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Instant Connection

California-Nevada Annual Conference



June 24, 2010



A Day of New Beginnings

Four new districts came into being on September 1, 2010 – their day of birth following one of transition, in which two district offices closed their doors.

At Annual Conference Session in June, members approved a resolution sponsored by the Cabinet and Conference Committee on District

Superintendency to reduce the number of districts within the California-Nevada Annual Conference from seven to four. The bishop, in accordance with *The Book of Discipline* (Paragraph 415.4), then drew district lines, establishing the Bridges, Central Valley, El Camino Real, and Great Northern Districts, effective September 1.

The Rev. Benoni Silva-Netto's retirement left the Revs. Renae Extrum-Fernandez, Mariellen Yoshino, Kristie Olah, and Jerry Smith as remaining district superintendents. They were assigned by Bishop Warner H. Brown, Jr.: Extrum-Fernandez, to the Bridges District; Yoshino, to the Central Valley District; Olah, to the El Camino Real District; and Smith, to the Great Northern District.

A Districts Administration Center was established in the United Methodist Center, 1276 Halyard Drive in West Sacramento, where most Conference offices are located (the exception is the Board of Pensions office, housed in Oakland), and a graduated schedule was put into place for closure of the outlying district offices.

The Districts Administration Center is the new point of contact for all four district superintendents – by phone at 916.374.1501, by fax at 916.372.5527, and by mail at P.O. Box 980250, West Sacramento, CA 95798.

[Mahsa Farahani](#) and [Jason Stubbs](#) began work September 1 as administrative assistants for the Districts Administration Center.

Time to remember and move on

The last day of operation for the former Nevada-Sierra District office in Reno, Nevada was August 30 and for the former Shasta District office in Chico, California, August 31.

Great Northern Superintendent Jerry Smith said there was a sense of excitement, of new opportunities and new directions, coupled with a sense of loss and even grief at the passing of an era.

"It's such a mixed bag," he said.

"Both districts had a strong presence here in the Conference. They were known for the way they collaborated and worked together to provide ministry. I'm really looking forward to this new chapter and wondering how things are going to play out."

The grief at the passing of an era was intensified by the necessity to say good-bye to Audrey Phelps and Janis Chisholm, administrative assistants for Nevada-Sierra and Shasta districts, respectively (although each will continue to assist in the transition to the new districts). Smith and Conference Treasurer Diane Knudsen traveled to both locations to bid farewell.

In Chico, the event was marked with a brief service. Both Silva-Netto and Smith, who shared responsibility for the district in its final year, were on hand, along with District Lay Leader David Haynes and others.

The former Bay View District office, now serving the Bridges District, will remain open at its Berkeley location through the end of this year with Ivania Miranda as administrative assistant. The former Golden Gate District office in San Francisco no longer is attached to a district – however, administrative assistant Bruce Pettit will continue to staff it through the end of this year, assisting in the conversion of files.

The former Fresno District office, now serving the Central Valley District, will remain open at its Fresno location through June 30, 2011 with Mariah Allred as administrative assistant. The former San Jose District office, now serving the El Camino Real District, will remain open at its San Jose office through June 30, 2011 as well, with Pam McKee as administrative assistant.

Locating information about districts on the Conference website

Districts information falls within the "Directories" category on the Conference website. "Directories" is the fourth item under "Quick Links" on the right side of the Home Page at cnumc.org – sandwiched between "Appointments" and "Looking for a church?"

Clicking on "Directories" will bring up the list of all website directories, including "Districts." Clicking on the "Districts" link will open the Districts Home Page.

The Districts Home Page has contact information for the Districts Administration Center, along with links to individual sites for the four districts.

Other information about districts and circuits can be found by clicking on "Circuits & Districts," also under "Quick Links" on the Conference Home Page – the second item with blue text, below the red-text listings.

"This is a day of new beginnings/time to remember and move on/time to believe what love is bringing/laying to rest the pain that's gone."
(*"This Is a Day of New Beginnings," The United Methodist Hymnal, #383, Words by Brian Wren, © 1983, 1987 Hope Publishing Co.*)

California-Nevada UMVIM Team Blogs From Haiti

September 2, 2010 | A United Methodist Volunteers in Mission team from the California-Nevada Annual Conference is en route to Haiti for 10 days of "service, construction, and learning," as the Rev. Jennifer Murdock, a member of the team, expresses it.

The team has established a blog site and will be updating us on their experiences throughout the trip. To read their blog posts (and add comments and prayers), go to www.cnumchaiti.posterous.com.

In addition to Murdock and team leader Phil Bandy (Conference Volunteers in Mission director), the team consists of Bruce Burr, Leslie Carmichael, the Rev. Mark Cordes, Stephen Elliott, Warren McGuffin, Jay Rosenlieb, Suellen Rowilson, and Janet Steele. All but one are scheduled lead their own teams to Haiti in 2011.

Team members assembled in Fort Lauderdale, Florida in preparation for a 4:30 a.m. flight to Haiti today. They are scheduled to say at the Methodist Guest House in Pétionville, which is just outside of Port-Au-Prince, and to work on repairing a parsonage.

Sierra Service Project Reports a Record-Breaking Summer

Sierra Service Project (SSP) has just ended a very busy and successful summer of home repair and youth ministry, according to an organization spokesperson. Volunteer teams of more than 2,000 junior- and senior-high youth, along with adult chaperones from their churches, worked on six reservations in California, Arizona, Nevada, and Idaho, and in Urban Los Angeles. Teams included 628 volunteers from 38 churches in the California-Nevada Annual Conference.

The hardworking volunteers completed 145 projects, ranging from roof installation and building wheelchair ramps, to renovating bathrooms at a community center and taking part in a community garden project.

SSP employed 51 young adult summer staff members to lead the project sites. Three teams of youth and young adult volunteers spent two weeks in Honduras, where they built six houses and learned about the local culture.

The summer of 2010 saw the greatest numbers of volunteers, staff, and projects in SSP's history!

Sierra Service Project is now looking forward to 2011. Next spring, youth groups and campus ministry groups will have the opportunity to participate in Alternative Spring Break projects at the Urban Los Angeles site. For more information and to register, contact Rick at the SSP office, 916.488.6441 or director@sierraserviceproject.org.

Information about 2011 summer projects will be available on September 15, 2010 on the SSP website – www.sierraserviceproject.org. Priority registration opens November 15, 2010.

'Kairos Palestine Document' Site Added to Conference Website

A section devoted to the Kairos Palestine Document has been added to the Israel-Palestine Task Force site on cnumc.org, the website of the California-Nevada Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

The site's introductory material states the document is Palestinian Christians' message concerning the "oppression, displacement, suffering and clear apartheid" they have faced for more than six decades. More than a year in the writing, the document asks the international community to stand by the Palestinian people.

In June, the Israel-Palestine Task Force petitioned the California-Nevada Annual Conference Session, commending study of the Kairos Palestine Document. The task force urges all congregations, boards, agencies, and caucuses to read it and to "join in an appropriate response in covenant with our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land."

The Israel-Palestine Task Force falls under the Conference Board of Missions. To locate it on the website, click on "Ministries" to bring up the Ministries Home Page. There, under "Outreach and Justice Ministry Team," you'll find "Board of Missions" and below it, a link to the Israel-Palestine Task Force site. (You also may navigate to it by clicking on "Boards and Agencies" in the menu on the right side of the Ministries Home Page.)

Clicking on any link to Israel-Palestine Task Force will bring up a right-side menu that includes a link to [Kairos Palestine Document](#).

GBGM Missionaries Itinerating in Cal-Nevada This Fall

The Rev. Joseph and Marilyn Chan, GBGM missionaries serving in Cambodia, are available to visit California-Nevada churches from September 27 to November 8, 2010 to share about their work and ministries in Cambodia.

The Rev. Joseph Chan has been assigned to Phnom Pehn, Cambodia, since 1998 where he has worked with evangelization and church growth. His focus is helping local pastors and church leaders. He provides pastoral care and counseling to pastors and members who are in need of spiritual, emotional, and economic support.

A native of Cambodia, Joseph was one of the educated persons targeted by the Khmer Rouge and imprisoned during the era of "the killing fields." After two years of enslavement he escaped to Thailand with his wife, Marilyn.

Marilyn has been serving in Phnom Penh since 1998 with the Methodist Mission in Cambodia (MMC) as the Women and Music Ministry Coordinator.

Learn more about the Rev. Joseph and Marilyn Chan by reading their biographies on the GBGM website.

- * [Rev. Joseph Chan biography](#)
- * [Marilyn Chan biography](#)

Please contact Laddie Perez-Galang, Conference Secretary of Global Ministries, at lad-dieg@pacbell.net or 925.727.1295 to discuss scheduling the Chans to speak at your church.

Mississippi Churches Thank Katrina Workers

By Lisa Cumbest Michiels*

Hurricane Katrina tore a gaping hole in the side of Mississippi City United Methodist Church in Gulfport. The organ was tossed upside down. On top was a worship book open to the "Hymn of Promise."

That was the hymn the congregation sang in a remembrance service Aug. 29.

The service was one of several throughout the state to give thanks to God and to the nearly 1 million, and counting, volunteers who have come and continue to come to rebuild homes on Mississippi's Gulf Coast.

The United Methodist Mississippi Annual (regional) Conference has hosted more than 160,000 volunteers, who have worked on 12,000 homes and built over 100 new homes, saving struggling Gulf Coast homeowners some \$100 million in labor costs. Many teams have returned again and again, some making as many as 20 trips.

"Across the Mississippi Gulf Coast, there was a deep sense of gratitude that filled United Methodist churches," said the Rev. Bill McAlilly, Seashore District superintendent, of the many worship services held on Aug. 29. "Today, we remember Hurricane Katrina and all those who have brought healing and hope."

Giving thanks together

United Methodists were not alone.

Interfaith sunrise services were held in Pass Christian and Ocean Springs, and in Biloxi the rainy skies cleared just as nearly 100 gathered with local and national officials for a memorial service remembering those who died in the storm.

Students from local high schools read each of the 168 names of people who died as friends and family observed in silence. The names of those who lost their lives and those who are still missing are etched in the Katrina Monument located on Biloxi's Town Green.

The monument was built by the "Extreme Makeover Home Edition" television show. "This monument stands as a quiet reminder of the lost, the found and the moment that changed us forever," Biloxi Mayor A.J. Holloway said.

In Gulfport, Gov. Haley Barbour said, "Katrina didn't change the character and spirit of the people down here, but it let it be seen across the world."

Hands of faith

Members of Mississippi City United Methodist Church gathered with the community for a Katrina Memorial Celebration on the beach.

The Rev. Denise Donnell said it was important for the congregation to host the event for the community to know the church is here for them.

"The church cannot be confined to four walls," Donnell said. "It must leave the building and proclaim to the world that God is good all of the time, and all of the time, God is good!"

In D'Iberville, members of Heritage United Methodist Church held a 90-minute service of remembrance, thanksgiving and celebration, moving from darkness into light. The congregation continues to host volunteers at their church.

Their service included a slide presentation of images before, during and after Katrina, followed by a time for personal witness.

Church member Ella Mae Weems closed her story by saying, "those who responded to help were the rod and staff of God."

The Rev. Wayne Napier added: "God had us lie down in green pastures, led us beside still waters, restored our souls and was leading us in paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. We truly are the rod and the staff of God. We just look like ordinary people."

*Michiels is director of communications of the United Methodist Mississippi Annual (regional) Conference.

For more stories, photos and resources be sure to visit the "Special Coverage: Hurricane Katrina - Five Years Later " website.

'Angels' Mending Lives on Gulf Coast

By Kathy L. Gilbert*

Leona Cousins, 99, has completely lost her sight, but she has no problems recognizing the voices of angels.

One of her angels is Dale Kimball, director of the United Methodist Slidell (La.) Recovery Station, who saw to it that Cousins' home was rebuilt after Hurricane Katrina sent a tidal wave over her home in 2005.

In the past five years, volunteers organized through The United Methodist Church have flooded Louisiana and Mississippi and helped thousands of people like Cousins put their homes and lives back together again.

More than 160,000 volunteers have mucked, hammered, wired, installed and painted their way across Mississippi and nearly 90,000 have braved the mosquitoes, heat and humidity in Louisiana to do the same.

Mississippi has supported the repair of 12,320 homes and built 132 from the ground up. Louisiana has closed the files on 67,741 cases from homeowners needing help.

Divine intervention

The homeowners say all the volunteers are God-sent.

"I never thought I would meet so many nice people this late in my life," said Cousins, a petite woman with a heavy Cajun accent and toasted brown skin.

Her modest white frame house was built for her by her father in the 1950s. A sheriff's deputy found her crying in the rubble of her home after Katrina because she had no money and no one to help her rebuild.

One call to Kimball fixed that.

Kimball stays in touch with many of the people his team has helped in the past five years.

"The last time I saw her (Cousins) she was doing fine, loving her home but has completely lost her sight. She still recognizes our voices, or as she says, the voices of angels."

Friends for life

The thousands who have come to the Gulf Coast offering help have left with lifelong friendships.

The Rev. Marilyn Roeder has brought mission teams from First United Methodist Church, Victoria, Texas, to New Orleans 11 times. She has driven from Victoria to New Orleans every six weeks since 2005 to work on homes and bring in supplies.

While in New Orleans, her second home is with Elvina and Vince DiBartolo. In 2008 she spent her three-and-a-half-month sabbatical at their home.

The DiBartolo family, devout Catholics, evacuated to the small Texas town to escape the storm and met the effervescent United Methodist pastor at a Red Cross shelter.

"Connections and relationships have continued way beyond anything Katrina did," Roeder said. "We always say it is not about the project, it is not about the work, it is about the relationship."

Baptized by a storm

Many historic United Methodist churches and institutions were wiped out by the hurricane. Some have been rebuilt, some have closed and some have been born again in new ministries.

After the water receded in New Orleans, 90 churches in three Louisiana parishes were damaged and 80 pastors were displaced. In 2007, five United Methodist churches - Gentilly, Napoleon Avenue, John Wesley, Felicity and St. Philip - in the New Orleans district were discontinued and abandoned. Jefferson United Methodist closed in 2008.

Ten churches have merged. First Grace, which combined an historically white church with an historically black church, has experienced steady growth since the merger.

Luke's House, a free medical clinic, operates out of damaged Mount Zion United Methodist Church serving a poor inner-city New Orleans neighborhood.

The hurricane that drowned Louisiana smashed and flattened Mississippi. More than 70,000 homes were destroyed. Five years later, 300 families are still on the waiting list at the Mississippi Katrina Recovery Center. Teams have signed up to come through 2012, said Robert Sharp, center director.

All the damaged churches in Mississippi have been repaired or rebuilt except for Leggett Memorial at the Seashore Mission, a homeless ministry, he said. Leggett was struggling before the storm and has opened a chapel in one of the undamaged buildings.

Three permanent recovery centers have been built to house volunteers and to store supplies for rebuilding.

Historic Gulfside Assembly in Waveland, Miss., was washed away. Gulfside was opened in 1923 as a retreat and recreation center for African Americans who were not permitted to use most resorts in the segregated South.

Mollie Stewart, president, said the center is moving in a new direction and soon ground will be broken for an active older adult community that will include independent and assisted-living villas.

"We did a lot of praying and soul searching and came up with this idea because the community needs this type of facility," Stewart said.

An ecumenical healing service will be held on the grounds of the center Sept. 17. United Methodist Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, Mississippi, and retired Bishop Felton May will be joined by religious leaders from other denominations to pray for the Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Alabama, she said.

Love offerings

United Methodists donated more than \$64.5 million to the United Methodist Committee on Relief's hurricane recovery efforts. The final disbursement of funds was released by UMCOR in March. UMCOR also managed another \$66 million contributed from foreign governments in a project called Katrina Aid Today.

Because UMCOR funds are restricted to helping people rebuild their homes, the United Methodist Council of Bishops established the Katrina Recovery Appeal to help rebuild churches and assist with other ministry needs. That appeal raised nearly \$5 million.

But those are just the official numbers, said the Rev. Chris Cumbest, pastor of St. Paul United Methodist Church, Ocean Springs, Miss.

"People brought materials, Home Depot cards, gave money to the local churches they were staying in. ... What you see on paper is just a small bit of what the response has been over the past five years," he said.

"Volunteers from England to Costa Rica to the Philippines and all of the United Methodist annual conferences have been to Mississippi," said Sharp. "The United Methodist connection is fabulous."

People like Leona Cousins will tell you it was the church that was there to care for their physical and spiritual needs.

"While we are most grateful for our local, state and federal systems, we have been reminded time and again that people need spiritual nurture and personal relationships along with the

physical recovery," said the Rev. Don Cottrill, provost for the Louisiana Annual (regional) Conference.

"There is a need that only the faith community can feed."

For more stories, photos and resources be sure to visit the "Special Coverage: Hurricane Katrina - Five Years Later " website.

Donors Respond Slowly to Pakistan Floods

A UMNS Report
By Susan Hogan*

The outpouring of donations following the Jan. 12 earthquake that rocked Haiti is not being repeated for the people of Pakistan fighting for survival in the wake of massive floods.

The United Nations blames donor fatigue and the fact the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis is unfolding slowly. Others say the time of year, the distance from Pakistan to the United States and scaled-down media coverage are factors, too.

Whatever the case, a massive financial response is necessary because the devastation is many times worse, said David Sadoo, an executive with the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

"We are in need of donations to deal with a desperate situation," he said. "The scope of the disaster is immense. But this isn't registering yet in the United States."

Many people assess the size of a tragedy in relation to its death toll, which may also play into the response to Pakistan.

More than 200,000 people died and 1.3 million were left homeless in the Haiti quake. UMCOR raised \$40 million dollars for relief efforts there.

In Pakistan, the death toll is lower -- an estimated 1,500 people. But the numbers run out of their homes or left homeless could reach as high as 15 million or 20 million, according to the United Nations.

"The number of people affected is many times over than that in Haiti," said Sadoo, UMCOR's executive secretary for international disaster response.

UMCOR has given \$105,000 to its ministry partners providing relief to Pakistan, he said.

"The money coming in isn't even close to that now," Sadoo said. "We have a general emergency fund that we're dipping into. We need help, and we need a lot of it."

Spreading the word

The Chronicle of Philanthropy reported that 39 aid groups raised \$560 million in just over two weeks after the Haiti disaster. But U.S. aid groups across the board said that donations for Pakistan were trickling in at a snail's pace.

"The immediate response was slow, but increasing media attention has brought more donations in the past few days," a spokeswoman for Oxfam America told the Chronicle.

Other relief agencies also said a lack of media attention, rather than donor fatigue, was a factor in the slow donor response.

"Donor fatigue is usually not the issue," said Josh Sprunger, a spokesman for the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. The center is based in Indianapolis.

"It usually comes down to two things -- awareness of the issue and being asked," he said. "If people are asked to donate by organizations they know and trust, then they will give."

When Haiti's earthquake hit, it also dominated television news on the front pages of newspapers, Sadoo said. People opened their hearts and their wallets upon seeing the horrific images of the tragedy

"Pakistan has been on the front pages, but it hasn't been the primary story," Sadoo said. "For many Americans, geography may be factoring into the response. Pakistan seems so distant. They don't feel the impact as much."

Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid, board chairman for the Chicago-based Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, shares Sadoo's assessment.

"People responded to the media coverage of Haiti. The images shocked them. They wanted to help," said Mujahid, a Pakistani who moved to Chicago decades ago.

"Pakistan's death toll is substantially lower, so people assume the tragedy is not as bad," he said. "The reality is that the millions left homeless makes it much worse. That impact on human life is only slowly becoming clearer."

For United Methodists, Haiti's earthquake hit home in a personal way, which fueled a desire to help, Sadoo said. United Methodist mission workers were trapped in the rubble. Three of them died.

UMCOR doesn't have an office in Pakistan, but it has partners on the ground there, Sadoo said.

United Methodist giving

The Rev. Rinya Frisbie, pastor of Asbury United Methodist Church in Hood, Ore., said the differences in response may also be due to the time of year.

Haiti's earthquake hit in January, a time when her small congregation of 80 people is likely to be on hand. The Pakistan flood hit in summer during peak tourist time, when church members are taking vacations.

"We may take a collection later, but I don't want do to it now because people are traveling and attendance is low," Frisbee said.

She also said she hasn't had resource materials to provide her congregation about Pakistan.

"It seemed like as soon as the earthquake struck Haiti, The United Methodist Church had videos and stories that you could share with your congregation," she said. "I showed the videos. I showed the photos. They made a huge impression on people. One church member decided to start a fundraising project for Haiti."

The effort - with a community choir and brass ensemble benefit - brought in \$1,300.

The Rev. Carol Thompson, the part-time pastor of Jerome United Methodist Church in Jerome, Idaho, also said the time of year is playing into people's response to Pakistan.

"We've been so consumed by the spud booth we run at the county fair every summer that I think we stopped paying attention to the world for a moment," she said.

The congregation's website, however, asks members to remember Pakistan's flood victims in prayer. Maybe it's time to start thinking about doing more, she said.

"We contributed to Haiti in an incredible way," she said. "We're just a small church of 75 members. Many people are retired and on fixed incomes. Yet, we contributed over \$500."

[UMCOR resources on Pakistan are available here.](#)

*Hogan is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

Keys to Building Vital Congregations

Topical preaching, varied worship styles, effective lay leadership and small groups.

These are the things United Methodist congregations can do right now to become more vital and strengthen the denomination, say members of the Call to Action Steering Team.

The 16-member team, which includes clergy and laity, met Aug. 23-25 in Nashville, Tenn., to begin developing recommendations on how the church can become more effective in making disciples and reverse decades of declining U.S. membership.

The team based its discussions on the findings of two studies it commissioned from independent researchers. The reports, released in July, included an "Operational Assessment of the Connectional Church" and a "Congregational Vitality" overview.

Illinois Area Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, a team leader, said the group plans to present "robust recommendations" about the church's operations to the denomination's Council of Bishops and Connectional Table in November.

While the group irons out the details, team members stressed that data shows local churches can take certain steps without any action from the bishops or General Conference, the denomination's top legislative body.

"We know that there are vital congregations, and we know it's possible to have more," said Fred Miller, a consultant who has been guiding the team's process. Miller is the president of The Chatham Group consulting firm and a member of First United Methodist Church in Chatham, Mass.

Churches of all sizes

For the "Vital Congregations Research Project," the consulting firm Towers Watson measured vitality in terms of attendance, growth over five years, professions of faith per member and annual giving per attendee.

The firm analyzed data from 32,228 United Methodist churches in North America and classified 4,961 congregations, or 15 percent, as "high-vital" congregations.

While larger churches tended to be more vital than smaller churches, the firm found "high-vital" congregations in all sizes, in all ethnic groups, in every jurisdiction and in rural, urban and suburban settings. In addition, the firm found "high-vital" congregations that are theologically conservative and theologically liberal.

What these churches tend to share in common are what the study identified as 16 "drivers" of vitality that fall under the broad categories of pastoral effectiveness, worship, lay leadership and small groups.

Pastoral effectiveness

According to the study, effective pastors are those that develop, coach and mentor laity in leadership roles; influence the actions and behaviors of others to accomplish change; work with congregations to achieve significant goals and provide inspirational, topical preaching.

The research also showed pastoral tenure contributes to congregational vitality. Whether a pastor is effective is usually apparent by the third year. If a pastor is effective by then, this success is likely to grow over time with the highest level at 10 or more years.

Worship

Churches with contemporary and traditional worship services also tend to be more vital. The research found that traditional worship services should include topical preaching and contemporary worship services should be multi-media.

The study also found that contemporary services work best when the music echoes what people hear on pop radio. Such services can use traditional hymns, but they had better have a back-beat.

Lay leadership

Effective lay leadership is also key to vital congregations. The most vital churches had 25 percent to 50 percent of attendees in leadership during the last five years.

Churches also have rotating lay leadership with people sharing their gifts in a variety of ways over time. People do not serve year after year in the same position. Effective lay leaders also demonstrate vital personal faith. They participate in disciplines such as regular prayer and Bible study, attend weekly worship, give proportionally, join in mission opportunities and share their faith with others.

Small groups and programs

Effective small groups can come in a variety of shapes, the research found. They include Bible studies, women's groups as well as groups organized around missions or shared interests. Vital congregations also tend to have separate programs for children and youth.

Moving forward

Judy Benson, team member and lay leader of the Oklahoma Annual (regional) Conference, said she plans to incorporate the study's findings on effective lay leadership at church leaders' workshops.

"We're going to do a big emphasis on how to help a person who wants to be a leader in a church be more creative," she said. "And there's no reason more churches can't do the same thing."

Team members said just getting the church to focus on these factors would be a significant step forward.

"The primary responsibility of everybody in all parts of our system - clergy, laity, general agencies, conferences - is to order our ministry around the drivers of vitality," Miller said. "Because if we are a more vital church, we will make more disciples of Jesus Christ."

California-Nevada Young Adults Conference: Making Connections

By Andrew Davis
Young Adult from Rancho Cordova UMC

On Saturday, August 14, a group of young adults in their 20s and 30s from the California-Nevada Annual Conference came together for a day of fellowship, discussion, and making connections at Japanese UMC in Sacramento. Coordinated by Kelsey Papst (Sacramento St. Mark's), the conference was a daylong event formed by, *and led by*, young adults to make connections with each other and find ways about being involved in the church and addressing some of the issues that young adults face in their faith journey.

In her introduction about the event, Kelsey Papst wrote:

"So often, people in their 20s and 30s feel lost in the age gap at their local churches. Too old for youth groups, members in their 20s become busy and move on from their childhood congregations. First-timers looking for a church home find few friends near their age who are at the same place in life. Attrition rates are high and many congregations are aging."

Kelsey added that the overall hope of the conference was to "encourage a sense of belonging and renew faith in those who so often start to feel less connected" – which was a large part of what the conference was about.

During the time together, there were various workshops that talked about devotion and spending time with God amidst a busy schedule; inclusion in the church and the Reconciling Ministries Network; evangelism; tithing; dealing with times when friends and faith collide; and making connections with other religions.

In addition to the workshops, there was also time to worship God, with a message by the Rev. Motoe Yamada, Holy Communion, and a time of prayer and worship at the end of the day.

The conference was an overall success, many new friendships and connections were made, and we look forward to more events in the near future!

"Thank you" to Kelsey for organizing this, to [Conference Young People's Ministries Director] Kelly Newell for her support, to Bishop Brown for the video greeting, and to Rev. Motoe Yamada and Sacramento Japanese UMC for opening their doors to this great event.

The Gospel According to ... WHO?

Temple United Methodist Church in San Francisco will launch a Bible study titled "The Gospel According to the Simpsons" on Wednesday, September 8, 7-10 p.m.

"Come see America's most animated family through the lens of Scripture," writes Temple pastor, the Rev. Schuyler Rhodes.

Expect "a time of friendship and great discussion," he adds.

The study will continue through mid-October. For more information visit the Temple UMC website at <http://www.templeunitedmethodist.org/>.

The church is located at 65 Beverly Street, San Francisco, CA 94132.

Adopt 'Wellbriety' During National Recovery Month

In 2009, the California-Nevada Annual Conference adopted a resolution designating September "National Recovery Month."

Doug Sibley, a member of the Conference Board of Church and Society, reports that White Bison, Inc., an American Indian non-profit organization (and the home of Wellbriety, a Native American effort to support becoming free from dependence on drugs and alcohol) is asking each tribal government, organization, and grassroots community group to support National Recovery Month by adopting their (or a similar) proclamation.

Download [proclamation form](#) (PDF format).

For more information about White Bison, Inc., visit its website at www.whitebison.org/.

Interfaith Elder Abuse Summit Scheduled in Cupertino in September

An interfaith summit on elder abuse will be offered Tuesday, September 21, 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Quinlan Community Center in Cupertino, California.

The summit is free; lunch will be provided but RSVPs for lunch are requested.

There will be separate sessions for clergy and lay leaders. Highlights include:

- The Many Faces of Elder Abuse and Neglect
- The DNA of Compassion
- Caregiving and Receiving
- Clergy Panel

Quinlan Community Center is located at 10185 North Stelling Road, Cupertino, CA 95014. Some parking is available but carpooling is highly recommended.

Register at rsvp@protectingourelders.net or leave a message at 650.269.25989. For more information, including itinerary, download **flyer** (in PDF format).

UMNS Briefs

Rethink Church Has New Web Address

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - Congregational resources for the Rethink Church advertising and welcoming campaign have moved to a new website address: umcom.org/rethinkchurch. The website that previously housed congregational resources, RethinkChurch.org, will become the primary seeker site that is featured in Rethink Church advertising, beginning this fall.

"Research shows that RethinkChurch.org resonates most strongly with the seekers we are trying to reach with our denominational advertising," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, chief executive of United Methodist Communications. "This website address reinforces the message we want non-United Methodist seekers to take away from our advertising - that we are rethinking church."

Rethink Church Bible Welcomes Seekers

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - Beginning in October, United Methodist Communications is offering a free New Testament to people visiting the Rethink Church campaign website. The Rethink Church Common English Bible (New Testament) is a special edition that features a seeker-sensitive introduction to the Bible and to The United Methodist Church.

"The Rethink Church Edition is a powerful tool for evangelism," said the Rev. Larry Hollon, top executive of United Methodist Communications. "It introduces the Bible and denomination to seekers with sensitivity to their worldview, in welcoming language." [Further information about the Rethink Church advertising and welcoming campaign is available here.](#)

Agency Offers Resources to Honor Laborers

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — Americans this weekend will celebrate such advances as the end of child labor and the 40-hour work week. At the same time, many Americans are still struggling with unemployment. The United Methodist Board of Discipleship has resources for churches to honor workers and all seeking work. The resources include a special blessing and suggested readings for "[A Service of Holy Communion for Labor Day.](#)"

September is National Hunger Action Month

BIG ISLAND, Va. (UMNS) - September is "National Hunger Action Month," and the Society of St. Andrew has resources available to help congregations become more aware of the needs of the poor and hungry. The resources offered by the hunger-relief ministry include a prayer calendar, litany, bulletin insert, sample sermons and hunger fact sheets. They are available [here](#).

Bread for the World Sunday Oct. 17

WASHINGTON (UMNS) - Bread for the World, a Christian organization supported in part through the United Methodist Advance, has resources for churches interested in participating in Bread for the World Sunday on Oct. 17. The group organizes Christians to write U.S. decision-makers in support of efforts to eradicate hunger in the U.S. and overseas. Resources include a study of Luke 18:1-8, a special litany, bulletin inserts and offering envelopes. Spanish-language resources also are available. Information is available [here](#).

Workshop Focuses on Black Clergy Health

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C. (UMNS)—An opportunity for African-American clergy to evaluate their health and well-being is slated for Sept. 27-28 at the Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center. With the theme "Wanting to Heal and Be Healed" (John 5:1-9), the self-care covenant workshop encourages pastors to care for themselves in order to bring healing to others. Participants will learn stress-management techniques, discuss recommendations for daily healthful living, assess current health behaviors and choices and develop a self-care covenant with an accountability plan. The [program](#) is coordinated by the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

Consortium Offers Online Theological Courses

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) - United Methodist theological schools will offer 11 online continuing education classes for clergy and laity beginning in the fall semester. The Online Continuing Education Consortium aims to provide theologically sound, financially affordable and easily accessible continuing education programs. All 13 of the United Methodist theological schools are expected to participate. Five seminaries are offering classes this fall. An online catalogue and links to each theological school offering classes is available at www.gbhem.org/continuingeducation.

The Instant Connection is published each week by Jane Horstman on behalf of Cate Monaghan, Interim Director of Communications for the California-Nevada Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

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