are times to "Let go, and Let God."

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## OPPORTUNITY FILE

A roundup of coming events in the Greater New Jersey Conference and beyond. Send items of conference-wide interest to the Opportunity File at [Editor@umrelay.org](mailto:Editor@umrelay.org) or UMRelay, 1 Mayflower Ct., Whiting, NJ 08759.

### March 4 — NCD Coach Webinar

GNJAC — Access this one hour informational Web seminar discussing what's involved in becoming a Natural Church Development coach. 10 a.m. and repeated at 7 p.m.. Register by e-mailing April Castaldo, [Acastaldo@gnjumc.org](mailto:Acastaldo@gnjumc.org) for information on accessing the webinar from phone and computer.

### March 4 — Pre-Retirement Seminar

HAMILTON SQUARE — The Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits will host this seminar at St. Mark Church, focusing on pastors planning to retire within the next five years, 9:15 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. *See story.*

### March 5 — Financial Security Seminar

HAMILTON SQUARE — Under the auspices of the GNJ Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, this seminar at St. Mark Church aims at assisting clergy who are more than five years from retirement, but who want a bit of help in planning their financial future. 9:15 a.m. - 1 p.m.

### March 6 — Christian Education Event

HIGHTSTOWN — "The Hightstown Event," an annual training opportunity for Christian educators and pastors, with a plethora of workshops and a wealth of information.

### March 7 — Centenary Fund Sunday

GNJAC — Amid all the talk of healthcare, your church can make an impact in a practical way by donating to this fund that helps underwrite the health care of retired pastors.

### March 11 — NCD Orientation Webinar

GNJAC — Clergy and laity are invited to participate in this one-hour Web seminar offering an overview of Natural Church Development in the local church - the process and steps toward church revitalization - to help congregations discern if NCD is for them. 10 a.m. and repeated at 7 p.m. To register, send email to April Castaldo, [Acastaldo@gnjumc.org](mailto:Acastaldo@gnjumc.org) for instructions on accessing the webinar from phone and computer.

### April 8 - 11 — Men's Walk to Emmaus Weekend

GNJAC — Renew the spiritual fire that energizes, informs and motivates Christian leaders in this three-day experience replicating the post-resurrection walk recorded in Luke 24. This Skylands Walk to Emmaus for men is part of a world-wide movement sponsored by the Upper Room. FFI: Log on to [www.gardenstateemmaus.org](http://www.gardenstateemmaus.org)

### April 15 - 18 — Women's Walk to Emmaus Weekend

GNJAC — Renew the spiritual fire that energizes, informs and motivates Christian leaders in this three-day experience replicating the post-resurrection walk recorded in Luke 24. This Skylands Walk to Emmaus for women is part of a world-wide movement sponsored by the Upper Room; at Sacred Heart Retreat Center. FFI: Contact Judy Mazinozzi at [judym@yahoo.com](mailto:judym@yahoo.com)

### April 22 - 23 — Scouting Ministry Training

MORGANVILLE — A new program for training scouting ministry specialist will be held at Monmouth Boy Scout Council here, open to all scouting leaders in New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania. For details log on to the NSD UMM at [http://www.gbgm-umc.org/Northern\\_Shore\\_District\\_UMMen/Northern%20Shore%20Scouting.htm](http://www.gbgm-umc.org/Northern_Shore_District_UMMen/Northern%20Shore%20Scouting.htm).

### April 27 — ARMS Luncheon Meeting

OAKHURST — Spring meeting of the Association of Retired Ministers and Spouses at First Church here will have as its featured speaker Maxine Clarke Beach, dean of the Theological School, Drew University in Madison.

### May 13 - 16 — Women's Walk to Emmaus Weekend

GNJAC — Renew the spiritual fire that energizes, informs and motivates Christian leaders in this three-day experience replicating the post-resurrection walk recorded in Luke 24. This Garden State Walk to Emmaus for Women at Keswick is part of a world-wide movement sponsored by the Upper Room. FFI: Log on to [www.gardenstateemmaus.org](http://www.gardenstateemmaus.org)

### July 9 - 19 — Taize Pilgrimage

GNJAC — Annual pilgrimage to the retreat center in France. Cost is reduced to maximize opportunity. For more information or to request an application please contact Erica Munoz at (732) 359-1042 or [Emunoz@gnjumc.org](mailto:Emunoz@gnjumc.org). Application deadline is February 20.

### June 25 - July 6 — Yakama Reservation Peace Trip

GNJAC — Annual bridge-building visit to White Swan's 150 year old UMC congregation in Washington state. Visit Seattle, interact with Native children in the church's summer program, worship and learn about Native respect for the elders. Meet Native leaders, learn history from an Indian perspective, visit a local artist and the Yakama Museum. Ages 13 & up. Airfare plus \$300. Contact Helen McCahill at (732) 988-1151 or [helenmccahill0305@aol.com](mailto:helenmccahill0305@aol.com)

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Application deadline March 31.

Contact: Jo Malessa (856) 786-0293  
or Rev. Emil F. Winkelspecht  
[ENJWink@aol.com](mailto:ENJWink@aol.com)

**The April Issue Deadline is March 5, 2010**

# *One Great Hour...Again...*



**UMCOR was in Haiti before the earthquake, and it will be there for the foreseeable future. When you give to UMCOR you give with the knowledge that every penny given to a designated Advance goes directly to those who need it most.**

**The designated Special Sunday offering for the One Great Hour of Sharing is  
March 14, 2010. Are you ready?**

**Call (888) 346-3862 today to order envelopes and other resources so your congregation can participate in this churchwide offering. They will be sent at no cost to your church!**

**Find out more at [umcgiving.org/specialsundays](http://umcgiving.org/specialsundays).**

## **One Great Hour of Sharing It's How We Give. It's How We Live**

You can continue to help the Haiti relief effort by giving to Advance #418325 or you can find other ways to help at [www.gbgm-umc.org/umcor/](http://www.gbgm-umc.org/umcor/)



**Ask your church treasurer about your congregation's progress toward becoming a 100%,  
First Mile First Church.**

More information, visit:  
[www.gnjumc.org](http://www.gnjumc.org)  
[www.umcgiving.org](http://www.umcgiving.org)

