



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR – by Juhee Lee

Happy New Year, my beloved Haven family,

Time flies, and it is hard to believe it's already 2024. How are you approaching this new year?

When I was young, I used to welcome the new year with numerous new wishes, plans, and resolutions, aspiring to live a blessed life. In Korean, we greet 'Saehae Bok Mani Badseyo' during the new year, meaning 'receive many blessings in the new year.'

I shared this blessing with many people each year while simultaneously working hard to receive the blessings that God granted my life, focusing on achieving various goals in my younger years. But do you think we can achieve God's blessing, which depends on God's will?

From several years ago, I came to realize that I cannot solely strive to achieve a life of blessings because it is more crucial to be a person who deserves those blessings. While this may sound similar, it differs from the primary goal of life.

The first approach focuses on receiving blessings, centering on personal benefit. In contrast, the second approach centers on blessings, involving self-reflection on one's attitude and decisions, with a priority on benefiting others.

I believe this is the essence of welcoming a new year. It's about living a life not solely centered on oneself and the values presented by the world but aligning our souls with God's heart and caring for others. I believe it is important to realize that we need to live in a manner that makes us worthy of receiving God's blessings.

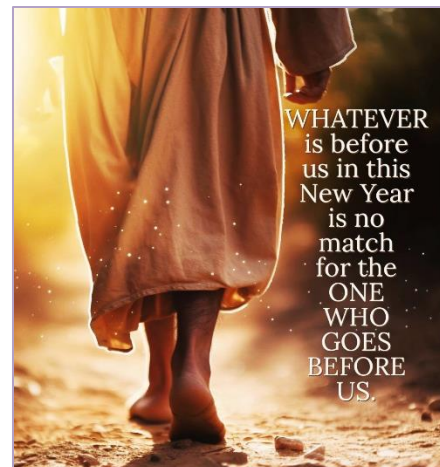
To be a person who is worthy of receiving God's blessings, we need to start by worshiping God every Sunday. As our spirits open to God and tune into God's heart, we can experience God's blessings in every corner of our lives.

As we step into the new year of 2024, I hope we continue to worship God wholeheartedly, create a loving community continually, taking care of others, and living by attuning our hearts to the Lord.

With heartfelt thanks and blessings,

Pastor Juhee Lee

Mission Statement: We are a haven for those who would seek to know God better while spreading the love of Jesus Christ.



January 1, 2024

A Timely Message from the Magi



Over 70 years ago, a one-act opera was commissioned by NBC as a special Christmas broadcast to premiere on Dec. 24, 1951. *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, composed by Gian Carlo Menotti, is a fantasy based on the Gospel of Matthew's account of the wise men. The plot includes a poor widow and her young son (with a disability) who get a surprise visit from these exotic travelers.

As a child, I was smitten by this wondrous tale, and later in high school, I was part of a chorus that served as shepherds in a local performance. Still later I taught this opera to my elementary vocal music students. And much, much later, I served as a sign language interpreter for this timeless opera for my Deaf congregation.

These musical Menotti magi continue to follow the star of my heart every year during the season of Epiphany. As I mature and consider people of other faith communities and the diverse cultures from which they come, my understanding continues to evolve.

As I write this, the Middle East is in the throes of a devastating war between Israel and Hamas. Jews, Muslims, and Christians have experienced and are experiencing tragic losses — bombings, kidnappings, and embargoes.

Across the globe people are drawing up sides. Anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic hate crimes are on the rise. Social media is full of slanderous mischaracterizations of Jews and Muslims. University campuses are staging protests, and in Vermont, three young Muslim men were shot.

What is our response to these atrocities? As people of God, we regret the loss of life and the anti-Semitic and Islamophobic violence and hate speech. But what else can we do?

According to our Book of Resolutions, we as United Methodists “corporately are called to be neighbors with other faith communities, and to work with them to create a human community, a set of relationships between people at once interdependent and free, in which there is love, mutual respect and justice” (Paragraph 3291).

Who are your neighbors? Where are the opportunities for you to forge interreligious relationships? Seek them out.

Here are some more specific approaches from our Book of Resolutions:

1. Identify the various faith communities and familiarize your congregation with them.
2. Initiate dialogues with different faith communities, remaining sensitive to areas of historic tension. Be open to the possibility for deepened understanding and new insight.
3. Work with persons of other faith communities to resolve economic, social, cultural, and political problems in the community.
4. Plan community celebrations with an interreligious perspective together with persons of other faith traditions.
5. Develop new models of community building that strengthen relationships and allow people to dwell together in harmony while honoring the integrity of their differences. (Paragraph 3291)

All of this takes some intentionality. Like the magi seeking an encounter with the newborn king of the Jews, let us diligently seek ways of understanding those of other religious communities. It is part of our Christian witness to respect, dialog, and fellowship with fellow pilgrims on this earth.

Don't be quick to put your wisemen figurines back in the box after Christmas Day. Keep them and their message on your mantle through Epiphany. Play a recording of Amahl and the Night Visitors for a bit of musical inspiration.

May this season of Epiphany be a time of deeper relationship building and mutual admiration for the many faiths of our communities.

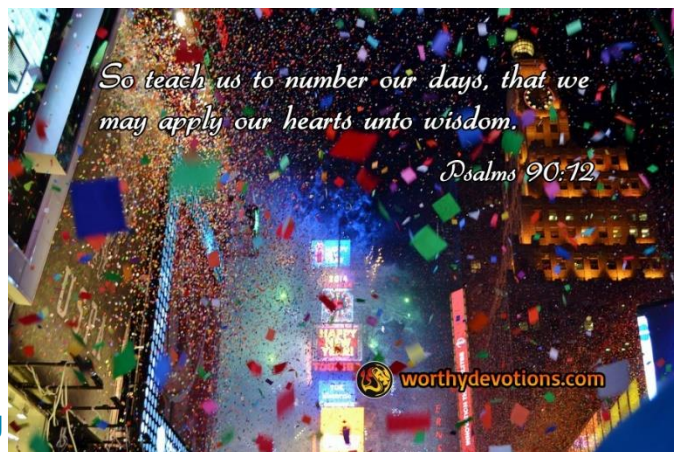
Resource: Wikipedia "Amahl and the Night Visitors"

As the ball drops!

January 2, 2024

Psalm 90:12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

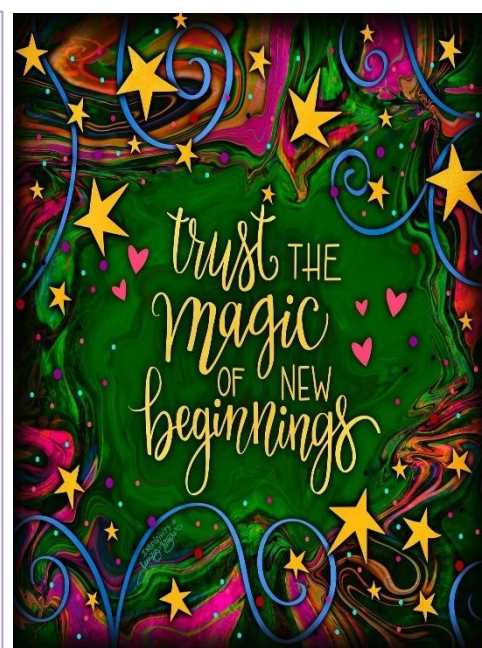
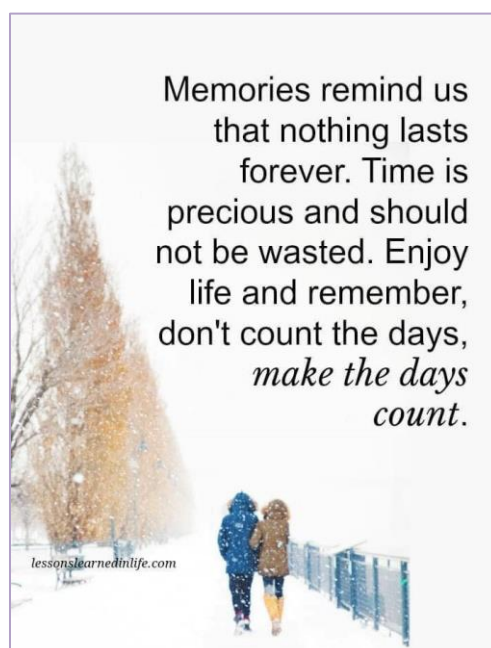
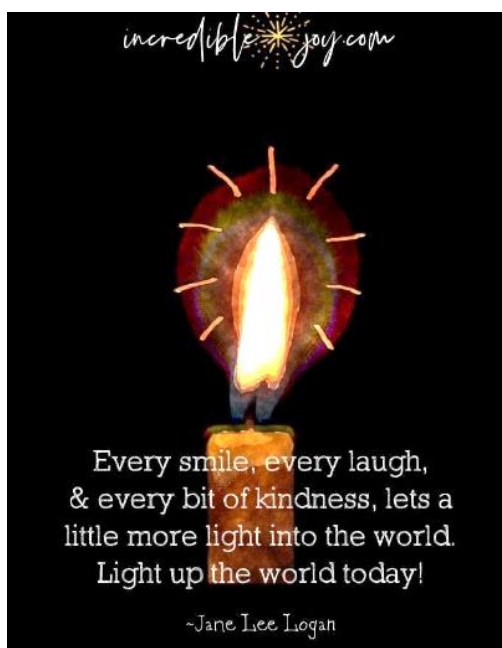
There were thousands of people bundled up in freezing New York weather to witness a few short seconds during which a descending ball of light announces the arrival of a New Year — 2023. These hardy people endured the freezing air to mark the passage of time, but even more, because they were anticipating a "new beginning!" Saying goodbye to a tumultuous 2023, they were looking forward to making a fresh start in 2024!



One thing given equally to every person, rich or poor — is time. In 2023, each of us lived 365 days, 8,760 hours and 525,600 minutes. How did you spend it? Reflecting over 2023, I am astounded how quickly the year seemed to pass — almost like the proverbial blink of an eye. And looking back over it has caused me to ask, am I really carefully managing my time...the one commodity I "spend", that I can never buy back?

The psalmist expresses a timely request on our behalf..."Teach us to number our days", so that every one of them truly counts for the Lord! We can't change the past, but we can always improve our time management in the year to come. With so much work to be done, let's apply our hearts to wisdom, and use our time wisely!

<https://www.worthydevotions.com/christian-devotional/as-the-ball-drops>



January 2024



New England Conference
The United Methodist Church

Connected is a publication of the New England Conference of The United Methodist Church. This monthly insert is designed put Conference news directly into the hands of our local church members.

Find more at www.neumc.org.



Online training for SPRCs

Join Bishop Peggy A. Johnson and District Superintendents Rev. Jill Colley Robinson and Rev. Nizzi Santos Digan for an online training for members of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) from 7-8:30 pm Jan. 17, 2024.

Some topics will include:

- Roles/duties of the SPRC
- Keys for effective and healthy SPRC ministry
- Creating a monthly SPRC ministry calendar
- Resources for staff-parish relations

We'll talk about all this and more. You will be able to submit your questions and possible topics in advance of the training when you register.

This training is part of the annual series offered by the NEAC for local church leaders. The session will be recorded.

Register at www.neumc.org/events

Bishop's 2024 Days on the Districts



Bishop Peggy A. Johnson and members of the General/Jurisdictional Conference Delegations will visit each district to share information as we begin this important year in the life of the New England Conference and The UMC.

Lay and clergy are urged to attend one of these events to learn about proposed plans for the New England Conference and for the denomination. The General/Jurisdictional Conference delegation will offer its report.

You are invited to attend any event that is convenient. Each Saturday event will begin at 1 pm and be followed by a light reception.

At 11 am at each location Bishop Johnson will be available to speak to those interested in lay or clergy ministry.

Schedule

- Feb. 3** – Green Mountain – Shelburne UMC
- Feb. 10** – Seacoast – Hazardville UMC
- Feb. 17** – Commonwealth West – St. Matthew's UMC Acton, MA
- Feb. 24** – Commonwealth East – Holy Trinity UMC, Danvers, MA
- March 2** – Granite – First UMC, Gilford, NH
- March 9** – Katahdin – Columbia Falls UMC
- March 16** – Many Waters – Brunswick UMC

All events will be in person, but there will be virtual options. In case of inclement weather, the event will be held exclusively online via Zoom. Information about such plans will be disseminated closer to the time.



GET DETAILS AND MUCH MORE ON OUR WEBSITE
www.neumc.org

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Join Bishop for webinar Jan. 25

Join Bishop Peggy A. Johnson and members of the NEAC Committee on Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships to pray for Christian Unity during a webinar beginning at 7 pm on Thursday, Jan. 25.

Guest speaker will be our very own Clare J. Chapman, Conference Treasurer and Director of Administrative Services.



cerns. An attorney, she was also the Deputy General Secretary and General Counsel for the National Council of Churches.

Bishop urges NEAC to take part in Week of Prayer for Christian Unity — This event will come at the conclusion of the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Jan. 18-25). www.geii.org

Bishop Johnson encourages all NEAC clergy and laity to take this time to be in prayer and solidarity with other Christians from around the world. This year's theme is from Luke 10:27: "You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbor as yourself."

Clare has served as Associate General Secretary for the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Con-

No registration required. Get the webinar link at neumc.org/events

Special Sunday

Human Relations Day is Jan. 14

The Human Relations Day offering supports social justice and outreach ministries that empower all God's children to realize their full potential as human beings in relationship with one another.

This fund helps encourage that potential through ministries like the Community Developers Program, multiethnic ministries, and countless other projects across the United Methodist connection. These funds are administered by Global Ministries in collaboration with the General Board of Church & Society. Learn more at www.resourceumc.org



Check out cross currents

December 2023: How does that work?

This issue of the online magazine produced by the NEAC Communications Team answers the question "how does that work?" for topics from calculating Mission Shares to General Conference.

neumc.org/crosscurrents

Let's Connect

Do you have a story to share? A feature idea? A question to ask? Contact Beth DiCocco, Conference Director of Communications, at communicate@neumc.org or (978) 682-8055 ext. 150

Looking ahead to General Conference next year

by Heather Hahn Dec. 18, 2023 | CHARLOTTE, N.C. (UM News)



UM News
FAIR. FAITHFUL. TRUSTED.

The Rev. Gary Graves, General Conference secretary, offers introductions ahead of a tour of the Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. Behind him are representatives of the convention center and the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority. In front of him looking on is Elaine Moy of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race. General Conference is set to meet April 23-May 3 in the convention center. Photo by Heather Hahn, UM News.



After a four-year delay, the next General Conference is rapidly approaching in just over four months.

With time of the essence, the commission that plans The United Methodist Church's top lawmaking assembly met Dec. 12-15 in Charlotte, North Carolina, to iron out some final details.

The coming General Conference is now set to take place April 23-May 3 in that city's convention center — bringing together United Methodists from four continents who will make decisions that will shape the global denomination for years to come.

During their December meeting, commission members also heard updates on efforts to ensure General Conference delegates from outside the United States receive the required visas to attend. Long waits for visas — exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic — were a major reason for General Conference's continued postponement.

The United Methodist Church typically holds its General Conference every four years. Before the pandemic shut down world travel, the coming session was initially scheduled in May 2020 in Minneapolis. There, delegates expected to take up legislation for a denominational separation after decades of intensifying debate and defiance over United Methodist bans on same-sex marriage and noncelibate, gay clergy.

A separation of sorts already has taken place. The 2024 General Conference comes as the denomination is grappling with the withdrawal of more than 7,600 U.S. congregations from The United Methodist Church.

Those departures represent about a quarter of U.S. churches leaving the denomination under a disaffiliation policy passed by the 2019 special General Conference. The bulk of those departures took place this year before the disaffiliation policy officially ends on Dec. 31.

Whether that church-exit policy will be extended beyond this year or expanded to include churches outside the United States will be up to General Conference. The same is true for any change in the denomination's policies related to LGBTQ people.

The lawmaking assembly faces many proposals dealing with topics as varied as the denomination-wide budget, social teachings, ecumenical relations and international structure.

All told, General Conference has received 1,100 properly submitted petitions — basically the United Methodist equivalent of bills before a legislature. And just like a bill on Capitol Hill, the first stop for a General Conference petition is in one of the gathering's legislative committees. In 2024, General Conference will have 14 legislative committees.

The Book of Discipline — the denomination's policy book — requires that all petitions must receive a vote in their assigned committee and all legislation approved by a committee must receive a vote by the full General Conference plenary.

“We really, as a commission, cannot set priority on legislation. That’s not what we’re called to do,” Kim Simpson, the chair of the Commission on the General Conference, said during the December meeting. “We are called to make sure that the facilities, the (language) interpretation, the hospitality — everything — is ready so that delegates can do their best work.”

Here is a look at some of what the commission did at its recent meeting.

Impact of disaffiliations

Part of helping delegates do their work includes dealing with some of the implications of the disaffiliations that already have occurred.

At its previous in-person meeting in May, commission members discussed how to handle petitions submitted by people who, for whatever reason, are no longer part of The United Methodist Church.

The Book of Discipline states that any United Methodist organization, clergy member or lay member may submit a petition to General Conference. The key phrase in that provision, the Discipline’s Paragraph 507, is “United Methodist.”

The commission approved a recommendation from its rules committee that will allow the Rev. Gary Graves, General Conference secretary, to enter a report identifying petitions submitted by people who have now left The United Methodist Church. Graves will base his report on information provided by chairs of delegations. His report will be shared with legislative committee chairs and printed in the Daily Christian Advocate, a daily report on General Conference proceedings.

“Everyone in the body would have that information in front of them as we begin our work together,” said Marie Kuch-Stanovsky, a commission member from the Pacific Northwest Conference.

Annual conferences — regional bodies consisting of multiple congregations — elect the delegates heading to General Conference. Disaffiliations and other changes since 2020 also have affected who serves on those delegations.

The Judicial Council — The United Methodist Church’s top court — has ruled that annual conferences could hold elections to fill any vacancies in their General Conference delegations if their pool of reserve delegates is empty.

However, the church’s high court has left it up to General Conference to decide how to handle vacancies in delegations to jurisdictional and central conferences, which meet after General Conference takes place.

Jurisdictional conferences in the U.S. and central conferences in Africa, Europe and the Philippines are the bodies that elect bishops. General Conference delegates as well as an additional number of elected delegates serve these bodies. Delegates elected solely to their jurisdictional or central conference also serve as General Conference reserves.

A number of U.S. annual conferences held elections earlier this year to fill vacancies in their jurisdictional conference slates. For now, those delegates are only provisionally elected. General Conference will have final say on whether those additional delegates can be certified to serve. Similarly, if General Conference chooses to allow those vacancies to be filled, annual conferences that have not yet filled vacancies on their jurisdictional and central conference slates will have the chance to do so after General Conference meets.

However, if General Conference opts to leave those vacancies unfilled, then the provisional delegates will not be certified and no new elections will need to be held.

“General Conference will need to make that call and then we will implement whatever that decision is,” Graves told the commission.

Visa updates

The commission also received an update on where things stand in ensuring elected General Conference delegates have the required visas to attend.

Commission plans call for the coming General Conference to have 862 voting delegates — 55.9% from the U.S., 32% from Africa, 6% from the Philippines, 4.6% from Europe and the remainder from concordat churches that have close ties to The United Methodist Church. Half are to be clergy and half lay. Bishops preside at General Conference sessions but do not have a vote.

Of the 862 delegates, 360 are to come from Africa, the Philippines and Europe. Simpson, the commission's chair, reported that letters of invitation have been sent out to 262 of those delegates — the first step in obtaining visas. Simpson said the commission is currently waiting to receive passport information from another 45 delegates. For the remaining 53 delegates from central conferences, the commission is still waiting on their credentials from their annual conference secretaries.

“Credentialing is to make sure these are the right delegates, the ones who have been elected,” Simpson said. The commission previously found that four people who were not elected delegates cast votes during the 2019 special General Conference.

Handling regionalization legislation

The commission also spent time discussing how to handle the multiple proposals coming to General Conference that affect the denomination's global structure.

A number of United Methodists have submitted legislation aimed at putting the U.S. and central conferences on equal footing in church decision-making. At this point, central conferences have the authority to adapt the Book of Discipline to their contexts but the United States does not. One result is that U.S. concerns end up dominating General Conference, and the U.S. dominance has contributed to the debates over LGBTQ policies that rage at the global meeting.

The most prominent of the regionalization proposals aimed at changing this dynamic comes from the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, a permanent General Conference committee that meets between sessions.

All regionalization proposals, including the standing committee's plan, are currently assigned to be first considered in the conferences legislative committee.

The committee, whose members have already started discussing the proposals, would have responsibility for refining the legislation and voting on what heads to the full plenary for more possible changes and a vote.

But because regionalization has the potential to affect other legislation at General Conference, the commission wanted some way for all delegates to at least keep the proposals in mind during their time in legislative committees.

The commission approved a recommendation that all legislative committees set aside time to discuss regionalization and how it will affect the work of their committee. That discussion would take place as the first order of business when legislative committees meet on April 25. The committees will receive a resource, including some questions for discussion, prepared by General Conference's steering committee.

“Regionalization is at the forefront in the minds of every delegate coming, no matter how they feel about it,” said the Rev. Andy Call, a commission member from the East Ohio Conference. “We know that there are going to be significant conversations.”

Looking ahead to 2026

The United Methodist Council of Bishops has announced plans to call a five-day special session of General Conference in 2026 — which the Book of Discipline allows bishops to do.

“A special session of General Conference in 2026 would allow the church to see our work as having two important next steps, the first being the regular session of the General Conference in 2024, and the second to make continued progress in 2026,” the bishops said in a statement.

Special sessions can only deal with a set purpose stated in the bishops’ call. The bishops have announced that the purpose of the called session will be unveiled next year.

A special session in 2026 would have the same delegates who serve in 2024, unless an annual conference chooses to elect a new slate.

Council of Bishops President Thomas J. Bickerton asked commission members and staff to consider what a 2026 special session should entail. A number of commission members suggested that bishops wait to see what the coming General Conference does before specifying a purpose. Commission members also brought up the desire to see a gathering that focuses more on spiritual formation than legislation.

“Everything is on the table at this point,” Bickerton told the commission. “And our goal is to really think seriously about how would a gathering in the middle of the quadrennium help us get down the road in terms of the future expression of The United Methodist Church and what we need to do.”

Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

Clergy of color ‘have to keep on pushing’

By Jim Patterson Dec. 7, 2023 | ATLANTA (UM News)



Attendees of the Nov. 14-16 Facing the Future conference in Atlanta pose with blank masks before decorating them as part of an exercise. The conference drew about 300 pastors serving in cross-cultural ministry to share their experiences and learn new ways to be effective. Photo courtesy of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race.

Proud Americans in a predominantly white United Methodist church outside Atlanta fly an American flag to mark Veterans Day.

Who would object? You might be surprised to find out that such flag-flying could alarm non-white residents of the neighborhood. In the eyes of some, the American flag has been coopted by white supremacists and far-right groups as a symbol, clouding the waters for patriotic Americans.

“One of the ways that people of color identify a potentially racist scenario is when they see a church that is an all-white church and they’re particularly passionate about the American flag,” said the Rev. Tony Phillips, associate pastor of Bethany United Methodist Church in Smyrna, Georgia.

Phillips, who is Black, has a calling to bring diversity to churches like Bethany where membership does not represent the multicultural communities in which they are set.

“It’s gentle conversations,” he said. “You’re looking at that flag and you’re like, ‘Gosh, we shouldn’t put that out there.’ But you can’t remove it because it would cause so much friction (that) Fox News would be down there.”

Such issues pop up “left and right,” he added.

“There’s a group going on a field trip and they’re going to the ‘Gone With the Wind’ Museum,” he said. “Of course, that’s probably not something that people in our (non-white) community are going to embrace.”

Discussions like this abounded at the Facing the Future conference, held Nov. 14-16 in a downtown

Atlanta hotel. The United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race event drew about 300 attendees, mostly United Methodist pastors serving in cross-cultural ministries. The goals of the conference included offering support and affirmation and providing practical workshops to help pastors in such ministries.



Pins with a message rejecting racism, sexism, homophobia and ableism were distributed during the Facing the Future conference, held Nov. 14-16 in downtown Atlanta. The conference drew about 300 pastors serving in cross-cultural ministry to share their experiences and strategies for navigating challenges. Photo by Jim Patterson, UM News.

There were expressions of hurt and hope.

“This is the reality of cross-racial, cross-cultural ministry,” said the Rev. Giovanni Arroyo, top executive at Religion and Race. “One of the reasons why this conference came into existence is, ‘How do we create a place that contains space where this group of leaders across the church could actually be vulnerable, and not feel like this can be used against them?’”

In a revealing exercise during the conference, blank masks were distributed to the pastors, who were invited to decorate them with colored markers. The outside of the mask was to express the face they show to the outside world, while the inner mask was to reflect how they wish others would perceive them.

“We may go in wearing a mask to do what God has called us to do, because we can't fully walk into who we are in our ethnicity,” said the Rev. Dyanne Corey, an elder in Virginia. “I want to be in a place where I am embraced for who I am and I can preach the way God birthed me to preach — and to feel the joy again of my call.”



Attendees of the Nov. 14-16 Facing the Future conference in Atlanta pose with blank masks before decorating them as part of an exercise. The conference drew about 300 pastors serving in cross-cultural ministry to share their experiences and learn new ways to be effective. Photo courtesy of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race.

Dawn Houser, pastor of Aitkin UMC in Aitkin, Minnesota, is a Native American leader at the majority white church.

Houser said her name and appearance give her the option to hide or downplay her Native American background, but she doesn't do that.

“When I started the appointment there, they did not know that I was Native American,” Houser said. “They're a good group of folks,” she added. “It's interesting for them. I don't think they consider my appointment to be a cross-cultural appointment.”

Her heritage does make her approach to Christianity a little differently.

She prefers to preach about the story of Native Americans rather than that of the Israelites of the Old Testament, and she doesn't refer to Jesus as “Lord.”

“To people who have been colonized, it's a real problem,” she said. “(Not using Lord) doesn't have anything to do with Jesus. (Native Americans) would take it as a slight toward Jesus.”

Houser reports receiving racist threats from people outside the church, including threats of violence.

Workshops at the conference included “Navigating Bias,” “How to Lead an Emotionally Intelligent Church” and “Empathy and Burnout.” The emphasis was on giving tools to pastors who are weary because of the hard circumstances of their jobs.

“I think the question (of the conference) is, ‘Are we trying to change people back home, or are we trying to create space for us to recognize and deal with our pain?’” Arroyo said.



The Rev. Stephen Handy, pastor of McKendree United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tenn., and the Rev. Giovanni Arroyo, top executive of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race, take part in a “mask” exercise during the Facing the Future conference, held Nov. 14-16 in downtown Atlanta. Pastors from cross-cultural ministries decorated the outside of their mask to express the face they show to the outside world, while the inside of the mask reflected how they wish others would perceive them. Photo by Jim Patterson, UM News.

“We have to recognize who we are and where we are,” he added. “Then it could be better able to navigate when we go back.” Some pastors of color say they sense a racial component in their struggle to even get ordained.

“I’ve been in the board ministry ordination process for a long time,” said Eric Reniva, the Filipino and Puerto Rican pastor of Waterman United Methodist Church in Waterman, Illinois. “My biggest gripe is that you’re good enough to lead a local church, but you’re not good enough to be ordained.”

He said he has seen white pastors have a smooth journey through the ordination process and get plum appointments, especially legacy pastors — those with family members who have held positions of authority in The United Methodist Church.

But not him. “There’s always something wrong with your answers,” Reniva said. “You’re not Wesleyan enough or you don’t understand this or that or you don’t have a great explanation for (the Book of) Discipline and polity.”

“When they were talking about systems that hold you down and make you fearful, that’s one of them for me.”

Arroyo says he has had similar feelings, despite rising to be a top church official.

“I think as a person of color, I know that I have to work harder than my siblings who are white, just so that I could be seen that I’m almost equal to the leadership — almost.”

Being vocal about racial issues doesn’t seem to be a good option, Reniva said.

“I’ve experienced it in seminary, and I’ve experienced it in my own personal ministry,” he said. “When you preach truth to power, you get stomped on. I mean, you may get punished for it.”

Not all the pastors at the conference are struggling. But the Rev. Grace Han, a Korean pastor at historically white Trinity United Methodist Church in Alexandria, Virginia, says some issues remain.

Han, the daughter of two United Methodist clergy, has noticed that nobody ever assumes she’s the pastor of the church. She has to tell them. And tricky discussions do come up.

“I was at my church when George Floyd was murdered, and in light of all of the Black Lives Matter movements, I’ve tried to have some really honest conversations about how we think about race, how we talk about race and how we address racism, especially when it’s right on our (television) screens for everyone to see.”

She has begun having those conversations, but more are needed, she said.

“I don’t want to paint it as like a perfect situation,” Han said. “I recognize that I’ve been blessed in my context, and I appreciate that and I value that.

“So there are success stories, and not just painful ones.”

Arroyo said that individuals and organizations like the Commission on Religion and Race “have to keep on pushing.”

“We are called to do better, so that we can move on to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is love. I think that’s important.”

Patterson is a UM News reporter in Nashville, Tennessee. Contact him at 615-742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

The real story behind ‘Good King Wenceslas’

By Heather Hahn Dec. 15, 2023 | UM News

The famed British carol “Good King Wenceslas” is inspired by a Christian martyr who remains an important figure in his Czech homeland. The real Wenceslas — known as Václav the Good — lived from about A.D. 907 to 929. For nearly 100 years, a large statue of him as an armed knight on horseback has stood proudly in Prague’s Wenceslas Square. It was sculpted by Josef Václav Myslbek. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Think of it as the English-speaking world’s most popular day-after-Christmas carol.

Musical groups as diverse as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Mannheim Steamroller, the Beatles and countless carolers in Victorian garb have all offered their own renditions of “Good King Wenceslas.”

The carol about a generous ruler trudging out to help a poor man, “when the snow lay round about, deep, and crisp, and even,” takes place not on Dec. 25 but on the Feast of Stephen, Dec. 26.

The British carol first appeared in a Victorian-era collection of children’s stories, with the intent of encouraging Christian charity. But the inspiration for this fanciful tale was a very real Christian martyr who lived in the 10th century.

The historical Wenceslas wasn’t English. He wasn’t a king. In his Czech homeland, he wasn’t even associated with Christmas.

However, he remains an important national figure in today’s Czech Republic — where he is known to Czech speakers as Václav rather than Wenceslas, the Latinized version of his name.

The Catholic Church has named him the country’s patron saint. He is meaningful to other Czechs as well, including the country’s United Methodists.

“Václav is a prominent figure from our past,” said the Rev. Jana Křížová, a United Methodist pastor in Prague. “He is a symbol of the Czech state.”

It also makes a certain poetic sense that a song about the Wenceslas of yore would be set on the feast day of Stephen, the first Christian martyr named in the New Testament.



An engraving by Brothers Dalziel featured for the carol “Good King Wenceslas” in an 1879 hymn book by Henry Ramsden depicts the saint performing the charitable acts for which he became famous. The carol about a generous ruler trudging out to help a poor man takes place on the Feast of Stephen, Dec. 26. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Saintly beginnings

The real Wenceslas — known as Václav the Good — lived from about A.D. 907 to 929, and the story of his brief 22 years on this earth featured more family treachery than a season of Succession.”

His father, Vratislaus I, was the Duke of Bohemia and a Christian. His mother, Drahomíra, though baptized before the marriage, was aligned with Bohemia’s pagans. As a child, Václav was raised largely by his Christian paternal grandmother, Ludmila — who was later canonized as a saint in her own right.

When Václav was about 13, his father died in battle and Ludmila became regent. But the regency did not last long. His mother had Ludmila killed — resenting her mother-in-law’s influence on the government and her soon-to-be duke son. Newly empowered, Drahomíra also sought to suppress Bohemia’s Christians.

When Václav became Duke of Bohemia himself at age 18, he instead sought to spread Christianity. He

commissioned the building of several churches including part of what is now St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague. He also developed a reputation as a wise and compassionate ruler, known for his deeds of mercy.

Legend has it that he paid particular attention to caring for the poor, widows, orphans and even prisoners. He opposed the slave market and would buy slaves in order to set them free. He also is known for successfully negotiating peace with the Bavarians, who had been traditional enemies of Bohemians.

But his jealous younger brother, Boleslav, wanted to become duke himself and had the backing of their mother. Boleslav also was willing to exploit his brother's faith to seize power. He invited Václav to a church dedication on Sept. 27, 929. The next day, while Václav was on his way to prayer, Boleslav and his henchman attacked — killing the young duke on Sept. 28.

Soon after his death, Václav's tomb at St. Vitus became a popular site for pilgrimage, and through many shifts in what powers ruled the region, he remained a hero to the Czech people. To this day, he is still a familiar sight to many Czechs.

For nearly 100 years, a large statue of him as an armed knight on horseback has stood proudly in Prague's Wenceslas Square. Václav's feast day of Sept. 28 is also a national holiday that celebrates Czech statehood.

Křížová, the United Methodist pastor, said most Czech people know few details of Václav's life and they enjoy Sept. 28 more as a day off than anything else.

Nevertheless, she said, whenever something significant happens in the life of the country, the Czech people crowd into Wenceslas Square.

On Oct. 28, 1918, the Czech people gathered in front of the statue to hear the Czechoslovak declaration of independence. The square also was the main site of the Velvet Revolution, popular demonstrations in 1989 that nonviolently led to Czechoslovakia's transition from Communist rule to democracy. The dissident leader who became Czechoslovakia's first democratically elected president, Václav Havel, even shared the saint's name.

"The Wenceslas tradition matters," said Křížová, who like the saint has her own mission of mercy. She coordinates United Methodist refugee ministries, working especially with Ukrainians displaced by war.

Becoming the good king

The transition of Václav, the saintly duke of Bohemia, to Wenceslas, the good king of Christmas-carol fame, came about 900 years after his reign.

The song's fans can thank John Mason Neale — a 19th century Anglican priest, scholar and hymn writer — for this addition to the holiday season.

Neale had a passion for the medieval church, and he spent much of his ministry translating devotionals and poems from Latin and Greek to make them accessible to English-speaking worshippers. He also wrote some 60 hymns himself.

"Good King Wenceslas" was outside his norm in that he turned to a Bohemian legend for inspiration rather than the writing of medieval monks. The carol first appeared in Neale's "Deeds of Faith," a children's book from 1849, and again in his "Carols for Christmastide" from 1853. Neale set the words to the tune of "Tempus adest florum," ("Spring has now unwrapped the flowers"), a 16th-century song for spring.

Neale contributed other beloved hymns to the Advent and Christmas seasons including his translations and settings for "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" and "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice."

But like Wenceslas himself, Neale's legacy can't be limited to Christmas tradition.

"Neale was concerned about resurrecting what he perceived to be the ancient glory of the church," said C. Michael Hawn, professor emeritus of church music at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in Dallas.

"Part of this was a revitalization of interest in the Christian year."

Other treasured hymns in the United Methodist Hymnal that bear Neale's name include "All Glory, Laud and Honor," "Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation" and "Of the Father's Love Begotten."

A good way to start the Christian year

The Rev. Andrew Bridgeman, a United Methodist pastor in the Mountain Sky Conference, shares Neale's love for the Christian liturgical year and has a special fondness for "Good King Wenceslas."

Bridgeman — no stranger to snow "deep and crisp and even" — makes a point at each church he serves of including the carol as part of worship on the first Sunday of Advent.

"I see it as a bridge between the end of the liturgical year and its beginning," said the pastor of Lewistown, Denton and Winifred United Methodist churches in Montana.

"It connects the Reign of Christ Sunday with the Advent of our hope as a concrete example of how we may let Christ's light shine. Wenceslas is both an example of the way things are and the way things can be."

Bridgeman first got to know the carol as a student at Spring Arbor University, a Free Methodist school in Spring Arbor, Michigan, where his dormitory each Christmas performed "Good King Wenceslas" with the dorm residents' own added verses. He said he saw young men — about the same age as Václav during his reign — start out shy and then begin to sing with gusto.

Bridgeman sees reason for United Methodists to be similarly enlivened by the story of Wenceslas.

"I find hope in the story of Wenceslas," the pastor said. "The song relates the incredible lengths that Wenceslas went to help his people."

Artist Chris Dunn imagines Wenceslas as a kindly bear king and his subjects as woodland animals in an illustration for the carol "Good King Wenceslas" in the children's book "Time for Rhyme." Image used with permission by the artist. To learn more about Dunn, visit www.chris-dunn.co.uk.

In the carol, Wenceslas sees a poor man gathering winter fuel. Rather than ignoring the man and ignoring the need, Wenceslas goes bravely into the night through "rudewind's wild lament and the bitter weather." His page then follows in the good king's footsteps, just as Christians are called to follow the path set by Christ.

Wenceslas, Bridgeman added, also makes a good foil for the other earthly king Christians hear about at Christmas time, the villainous Herod. The Gospel of Matthew tells how Herod saw Jesus' birth as a threat and how his efforts to stop the coming Messiah led to the slaughtering of children.

"In Herod, I find a leader consumed with having, holding and maintaining power. Herod — whose faith is in himself, who would resort to violence, who knows no peace — is so often us," Bridgeman said.

But in Wenceslas, Bridgeman sees someone whose mind, heart and arms were unreservedly open to his neighbors.

"Wenceslas is the saintly leader who reminds us that we belong wholly to God and one another," the Montana pastor said. "He and his song remind us that we cannot remain comfortable by the fire when our neighbors are cold, hungry and in need. We must go out into the night, into the wintry winds, into the billowing snow for the sake of our neighbor."

In his native land, Křížová said the saintly ruler's story continues to inspire.

"People still project their ideals onto the figure of Wenceslas," she said.

Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.



NEAC staff undergoing changes, realignment

November 27, 2023



Clare J. Chapman, Conference Treasurer/Director of Administrative Services, shares the following information about administrative systems and staffing changes taking place in the New England Conference.

As we are all aware, this has been and continues to be a time of transition for our New England Conference and The United Methodist Church.

We have experienced a change in episcopal leadership and among our senior staff. At the same time, the ongoing work of the Vision Forward Team has helped us discern and focus on a new and renewed vision for our Conference.

During this time of analysis, assessment, and change we have realized the need for a realignment of both our programmatic and administrative staffing. We have also engaged in an examination of our processes and software.

“This is all part of a big-picture analysis that I am confident will lead to greater efficiency and productivity,” said Bishop Peggy A. Johnson. “I am so grateful for the careful and prayerful planning and attention that have gone into this staff reorganization led by our Treasurer and Director of Connectional Ministries in collaboration with Conference Council on Finance and Administration and the Connectional Table.”

The overarching goal of these changes is to better equip us to support our local churches. We are seeking not just to meet current ministry and program needs, but to have a vision and plan for the future.

As we work to improve efficiency and productivity, we are mindful of the need to reduce expenses. Our goal is for this staff realignment to have no impact on the current budget. By eliminating some positions, seeking internal candidates and other adjustments, we are confident that we will fulfill that commitment.

Some of these changes are already under way. As of July 1, we reconfigured our district staff. We created four full-time Regional Administrator positions and one part-time District Administrator position from the seven part-time positions (one in each district) and one full-time administrative assistant position (formerly held by Rosemary McNulty) in the Conference office.

This new staffing model will provide greater cooperation and consistency in district administration and help make our processes more streamlined.

On Nov. 14, we announced that Administrative Assistant Debbie Cannella and Controller Randy Van Deventer will retire at year’s end.

We have decided not to fill these positions. Instead, we will reinstate the position formerly held by Steve Hart with a new title. The search for an Assistant Treasurer/Director of Financial Ministries (conducted internally and externally) began in October. In addition, a new position, Director of Administrative Ministries, has been developed and an internal search is underway.

In our assessment of programmatic needs, we have made the decision not to fill the vacant position of Director of Congregational Development at this time. More study and collaboration with our Vision Forward Team is needed before any further additions to the programmatic staff will be considered.

We will continue to keep you apprised of the changes as this process moves forward. We ask for your prayers and grace as we continue the ministry of Conference administration. If you have questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact my office treasurer@neumc.org.



Patles named Director of Administrative Ministries

December 04, 2023

The New England Conference and Treasurer/Director of Administrative Services Clare J. Chapman are pleased to announce that Kerry Patles has been promoted to the newly created position of Director of

Administrative Ministries.

Patles has been serving as Accounts Receivable Specialist since Jan. 4, 2016. She will begin her new role effective immediately while continuing to serve transitionally in her current position.

"I am delighted to make this announcement. Kerry brings many gifts to this position, most especially a collaborative spirit and a strong commitment to the ministries of the New England Conference," said Chapman. "I am sure we will see the fruits of her leadership as Director of Administrative Ministries in a number of ways very soon."



Reporting to the Treasurer, Patles will provide leadership in administrative management and oversight as well as provide support to boards, committees, and program ministries of the Conference.

Based at the Conference office in Methuen, MA, the Director of Administrative Ministries will implement and oversee compliance with administrative policies as established by the Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CCFA).

"I am passionate about improving connections and processes to bring the NEAC through this period of many transitions with grace and positivity," Patles said. "I am hopeful that this and our other recent staffing changes will help us kick off the New Year with a renewed sense of collaboration and synergy within the Conference office and beyond."

Before joining the Conference staff, Patles was Cash Receipts Specialist for Genesis Health Care Corporation in Andover, MA. She has experience in customer and insurer relations as well as in new employee training.

"We have seen so much change over the last few years, we have hung in together through a pandemic, several leadership changes, and grieved loss; this team is nothing, if not resilient," Patles said. "I am looking forward to embracing change and challenges with this team!"

Patles lives in Derry, NH, with her husband, Clayton. They have two adult children Anthony, 27, and Avery, 19.

Patles volunteers with the Lions Club in her hometown of Plaistow, NH, and serves as the organization's second VP and with Christmas Project Coordinator.

She's a softball fan and supports her two favorite teams: Timberlane High School in Plaistow and Regis College in Weston, MA.



Bishop urges NEAC to take part in Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



Join Bishop Peggy A. Johnson and members of the NEAC Committee on Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships to pray for Christian Unity. This online gathering will begin at 7 pm on Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024.

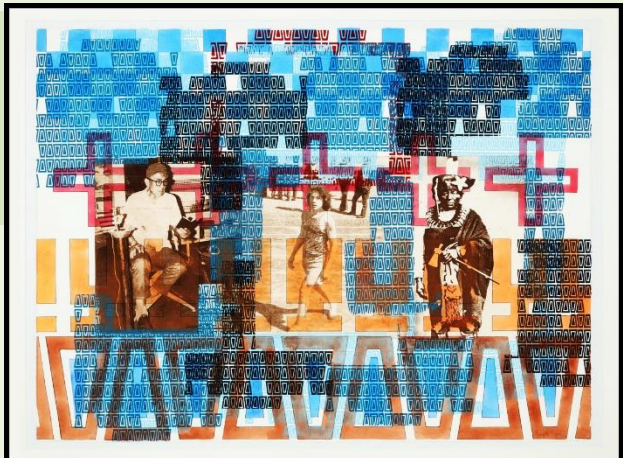
Guest speaker will be our very own Clare J. Chapman, Conference Treasurer and Director of Administrative Services. Clare has served as Associate General Secretary for the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. An attorney, she was also the Deputy General Secretary and General Counsel for the National Council of Churches.

This event will come at the conclusion of the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Jan. 18-25). Bishop Johnson encourages all NEAC clergy and laity to take this time to be in prayer and solidarity with other Christians from around the world. This year's theme is from Luke 10:27: "You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbor as yourself."

Virtual Meeting Link: <https://zoom.us/j/92086086222?pwd=MFU1YXdLQVVNU0NHc2w2bDVYeXFMdz09>

Airport exhibit spotlights Indigenous heritage

By Jim Patterson Dec. 5, 2023 | ATLANTA (UM News)



“Influence of Ancestors,” an artwork by Tony A. Tiger, is about how ancestors can inform, inspire and encourage. Images include Tiger at 15, his grandfather and a Fox warrior. Photo courtesy of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries.

While traveling several years back, the Rev. Chebon Kernell came across something interesting at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

It was “A Walk Through Atlanta History,” a permanent exhibit tracing the city’s story up to the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games.

“They included Indigenous peoples there, but it was on just one little panel of this massive display,” said Kernell, executive director of the Native American Comprehensive Plan of The United Methodist Church. “I noticed that one panel was about 13,000 years of (Native American) history. And the entire rest of the exhibit was 200 years.

“That didn’t sit well with me, and so I began to use that example as a teaching moment, to talk about how we have silenced histories, especially in this country.”



Visitors view the newly installed works of “This Land Calls Us Home,” on view at Concourse T North, near gates T12-15 at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in Photo by Dan Curran for Global Ministries.



The Rev. Chebon Kernell (Seminole/Muscogee), executive director of the Native American Comprehensive Plan of The United Methodist Church, speaks with a reporter at the opening of “This Land Calls Us Home,” held at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in Atlanta on Nov. 6. Photo by Susan Clark, courtesy of Global Ministries.

Glenn Kellum, a colleague at the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, where Kernell worked at the time, suggested he meet with airport officials to talk it over. They were amenable.

“So fast-forward five years later, we have developed an art exhibit that gives contemporary examples of Native American culture, identity and even our hopes and dreams for this area that we still consider our homelands in Georgia,” Kernell said.

He curated the exhibit with the help of museum professionals and other Native American Methodists and scholars. It is sponsored by Global Ministries.

The show, “This Land Calls Us Home: Indigenous Relationship with Southeastern Homelands,” features more than 60 paintings and objects by 26 artists and will be on display in the T North Concourse until November 2024. It’s free to travelers in the airport.

“Global Ministries is pleased to partner with representatives from our denomination’s Native American community to present this exhibit for display at Atlanta’s airport,” said Roland Fernandes, the top executive of Global Ministries and the United Methodist Committee on Relief, in a statement. “The installation offers a unique opportunity to help facilitate a greater understanding of Native American and Indigenous peoples of the Southeast. Many of the artists have close ties to specific ancestral sites now in the greater Atlanta and Georgia region, which may also be of special interest to travelers visiting the Atlanta area.”



“Double Woven River Cane Basket” (left) and “United First Nations River Cane Basket” (right) were created by Vivian Garner Cottrell, who is of Cherokee and Irish descent and a fourth-generation basket maker. Cherokee patterns are woven into each basket with natural dyed material using black walnut, bloodroot, berries and bois d’arc shavings. Photo courtesy of Global Ministries.

Artist Vivian Garner Cottrell (Cherokee) stands near a display case that features one of her baskets at the opening of “This Land Calls Us Home” held at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in Atlanta on Nov. 6. Photo courtesy of Global Ministries.



“Spearfinger’s Deception” was created by Luzene Hill of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Her work is informed by pre-contact culture of the Americas and advocates for Indigenous linguistic, cultural and individual sovereignty. In Native American lore, Spearfinger could transform herself from the ugly, old woman she was into a beautiful young female. Her deadliest weapon was her sharp finger that resembled a spear or awl, which she used to cut her victims. Photo courtesy of Global Ministries.

Jeff Edwards, who has three pieces of art in the exhibit, said it was the first time his artwork was featured in an airport.

“I think it’s pretty neat,” he said.

One of Edwards’ pieces is an Andy Warhol-inspired piece about Sequoyah, whose creation of the Cherokee syllabary made reading and writing in Cherokee possible.

“I thought it was kind of cool that you actually have to be a traveler (to see the exhibit),” Edwards said. “If you get a six-hour layover, it’d be kind of cool to have an art show to go to.”

Some of the exhibits tackle Native American issues such as missing and murdered Indigenous women, abuse at Indian boarding schools and climate change, albeit subtly.

“You’ll see little bits and pieces in some of the expressions that we’ve selected,” said Kernell, a Native American scholar and educator. “Sometimes they might take a little bit, maybe an explanation from the artist or different things, to kind of bring it to the forefront.”

For example, there is a painting by Jody Bradley Lipscomb of a young girl clutching a tree. Titled “The Crying Tree,” it alludes to abusive Indian boarding schools – a few operated by Methodists – intended to separate Native Americans from their culture. “The Crying Tree” refers to an oak grove where children sought refuge from Cherokee Indian Boarding School in North Carolina.

Tony A. Tiger, another artist featured in the airport show, believes exposure to Native American art could do the opposite of the boarding schools by sharing Native culture with people of other races.

“We have a narrative to share with America,” Tiger said. “I think it’s more important that people understand that we weren’t savages; we did have civilization here with many different languages and we had large villages.

“With more knowledge ... possibly we can treat each other better.”

But Edwards said there's a line he won't cross between honoring his Cherokee heritage and doing what he called "pity pieces," or art that reflects stereotypes.

"Oh, look at what has happened to us Cherokee. We've had such a horrible history." Edwards said. "Yes, of course we have. But ... we're still here, you know, so we survived that history."

Having the exhibit at the airport means it may reach people who don't go to museums very often.

"One advantage ... is to counteract the historical silencing that I feel the other exhibit does in the tunnel area of the airport," Kernell said. "To have something more in depth that provides the community with a deeper understanding of Native American people."



The Rev. Chebon Kernell (second from left), executive director of the Native American Comprehensive Plan, leads a stomp dance demonstration at the opening of "This Land Calls Us Home" held at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in Atlanta on Nov. 6. Photo by Susan Clark, courtesy of Global Ministries.

An exhibit at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in Atlanta, "This Land Calls Us Home: Indigenous Relationships with Southeastern Homelands," showcases 60 works of art by 26 Native American artists. It will be on display in the T North Concourse until November 2024. Photo by Jim Patterson, UM News.



"Know Your Enemy" by Jeff Edwards portrays a Cherokee Native American. The spider held by the subject's left hand originally was the head of Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt. It was changed to a spider because of concerns the reference would be missed by non-Oklahomans. Photo courtesy of Global Ministries.

Patterson is a UM News reporter in Nashville, Tennessee. Contact him at 615-742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

About the Native American Comprehensive Plan

The Native American Comprehensive Plan serves as the United Methodist entity that resources, strengthens and advocates for the local church in Native American communities and contexts for all generations.

"Post-COVID ... the focus that we've taken is (to cultivate) relationships with the entities that surround us and do a lot of education to the non-Native American world about the things that we're going through," said the Rev. Chebon Kernell, executive director of the plan.

"We have relationships with universities. We have relationships with museums ... and we've tried to reach what they're teaching so that a good message about Native American people today can be taught that can be a good pedagogy there."

Posted on Facebook by Doug Stevens [with gratitude to Hafez]

There are three kinds of people in the world: Those who can count and those who can't. 🤖

Actually there are two kinds of people: Those who walk into a room and say, "Here I am!" And those who walk into a room and say, "There you are!"

So, honestly, which one are you?

Admit something: Everyone you see, you say to them, "Love me." Of course, you don't say this out loud otherwise someone would call the cops.

Still though, think about this: This great pull in us to connect. Why not become the one who lives with a full moon in each eye that is always saying, with that sweet moonlit language, what every other eye in this world is dying to hear?

New Identity in Jesus

By: James Banks

See what great love the Father has lavished on us. **1 John 3:1**

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 5:14–21 (NIV)

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. ¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

"I'm not who I once was. I'm a new person." Those simple words from my son, spoken to students at a school assembly, describe the change God made in his life. Once addicted to heroin, Geoffrey previously saw himself through his sins and mistakes. But now he sees himself as a child of God.

The Bible encourages us with this promise: "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). No matter who we've been or what we've done in our past, when we trust Jesus for our salvation and receive the forgiveness offered through His cross, we become someone new. Since the garden of Eden, the guilt of our sins has separated us from God, but He has now "reconciled us to himself through Christ," "not counting" our sins against us (vv. 18–19). We are His dearly loved children (1 John 3:1–2), washed clean and made new in the likeness of His Son.

Jesus liberates us from sin and its dominating power and restores us into a new relationship with God—where we're free to no longer live for ourselves but "for him who died for [us] and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:15). On this New Year's Day, let's remember that His transforming love compels us to live with new identity and purpose. It helps us point others to our Savior, the One who can make them new people too!

REFLECT & PRAY

R: What does it mean to you that a new beginning is possible with God? How can you live as His "new creation"?

P: *Abba, Father, thank You for sending Your Son to save me. Please send me to someone who needs You too.*

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Second Corinthians 5:21 describes the very heart of the gospel message: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." In this great divine exchange, known as substitutionary or vicarious atonement, God took our sins and placed them on the sinless Christ and attributed His righteousness to us. Jesus took the full punishment that we deserved. The apostle Peter describes this exchange as "the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring [us] to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

When we believe that Jesus died for our sins, we take on His righteousness (Romans 3:22) and receive a right standing before God (see 4:3-4). Paul says of this gift: "Even greater is God's . . . gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ" (5:17 nlt).

By: **K.T. Sim**

The Really Big Fun Bible Quiz! (part 5 of 5)

81. On what day of the week was Christ resurrected?

Mark 16:2

- 1st
- 3rd
- 6th
- 7th

82. Who did Mary suppose Jesus to be at first after the resurrection? *John 20:15*

- Roman soldier
- Gardener
- Milkman
- Farmer

83. What did Thomas want to see before he would believe that Jesus had been raised? *John 20:25*

- The tomb clothes
- The nail imprints
- The thorn imprints
- The spear wound

84. Which group of people stood and watched Jesus as he ascended into heaven? *Acts 1:11*

- Samaritans
- Nazarites
- Pharisees
- Galileans

85. On what day did the apostles receive the Holy Spirit? *Acts 2*

- Passover
- Pentecost
- Day of Atonement
- Purim

86. What did Peter and John heal the man of at the temple gate called Beautiful? *Acts 3*

- Blindness
- Dumbness
- Lameness
- Unclean spirits

87. Who did God send to restore Paul's sight? *Acts 9:10*

- Jesus
- Ananias
- Bartholomew
- Timothy

88. What did Paul do immediately after receiving his sight back? *Acts 9:18*

- He preached in the synagogues
- He was baptized
- He changed his name to Paul
- He set off on his first missionary journey

89. Who did Paul take with him on his first missionary journey? *Acts 13:2*

- Timothy
- Silas
- Barnabas
- Philip

90. What event occurred to help release Paul and Silas from prison? *Acts 16:26*

- Earthquake
- Whirlwind
- Riot
- Flood

91. What happened to the prison keeper after finding all the doors open and the prisoners unchained? *Acts 16:33*

- He was thrown into prison
- He was brought before the governor
- He killed himself
- He believed and was baptized

92. Who went to sleep during one of Paul's sermons and fell out of the window? *Acts 20:9*

- Tychicus
- Tabitha
- Eutychus
- Sapphira

93. How does Paul tell us to work out our own salvation? *Philippians 2:12*

- With fear and trembling
- By reading our Bible often
- In hope and charity
- By obeying Paul's words

94. Who had a slave named Onesimus? ??

- Paul
- Jude
- Titus
- Philemon

95. Melchizedek was a high priest, but also king of where? *Hebrews 7:1*

- Babylon
- Judah
- Salem
- Egypt

96. Who was the author of Revelation? *Revelation 1:1,4,9; 22:8*

- Paul
- Jesus
- John
- Luke

Answers can be found on the next to last page. Quiz taken from <https://bibletrivia.co.uk/quiz/thereallybigfunbiblequiz>

97. Which of these is one of the seven churches in Revelation? Revelation 2:1-7

- Ephesus
- Galatia
- Thessalonica
- Philippi

98. What animal is associated with the first four of the seven seals? Revelation 6:1-8

- Sheep
- Goat
- Horse
- Dragon

99. The fifth trumpet in Revelation is a plague which was also a plague upon Egypt in Exodus. Which one? Revelation 9

- Death of the firstborn
- Darkness
- Locusts
- Hail

100. In Revelation, what is the number of a man? Revelation 13:18

- 7
- 42
- 153
- 666

RESOLUTION

"I will not exalt any theological principle or duty above love."

"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

"—Galatians 5:6b

Soteriology, eschatology, pneumatology, apologetics: there's no end to the theological issues people get passionate—and divisive—about.

-HOWEVER-

Love is not some small minded ideal that we bypass on the way to weightier theological principles. Love is PhD-level Christianity. In our pursuit of Jesus, we will spend the rest of our lives learning to love more passionately, intimately, intentionally, and transformationally.

THERE IS NO HIGHER CALL

Jayson D Bradley



Possibly the Most important thing you'll read this Year...

The following is the philosophy of Charles Schulz, the creator of the 'Peanuts' comic strip.

You don't have to actually answer the questions. Just ponder on them. Just read it straight through, and you'll get the point.

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America pageant.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners.

How did you do?

The point is, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. These are no second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. But the applause dies. Awards tarnish ... Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.

Here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

1. List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
2. Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
5. Think of five people you enjoy spending time with.

Easier?

The lesson:

The people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money or the most awards. They simply are the ones who care the most.

Regionalization Series, Part 4: What does the proposed regionalization plan do -- and not do?



by The Rev. Taylor W Burton Edwards, Director Ask The UMC



Legislation the Standing Commission on Central Conference matters is bringing to General Conference takes several steps toward a goal of building connectional unity while making room for customization in each region of the world. Graphic by Laurens Glass, United Methodist Communications.

The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters has been working diligently since 2012 to develop a proposed structure for The United Methodist Church, worldwide, that builds connectional unity across the whole denomination while making room for customization in how the church lives out its mission in each region of the world, including the United States.

The legislation that the Standing Committee has brought to the upcoming session of the General Conference takes several steps toward that goal:

- It renames and realigns the existing central conferences as regional conferences so there is parity in naming and the elimination of a label (“central”) that reminds all too much of the previous history of a segregated Central Jurisdiction in the United States. The result will be four regional conferences: Africa, Europe, Philippines, and the United States.
- As noted, it creates a regional conference for the United States, with powers parallel to that of the other regional conferences worldwide, and makes room for regional conferences outside the United States to create jurisdictions within their central conferences if they so wish.
- It provides greater clarity about the power these regional conferences have to customize the denomination’s Book of Discipline as adopted by the General Conference for the sake of mission and ministry in their own areas.

What are regional conferences?

More than simply a new name for central conferences, regional conferences would have more explicit and clearly defined powers than their predecessors. Since one of the regions would be the United States, United Methodists there would have, for the first time, authority to adapt the Discipline in the same ways that every other regional conference would be able to do.

Regional conferences without jurisdictions would elect and assign the bishops for their episcopal areas. Regional conferences with jurisdictions would set the boundaries for the jurisdictions with them. The jurisdictions, in turn, would elect and assign the bishops to serve within the jurisdictional areas. And, as already noted, any regional conference could create jurisdictional conferences within it.

How would persons be elected to regional conference?

Election to be a delegate to a regional conference would not change from how elections to existing bodies (General, central, and jurisdictional) conferences happen now. For the United States and other regional conferences that may in the future create jurisdictions within them, those elected as General Conference delegates and those elected as jurisdictional conference delegates would serve as the regional conference delegates. For regional conferences without jurisdictions, those elected as General Conference delegates and those elected as regional conference delegates would serve as regional conference delegates.

Also in continuity with current patterns, General Conference delegates would have voice and vote at the General Conference, with the jurisdictional/regional conference delegates acting as reserve delegates in order of election should one or more of the General Conference delegates be unable to serve on a temporary basis or at all. Then, at the regional conference, both those elected to the

General Conference and those elected to the jurisdictional/regional conference would serve as delegates to the regional conference. At the level of jurisdictional conferences, where these exist, the General Conference delegates from within that jurisdiction and the jurisdictional conference delegates within that jurisdiction would have voice and vote on matters relating to the work of the jurisdiction, including the election of bishops.

Who could approve adaptations to the Discipline?

Only the regional conferences, not the jurisdictional conferences or annual conferences within them, would have the authority to authorize adaptation of the Discipline for their regions. Regional conferences could also authorize annual conferences to propose, but not make, further adaptations. Annual conferences would bring their proposed adaptations to the regional conference for final action.

What could regional conferences customize?

The legislation submitted by the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters would grant new, specific authorization to regional conferences to take full responsibility for setting the following standards as part of its own regional Book of Discipline.

1. Criteria for ordained and licensed ministry:

Regional conferences would set the minimum qualifications and educational requirements to ordain, commission, and license clergy within their bounds. Annual conferences within each regional conference could include additional qualifications and educational requirements as well.

2. Criteria for specialized lay ministries:

Regional conferences would also set the minimum qualifications and educational requirements for specialized lay ministries within their bounds.

3. Criteria for admission of and care for lay members:

Regional conferences could set their own criteria to determine whether persons qualify for professing membership in The United Methodist Church within their bounds, as well as set expected standards of character and conduct for persons to be continued as professing members.

4. Organization of the regional, annual, district, and charge conferences:

Regional conferences could create their own forms of organization for these bodies within their region and document them within their regional Book of Discipline. All such forms of organization must comply with the laws of the country or countries involved.

5. Hymnal and ritual:

Each regional conference could develop and publish its own hymnal and ritual, including its own rites for marriage and burial, for use within its bounds.

6. Judicial administration:

Each regional conference would establish its own judicial court to rule upon questions arising from new or adapted sections of the regional Discipline over time. It would also set its own rules and processes to implement its rules for the investigation and, if needed, trial of its clergy and laity when formal complaints are brought based on the chargeable offenses and penalties as adopted in its regional Book of Discipline.

All of these mark new or clarified responsibilities for regional conferences, as well as areas where they may make adaptations to the General Discipline. And all of these are proposed as part of a revised section of the constitution addressing regional conferences. Placing these responsibilities and rights to adapt within the constitution ensures that, if passed, they would be difficult to remove from the regional conferences.

What does the legislation not do?

While the legislation proposed to date goes a long way toward establishing a more sweeping and churchwide role for regional conferences, it does not entirely fulfill the promise of Paragraph 101 as originally adopted in 2012.

The enabling legislation to put these amendments into practice, if also passed by a simple majority of the General Conference in 2024, would go into effect when the Council of Bishops announces the relevant amendments have passed. This meeting will be in fall 2025 (usually late October, early November). The constitution sets the framework. The enabling legislation, which will appear mostly within the existing Central Conferences paragraphs (numbered starting with Paragraph 500), gives the specifics about how the revamped regional conferences would function.

Most of the constitutional changes in the legislation, in terms of sheer number of changes, are in name only. They would change the name “central conference” to “regional conference.” As we saw in Part 4 of the series, however, some of the amendments are more substantive, granting to the proposed regional conferences several powers to adapt the Book of Discipline that were not previously specifically assigned to the existing central conferences. These more substantive changes would become effective upon the announcement of the passage of their related constitutional amendments as well.

Some of the regionalization legislation is neither a constitutional amendment nor enabling legislation for constitutional amendments. These include parts of two of the three non-disciplinary regionalization petitions brought by the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters (Petition 6, (p. 44 ff.) Petition 8, p. 50 ff.).

Petition 6, if passed by a simple majority of the General Conference, would create an Interim United States Legislative Committee immediately upon the adjournment of the upcoming session of the General Conference in 2024. This committee would function much as the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters does now, by having all legislation relating to specific U.S. matters diverted to this body rather than to the various other legislative committees of the General Conference. This would entirely free those committees to consider legislation intended to be of a churchwide nature. The United States Legislative Committee would continue to function until a U.S. Regional Conference becomes fully operational.

Petition 8 would create a study team to develop proposals for addressing several unresolved matters with the new regional conferences — if the legislation is passed to create them — and present those proposals to a subsequent session of the General Conference. Unresolved issues include but are not limited to whether jurisdictions should continue to exist and how to proceed if regional conferences are believed to have overstepped their legislative bounds in how and what they adapt. The purpose of the study and the proposals would be to ensure full equity across all regional conferences. If this petition is passed, the study would begin immediately, but proposals would be brought to the General Conference only if the constitutional amendments and enabling legislation creating the regional conferences have also passed.

Finally, there remains the work of completing the task of restructuring the Book of Discipline as described in the current Paragraph 101 of the 2016 Book of Discipline. At the heart of this work is a substantial overhaul of the current Book of Discipline to create a new Part VI (items not adaptable by the regional conferences) and a new Part VII (items adaptable by the regional conferences). The Standing Committee had submitted in 2019 two items of legislation that would help facilitate this work. The 2019 versions of these items are included in Volume 2, Section 2 of the Advance Daily Christian Advocate. The Standing Committee’s updated versions of these petitions will appear with the final updated volume of the ADCA, reflecting materials submitted within the 2023 window for new

legislation. These items with all other new or updated legislation are expected to be published online in an additional section of the Advance Daily Christian Advocate in early 2024.

Petition 20157 (p. 616) would amend Paragraph 101 to allow the Standing Committee to propose new language related to theology and mission, particularly for the work of agencies, that reflects the diverse legal and missional contexts across the worldwide Church. As the rationale statement in the 2019 version of this petition notes, the current language of the Discipline was forged in a predominantly U.S. cultural and legal context. Simply rearranging the existing language, as Paragraph 101 seems originally to have proposed, cannot adequately address the very different realities outside of the United States in a way that a truly General Book of Discipline calls for.

Petition 20660 (p. 824) would create an immediate feedback process from every annual conference across the worldwide Church to address core questions about what kinds of legislation best belong in Part VI (non-adaptable) and Part VII (adaptable). Every annual conference would provide answers to a few key questions about what needs to apply across the entire denomination to ensure clear United Methodist identity and what needs to be adaptable regionally for maximal missional effectiveness. Using these responses from every annual conference meeting in 2024, the Standing Committee would draft proposals for Parts VI and VII to be presented to a subsequent session of the General Conference.

What it takes for The United Methodist Church to maintain its identity and unity worldwide while granting appropriate regional flexibility will not be finalized by the General Conference in 2024, even if all of the legislation brought to support this work is passed by the required margins. The effort will only have begun. But it will have begun with clear plans to listen to leaders across the entire church and continue to bring revisions in the years ahead to ensure that what has begun will help United Methodists carry out their mission more effectively wherever they are.

Burton Edwards is director of Ask The UMC, the information service of United Methodist Communications.

RESPONDING TO FOOD INSECURITY ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES



By Christie R. House December 13, 2023



Students drop by the fresh food table of the Koala Pantry on Columbia College's campus in South Carolina. (Photo: Courtesy of Columbia College)

ATLANTA – “On days that I was away from home from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., I didn’t worry about eating because of the Koala Pantry. When my family’s refrigerator broke for weeks I was able to eat well. Without this resource, I would not have been able to complete either semester.”

Food insecurity on college campuses is often a hidden problem because students do not want to admit they are in need...until colleges establish free or low-cost food ministries and discover how many students use them.

Columbia College in South Carolina was one of seven colleges that received Global Ministries’ grants last year to develop pantries or other means of supplying food and hygiene supplies for students. The colleges receiving grants, made possible by Human Relations Sunday offerings, were all United-

Methodist related institutions with significant numbers of enrolled students of color with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

At Columbia College’s Koala Pantry, some students who frequented the pantry disclosed that they would not have been able to continue their college education without it. For students without reserve income for basic necessities, it is difficult to focus on being a full-time student while working to scrape together an income.

“The Koala Pantry has been one of my favorite services on campus,” noted another Columbia student. “I have used it many times, along with several of my teammates, when we needed to grab a quick snack between classes and practices. As a volunteer at the Koala Pantry this past spring semester (2023), I also witnessed how much good it does for many other students. I noticed that many rely on the pantry’s supply throughout the week.”

ESSENTIAL PARTNERS PROVIDE SUPPORT

While the grants were used to set up or refurbish existing pantries, these full-time ministries need full-time partners to keep supplies stocked and volunteers working. All of the grantees last year fostered additional resources to keep their pantries viable throughout the year.

At Greensboro College in the Western North Carolina Conference, Tyler Smith, a former student, current theological student and the Greensboro College Community Service coordinator, notes a number of ways they found to support their new Pride Pantry, one of three available on the campus.

Greensboro College works with its athletic teams and honors societies to host food drives to support the pantries. In addition, they partner with Spartan Open Pantry, hosted by College Place United Methodist Church in Greensboro, to give students access to a larger food pantry that provides hot meals throughout the week.

“We hope to shine a spotlight on food insecurity on college campuses and we also plan to offer educational opportunities for our staff to discover more about the issue and make a difference in students’ lives,” Smith noted in a video about the Pride Pantry.

Emory and Henry College in Virginia opened the Stinger’s Supply Shelf a couple years ago and its Bonner scholar program helps to coordinate the pantry operation. Appalachian Center for Civic Life helps to supply volunteers. The campus food vendor, Sodexo, maintains the food supply and churches and individuals donate hygiene supplies.

A student volunteer stocks the Stinger Supply Shelf with hygiene products at Emory and Henry College in Virginia. (Photo: Courtesy of Emory and Henry)



GOOD GRADES ACCOMPANY GOOD HEALTH

In Waleska, Georgia, Reinhardt University upgraded its pantry to increase capacity. Walter May, Reinhardt’s dean of students, notes their grant was used to equip the pantry with a card-access system; increase storage space; install air conditioning; increase inventory of hygiene products, as well as food preparation and cookware and utensils.

“The research is clear that college students without reliable food access earn lower grades and suffer higher levels of stress,” says May. “The food pantry is one of many university strategies that supports our students and is an important part of the Student Health Center’s outlook on student life – caring for the whole person.”

Birmingham Southern College in Alabama used its grant to focus on the college’s “E-term” or January term, outside the regular 2-semester schedule of classes. Students themselves developed the idea for a free food market during the extra term that provides fresh produce, breads, meats and dairy. The market was free-of-charge to all students, and open 24/7. This resource was embraced and heavily utilized by the students; the shelves were nearly empty by each week’s restocking.



The new mobile market on the campus of Birmingham Southern College in Alabama. (Photo: Courtesy of Birmingham Southern College)

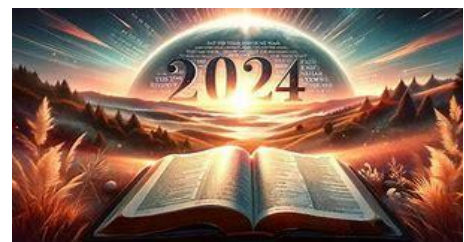
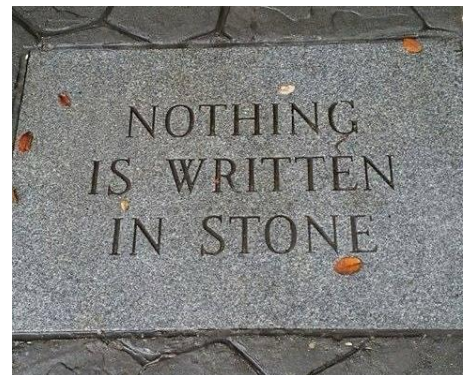
Students attending colleges and universities from diverse economic backgrounds often experience financial independence for the first time and they must learn how to balance work and being a full-time student. Many college campuses are surprisingly far from affordable grocery stores, so students without cars find themselves living in a food desert, and if they miss a campus meal, they go without food until the next is served. Working in partnership with Global Ministries, churches, businesses and volunteer agencies, United Methodist-related institutions are responding to this particular form of food insecurity.

Christie R. House is a consultant writer and editor with Global Ministries and UMCOR.



**ME: CAN YOU PASS ME THE ROOSTER SOOSTER SAUCE.
 MY SISTER: THE WHAT?
 ME: THE WARSHA CHESTER SIRE SAUCE.
 MY SISTER: ARE YOU HAVING A STROKE?
 ME: THE WORST SISTER SHIRE SAUCE.**

- Quiz Answers**
- 81. 1st
 - 82. Gardener
 - 83. The nail imprints
 - 84. Gallileans
 - 85. Pentecost
 - 86. Lameness
 - 87. Ananias
 - 88. He was baptized
 - 89. Barnabas
 - 90. Earthquake
 - 91. He believed and was baptized
 - 92. Eutychus
 - 93. With fear and trembling
 - 94. Philemon
 - 95. Salem
 - 96. John
 - 97. Ephesus
 - 98. Horse
 - 99. Locusts
 - 100. 666



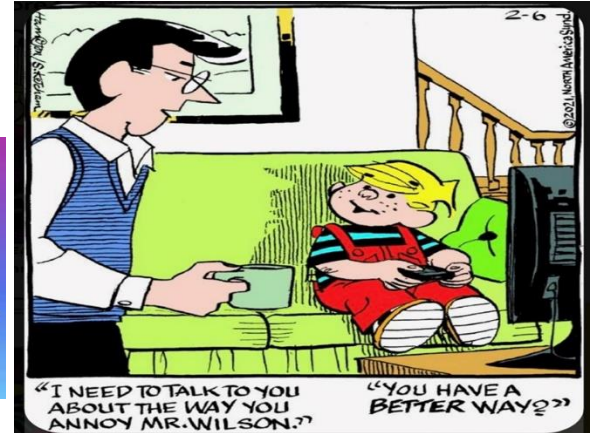
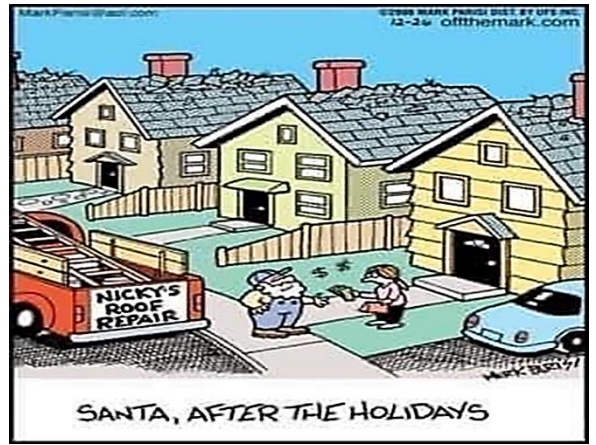


"Hurry! Our New Year's resolutions start in ten minutes."

When I look in the mirror and see gray hair, tiny wrinkles, and dimming eyes I think, "They sure don't make mirrors like they used to."



Do not accept a friend request from Hormel Foods. It could be Spam.



My mother used to tell me I was the worlds greatest potato peeler and I really bought into it. And every time we'd have potatoes I would be so excited to show off my skills as the ultimate peeler. It wasn't till I was in my mid-30s I realized the whole play. Touché mom. Touché.



Dads all year: Who left this light on?! We aren't lightning the whole neighborhood!
Dads in December:



People be like:
He doesn't act like a Christian.
God be like:
I'm not looking for actors.



Why is abbreviation such a long word?

Haven United Methodist Church
200 Taunton Avenue
East Providence, RI 02914
Phone: (401) 438-4911
Fax: (401) 434-0289
Email: havenumchurch@yahoo.com
Website: www.havenumchurch.com