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Bishop's Letter

Annual Conference Reflections



Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Two months after the conclusion of our 172nd Annual Conference in Northern Illinois, I continue to thank God for the amazing witness and spirit that permeated our gathering in St. Charles. I have heard from many of you following the conference; your words of praise and encouragement, your stories of blessing and moving moments during our gathering have been a gift.

On the last day of conference, as the youth led us in worship - even though the Mega Center's temperature was frigid - our hearts were strangely warmed. The diverse, young people who led music, read scripture, and witnessed to us encapsulated our work of building unity in the midst of our commitment to Christ. I truly felt the theme of this year's conference, "Together We Serve United By Love", embraced in many ways as we worshiped, learned, celebrated and legislated for the future.

The gifted leadership of Ray Buckley, as our Bible Study Leader, offered us insight into our own souls as we open our hearts to God. Ray held a mirror up to our hearts, calling us to see God's gifts within. Ray challenged us, sharing the pain and brokenness of the Native American people and our responsibility and role in restoration. The passion of Ray's witness brought many to tears, cleansing our souls and offering us a moment for new beginnings.

The Memorial Service's recognition of those who have gone before us set the stage for the great cloud of witnesses who surround our work, reminding us of the ways in which we are called to honor their sacrifice with our commitment to Christ. The energy and enthusiasm of this year's ordination class was contagious filling the mega center with electricity. The amazing witness of a joint choir from St. Mark United Methodist and Flossmoor: South Suburban Korean United Methodist spoke volumes about our diversity, our resources, our passion, our partnerships and our promise. A special visit and performance from the Clergy Spouse's Choir of Seoul, South Korea as they traveled to Wisconsin to give leadership to that annual conference, was a blessing.



Choirs from St. Mark United Methodist and Flossmoor: South Suburban Korean United Methodist joined together to sing at the ordination service.

The witness of two youth during the Harvest 2020 presentation; worlds apart, one from far northwestern Illinois and the other from the southwest side of Chicago, were connected by their revitalized experience of worship and faith. Their testimony gave us further hope for the future in the unfolding work of Harvest 2020. The presence of Bishop Javier Rojas, reminded us of our sister relationship with Bolivia where faith is rich even though the country is poor. The commitment and growth of the church in Bolivia put our riches into perspective and helped heal us of our tendency to think through a lens of scarcity.

Countless awards for the achievements of dedicated servants and stories of vitality spoke volumes about our passion and commitment. I was honored to be the recipient of this year's Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns award. My passion to bring all peoples of faith together in respect with mutual support has been enriched by the diversity and embrace of the Northern Illinois Conference.

The year ahead promises to be one of continued blessing. We are moving ever more boldly into our fundraising efforts to benefit the Harvest 2020 journey. In these efforts, we will foster the development of more places for more people to witness and experience the healing, hope-filled, joyous love of Christ.

I am excited about our journey and pray that you to feel the pulse of the Spirit in your heart, in our churches and undergirding our witness. With God's help we continue to take bold steps into an uncharted but faithful future.

Help make September 11th a day of HOPE!

Several Northern Illinois Conference churches are planning to make the 10th anniversary of September 11th a day of hope. First UMC of Park Ridge, New Hope UMC of Chicago and First UMC of Des Plaines together are organizing HopeFest 2011 on 9/11.

Instead of Sunday services, these congregations will be participating in a day of service and activities which will include tributes to local first responders, as well as blood drives, family friendly CPR classes, disaster response/relief class, food pantry collections, clean-up and repair projects and elderly care for local nursing home residents.

"The idea is that we each can do our part individually or collectively to reclaim the day as a day of hope and be in service with the community," said event coordinator Al Bartel. "It's our hope the community will engage in service with us too to make a difference."

The day will begin with an ecumenical memorial commemoration to remember those who died in the World Trade Center/Pentagon attacks as well as honor first responders and emergency room staff. Organizers say this is an opportunity for solemn remembrance, thankful celebration, and HOPE-affirming volunteer action.



Most of the activities will be held at Maine East High School at 2601 W. Dempster St. in Park Ridge. Advocate Lutheran General Hospital will host a KIDS Fair on a variety of safety issues for children and teens. A blood drive sponsored by LifeSource will be held at Maine East High School and New Hope UMC of Chicago. Other plans include visiting seniors at Bethany Terrace in Morton Grove, letter writing to troops and putting together thank you kits for local police and fire personnel. Closing ceremonies with music and entertainment will also be held at Maine East High School to wrap up the day's events.

"It's good to know that my family and I can each do something to make a difference in our community as volunteers. It seems to me that's part of what good citizenship is all about," said volunteer Ed Hansen.

If you're interested in volunteering and taking part in HopeFest 2011, visit www.hopefest.net.

Churches Spend "Day of Hope" in Service

The following churches: Christ UMC, Deerfield, North Shore UMC, Glencoe, Northbrook UMC and Glenview UMC are spending 9/11 in a "Day of Hope" by being in service outside their church's four walls.

Volunteer activities include: cleaning various city parks, singing at nursing homes, tending to Biblical and community gardens, helping clean and organize a resale store and food pantry, making Linus blankets, joining a prayer group or a knitting group and making get well cards. Other opportunities include: cleaning, repairing, and painting several facilities that serve the poor or homeless.

There is something for everyone of all ages and abilities. Nursery services for little ones will be provided at most churches. Each participating church will have a 15 minute service starting at 10:00 a.m. For most projects, you will leave after the service from the church and with the team you wish to choose to participate. The singing groups will go to afternoon services at the nursing homes. Sign ups begin August 15. For more information contact: Janet Ferrone, Glenview UMC, 847-729-1015, jferrone@glenviewumc.com.

September Safe Sanctuary Training

The Northern Illinois Conference Safe Sanctuaries Committee is offering a one day training for local church leaders and volunteers on **Saturday, September 17** at First UMC Elgin from 9:00 a.m - 3:00 p.m. Who should participate? Church leaders, Trustees, Sunday School Teachers, Youth Leaders, Volunteers, and anyone who works with children, youth, and vulnerable adults are invited.

Participants will be trained in safe and appropriate procedures for keeping children, youth and vulnerable adults safe in all church environments.

Additional information will be shared regarding the NIC Safe Sanctuaries plan, Cyber Safety procedures for all church members, and insurance information that can protect your church, leaders, and volunteers.

The \$20.00 registration fee will cover the training, a box lunch, your \$5 background check and training materials. Individuals or church groups are encouraged to register by calling the Outdoor and Retreat Ministries office at 800-642-2267 or email [Connie Colon at orm@niccamp.org](mailto:orm@niccamp.org).



Missouri Youth Help in a Heatwave

by Anne Marie Gerhardt

Despite record breaking heat in Chicago, 170 youth and adults from the Missouri Conference (regional) helped spruce up the Marcy-Newberry Association's site at 1073 W. Maxwell Street from July 18-23. The volunteers from 11 churches across Missouri traveled by bus to Chicago for their annual conference-wide youth mission trip. The group spent the week cleaning, painting, weeding and planting while trying to stay cool!

The volunteers also painted inside the transitional housing apartments to help prepare for their reopening. But some of the youth didn't see it as all work. "It's fun to take vacation in the summer and go to a different city, but here you're actually doing something productive and doing something for the community," said youth volunteer Emily Hartung-Gilbirds of Good Shepherd UMC in Kansas City, Missouri.

Tanner Kirksey, 16, from Wesley UMC in Independence, Missouri spent one day digging out and learning how to separate hostas. "It's just so fun to give because you get back a lot of it," said Kirksey. "I think it builds character and I just enjoy it!"

The Marcy-Newberry Association has served residents of the West Side for over 126 years providing pre-school childcare and after school services as well as a safe haven for teens and young adults. Associate Executive Director, Rev. Margaret Ann Williams says the agency depends a great deal on work groups coming and helping throughout the summer.

"It's a tremendous help," said Rev. Williams. "You're saving dollars, elbow energy and they're doing things that are so needed for the population we serve. We have so many children and families that depend on Marcy-Newberry for childcare, food, clothing and other services."

Bev Boehmer, the Missouri Conference Director of Youth and College Ministries says they began conference-wide youth mission trips more than 10 years ago to provide an opportunity to smaller churches which may not have enough participants or resources to plan their own mission trips.

"Our goal was to make youth mission trips available to any youth in the conference and as it has grown, we're now reaching all sizes of



ABOVE: Tanner Kirksey from Wesley UMC in Independence, Missouri helps garden outside in record breaking heat. BELOW: Youth from Good Shepherd UMC in Kansas City, Missouri helped clean up trash and debris.

churches," said Boehmer.

Henry McDaniel, Youth Director at Gashland UMC in Kansas City, Missouri, brought a group of nine youth and five adults. "The goal is really to get as many of the kids out to be the hands and feet," said McDaniel. "They learn teamwork and the kids bond a lot. But it's taking what we learn Sunday mornings and actually going out and helping others in communities that are less fortunate than us."

"I think these youth are capable of so much more than we ever give them credit for," said Boehmer. "The skills they're learning will last a lifetime."

They'll definitely remember this as one of the hottest mission trips they've ever participated in, as temperatures soared into the upper 90's with a heat index well above 100. To beat the heat, the youth made sure they drank lots of water, took frequent breaks and planned on jumping into Lake Michigan at one of the Chicago area's beaches.

Redline Ministries Summer of Activity



by Breanna Dahl

Chicago has been a hub of activity as groups participate in mission trips with Red Line Ministries. Red Line Ministries, a Harvest 2020 partnership ministry of United Church of Rogers Park UMC, Epworth UMC, and Granville Ave UMC, has welcomed groups from as far away as North Carolina and as close as suburban Downers Grove. These groups have made a tremendous impact on the city of Chicago through their service.

Highlights include repackaging over 8,000 lbs of oranges at the Greater Chicago Food Depository, working on a suburban organic farm to learn about where our food comes from, unloading over 10,000 lbs of food to stock the shelves of the food pantry at Care for Real, helping run a free children's camp for over 80 children at United Church of Rogers Park, and so much more.

In the evenings, the groups gathered together to reflect on their day and do some learning. This summer's theme has been Micah 6:8. Learning activities have taught about how we as Christians are called to work for justice in the world around us. These experiences all take place in the context of the vibrant city of Chicago, so many groups have taken advantage of this setting and have spent time seeing the sites of the city.

Those who participate have returned home having experienced a world that is different than their own. The hope is that they take their experiences with them and allow them to influence their lives to do what God has called us, "to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8)."

Red Line Ministries is now accepting



Volunteers from the Sauk Valley Cluster painted, packaged oranges and stocked food pantry shelves.

reservations for fall, spring break, and summer 2012 trips. Check out our webpage at <http://www.redlinemissions.com> or contact Breanna Dahl at breanna.dahl@gmail.com or 773-234-4273 for more information.



Youth 2011: More than a meeting

by Ann Mitra*

The theme for this year's Youth 2011 from July 13–17 was "More Than"—and indeed it was. As we entered Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, we basked in a different ambiance that surrounded us; the energy was remarkably dynamic as other youth from local churches joined us as we anxiously waited for registration.

Worship, Workshop, L.A.B.s and Bible Studies were the core components of the event. Every night, 3,700 people from 42 states and 274 churches gathered at a music hall as we were led to worship by Kristian Stanfill. Workshops ranged from one entitled "Princess and Frogs" to another called "Intentional Discipleship". All of which were always open invitation.

Bible Studies were led by Pastor Olu Brown and it progressed from knowing God's love to loving yourself and sharing that love with your neighbors. L.A.B.s, which stands for Learn, Act and Believe, are smaller groups which introduced us to Koinonia Community, relationship with God, and the numerous Spiritual Pathways.

But what I really took away from the gathering was implying the idea of "more than" in our lives.

Worshipping God is more than just singing along with a praise band.

It is more than going to church every Sunday.

It is more than attending Bible Studies or conventions.

We are more than what we wear or how we style our hair.

We are more than our possessions.

We are more than the color of our skins.

We are more than what we think we are.

God's plans for us are more than what we have for ourselves.

It is more than what we have ever imagined.

It is more than what we know now.

There is more than what our life entails at this current moment.

God is more than what we may think or know about him.

He is more than what we feel He is.

It is because of His Love that we are more than just sinners in this world—we are children of God.

*Ann Mitra is one of three youth from Edison Park UMC who attended Youth 2011. Youth from FUMC Park Ridge, Community South Elgin UMC, Humboldt Park UMC, St. Andrew UMC, Carol Stream and Centennial UMC, Rockford also attended.

*Youth 2011 is a project of Young People's Ministries, a division of The General Board of Discipleship.



Edison Park UMC youth, Danelle Boroja, Dan Edward Baroja and Ann Mitra took part in a "Stop Hunger Now" workshop during Youth 2011. The goal was to package 10,000 dehydrated meals for the international hunger relief organization. At the end of the day, all the volunteers doubled their efforts packaging up to 20,000 meals for crisis situations and in-school feeding programs in developing countries around the world.

Take Part in Plumblin Tour 2011

The Plumblin Tour is taking off October 9–12, 2011. This experience for high school-aged youth will take place in New York City, with most sessions to be held at the Church Center for the United Nations. This year's experience is entitled "PeaceGen: Becoming a generation of peace in a culture of violence."

The Plumblin Tour is a youth seminar that connects Christian faith and social justice. It is a time for considering how our relationship with God calls us to act in this world, especially on behalf of those who experience violence. When asked about the theme for this year, Rev. Michael Mann, one of the organizers, said, "we chose this emphasis on violence to coincide with the 10th anniversary of 9/11. But the truth is," he continued, "youth in our Conference experience violence in so many ways every day. It happens when they are bullied, when there is violence at school, or when home isn't a safe place to be. And that happens all over our Conference."

This fall's Plumblin Tour, sponsored by the Office of Connectional Ministries, will talk about all aspects of how youth encounter violence. Organizers indicate that the tour will also ask how violence intersects with race, economics, and gender to expose some of the roots of violence. Yet the organizers also ask participants not just to identify where pain is felt but "how can we become a generation of peacemakers?"

Past experiences have also included group-building activities and experiences of New York City. Groups have taken a tour of the United Nations, eaten at diverse restaurants, seen a Broadway show, and experienced worship together. According to Rev. Mann, "those who come should expect to have fun, share together, and maybe help all of us know what it means to live out God's justice as a Christian community."

The total cost for the trip, \$650, includes airfare, lodging, all meals and all program costs which includes a UN tour. Partial scholarships are available. Past participants have told stories of holding fundraisers for months in their church, including car washes and smoked fish sales, to afford to go. Churches have also been very willing to help. If you're interested in applying, email Lonnie Chafin (lchafin@umcnic.org) or Michael Mann (mmann@umcnic.org) or visit www.umcnic.org/plumblin.



Cameras, Contemplative Tools in a Digital Age

A special retreat titled, Cameras, Contemplative Tools in a Digital Age, will bring mystics at heart together at the Reynoldswood Retreat Center in Dixon on **Saturday, October 8 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.** Planned by the NIC Spiritual Formation Committee, participants will have the opportunity to spend a part of the day exploring the earth through a lens as it relates to our spiritual life.

We will be led by Marianne Saig, OSF, a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Joliet. A Spiritual Director, Retreat Facilitator, Teacher and Photographer, Sister Marianne will guide us as we consider the difference between a snapshot and a photograph. We will focus on the important parts of our lives in nature. Sister Marianne shares, "Images are all around us and images within can come together as we reflect on a deeper level with our cameras."

The cost for the day is \$30.00 which includes lunch and healthy snacks. Participants are invited to bring a camera of their choice as the burnished reds and golds at Reynoldswood will invite a snap of the shutter! Deadline for Registration is **September 26**. The event brochure and registration form can be found on the conference website under "Ministries-Spiritual Formation". Cokesbury will provide related books for the day. Come, discover and share!

Come Explore the China Bible

The Protestant Church in China is growing at an unprecedented rate. Today, an estimated 80–130 million people are practicing Christians in China. Although this is one of the fastest growing Christian communities in the world, few stories of this dynamic Christian movement have been shared with the world.

Our community has an extraordinary opportunity to learn more about this growing, changing landscape of Christian faith from the Bible Ministry Exhibition of the Protestant Church in China. A traveling exhibit, entitled “Thy Word is Truth”, is coming to Chicago from **October 12–16, 2011**. The free exhibit will be open daily to the public from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple located at 77 W. Washington St., Chicago. An opening ceremony will take place on **Tuesday, October 11 at 4 p.m.** in the Temple’s sanctuary.

Through 42 panels of texts and pictures and 350 displays of bibles, paintings, handicrafts, models and other artifacts, this showcase of



treasures gives an account of the Bible Ministry in China of yesterday, today and tomorrow. You will learn how the Bible was brought into China, how it has been translated, published, distributed, used and loved by the Chinese people.

To enrich the experience, indigenous artisans from Yunnan Province will perform three times daily during the exhibition (10:00 a.m., 12:15 p.m. and 5:00 p.m.). These performances

will offer a sense of Chinese traditional culture and the ways in which Christianity is expressed from the indigenous perspective.

A delegation of 23 people from China will include the President of the China Christian Council, Reverend Gao Feng, the Chairman of the Jiangsu Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church, Reverend An Xinyi and the President of the Yanjing Theological Seminary, Reverend Gao Ying.

During their stay in the Chicago area, in addition to the Bible Exhibition, three seminars looking at Church Life, Theological Education and Social Service Ministry in China and the United States will be offered and open to the public (for free).

The exhibit is organized by the China Christian Council and the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (CCC/TSPM) which work to expand dialogue and partnership with Christians around the world. This exhibition is designed to share the history and movement of rapidly growing ministries in

China.

“The story of the Protestant church in China is an inspirational story of perseverance, growth and miracles. I look forward to the Bible Ministry Exhibition this fall as the China Christian Council shares this story with the people of United States. Learning about faith and witness in other countries deepens our relationships and strengthens the faith of us all,” said Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, Northern Illinois Conference United Methodist Church.

To learn more about the Exhibitions Tour of the United States visit www.umcnic.org/china-bible or www.bibleinchina.org.

The Chicago exhibit is made possible through the partnership of civic and religious groups across the city including the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the United Church of Christ, the Chicago Center for Cultural Connections, the Chicago Bible Society and the Greater Chicago Christian Broadcast Ministry.

Groups Encouraged to Visit Exhibit

Many confirmation classes enjoyed the recent interfaith bus tour and incorporated it into their curriculum. The China Bible Exhibition will present a new invitation to include this history in fall confirmation classes. Delegates from China will be on-hand to interpret each display for those confirmation students, giving them a richly storied background to what God has done and continues to do across the globe. Come on **Saturday, October 15**, to join with youth from across the Conference for a day of worship, learning, and fun.

Adult study groups can also experience the China Bible Exhibition as a time to enhance their fall learning opportunities. As your adult study groups begin to form, consider making this a way to enhance that group formation and study of scripture. Hear what the scripture means to Christians beyond your own context. Let that

encounter with another Christian culture inform your discussion and deepen the way you study sacred scripture and the way you put it into practice.

Mission committees, United Methodist Women (UMW), and United Methodist Men (UMM) can come to Chicago for a time to learn about the history of the Christian faith in China. With China Bible Society delegates on-hand at each display, their stories will be a way for those who are mission-minded to understand and interpret the faith in a new way. The China Bible Exhibit presents an opportunity for us to grow in our understanding of how the church is in mission throughout the world.

For more information please contact Rev. Michael Mann, Assoc. Dir. of Mission & Advocacy at 847-931-0710 ext. 20 or email mmann@umcnic.org.

- Confirmation classes can come, especially on **October 15**. Youth from across the Conference will be there at 10 a.m. Learn about the history of the Christian faith in China. Join other youth for a day of worship, learning, and fun.
- Adult study groups can use this as an invitation to study, learn, and grow in their faith.
- Mission committees, UMW circles, and UMM can hear the story of how the faith has spread, including meeting delegates from the China Bible Society. Spread those stories to your congregation and beyond.

School of Evangelism to Explore Christian Outreach in a Post-Christian Culture

by Jay Carr

In a society which is increasingly postmodern, post-Christian, multicultural and multi-religious, how can faithful church members and pastors fulfill the United Methodist mission statement to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world? As our denomination continues to lose members, can we develop new behaviors for making disciples that are not driven by institutional survival? As the Church’s influence upon society continues to diminish, is there an alternative to the fear-driven agenda of reversing these trends?

These are the questions that the NIC School of Evangelism will be exploring on **Saturday, October 15**, at Cornerstone United Methodist Church in Elgin, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Leading the conversation about religion

and culture will be this year’s keynote speaker, Martin Marty, the Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of the History of Modern Christianity at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Marty

is a student of and expert on the relationship between religion and culture. The Martin Marty Center at the University of Chicago was founded to promote “public religion” endeavors. Professor Marty has put considerable effort into the Master of Divinity program at the Divinity School and into teach-



Martin Marty

ing for public ministry. He writes the “M.E.M.O.” column for the biweekly Christian Century. He is also the editor of the fortnightly Context, and authors the Marty Center’s weekly e-mail column, Sightings.

The author of more than 50 books, Marty has written the three-volume *Modern American Religion* (University of Chicago Press). Other books include: *The One and the Many: America’s Search for the Common Good*; *Education, Religion and the Common Good and Politics, Religion and the Common Good*, and with photographer Micah Marty, *Places Along the Way; Our Hope for Years to Come; The Promise of Winter*; and *When True Simplicity Is Gained*. His *Righteous Empire* won the National Book Award. His most recent book is *The Mystery of the Child*, of which he says, “It is not a

how-to book—It is also not a book of psychology, or sociology, or educational theory. It is only a seasoned reflection of a grandfather.”

For the first time in the School of Evangelism’s six year history, this year’s workshops will be offered on two tracks: basic and advanced. Basic workshops will include topics like: 12 Things Your Church Can Do Right Now to Reach New People; How Your Congregation Can Benefit from “Walk to Emmaus” and “Alpha”; and Worship as Evangelism. Advanced workshops will include: Evangelism and Social Justice; Advanced Faith Sharing; and Closing the Back Door. Participants will have the opportunity to attend two different workshops.

Registration materials will be mailed to churches by the end of August. For more information email SoE@umcni.com.



ABOVE: The hollow and empty communities were filled with thousands of tons of household goods and debris. LEFT: Thousands of foundations stood unknown, unclaimed, with no house numbers.

100 days after the earthquake and Tsunami: Journey to a Land of Disaster and Hope

by Rev. Im Jung

When the winter was about to thaw out, warm energy hovered around deep in the soil and cherry trees prepared to sprout new leaves. However, on March 11, 2011, something deeper in the ground called. An earthquake churned and burst open. The calm ocean suddenly became a tsunami, pushing a tower of salt water into the communities along the 250 miles (500 kilometers) of Northeast coast in Japan. I was glued to the television and followed every news report about what was going on. Right away, I joined millions of people in prayer.

With unspeakable sorrow in my heart, I went to work in Nashville with the Upper Room Ministries and the General Board of Discipleship. When I entered the employee entrance, the first thing that caught my eye was a little display table with a Japanese origami nativity scene. That silent symbol called me to stop and be attentive to each nativity figure. As I looked at them one by one, they came alive and at the same time, each figure disappeared from my own imagination like the tsunami which swallowed people, animals, and houses. Soon there was nothing on the table but the empty city. I wept. I wept over the thousands of lives gone, thousands of lives with no home, and thousands of lives filled with pain and sorrow. That silent origami nativity scene spoke to me even louder than the word to go and be with the wounded land and people, bring comfort and healing.

During my prayer and discernment, I heard the call; the same call that twice sent me on the Katrina mission trip to Mississippi and Louisiana five years ago. As my calling grew strongly in compassion, the nuclear plants in Japan were boiling dangerously. My family and friends were joining me in prayer with great concern. I was not even sure what this meant to my journey to Japan. During my prayer, I encountered word from the John 1:38. The disciples asked, "Teacher, where are you staying?" The Teacher answered, "Come and you will see." This saying empowered me to focus on "come and see." Ever since the March 11 tsunami and earthquake, for 100 days, I had been meditating on these verses and praying about how the Teacher is going to show me where He is staying. See what? What is he going to show me? Is he going to show me where He is staying? I was not only curious but also excited.

In April, in the midst of devastation, as every surviving cherry tree brought new blossoms of life and new hope to the whole country of Japan, I had a blossom of new hope. The Teacher revealed himself through my friend. He sponsored me with words of encouragement and some gifts of finance. In May, as the cherry branches began forming their small fruits, my journey to Japan bore small fruits. Amazingly, one pastor connected me with a pastor in Japan, then this pastor introduced me another pastor. Then one day, a

stranger, a pastor, appeared to me in Chicago. He introduced himself and talked about the pastor that I was about to meet in Japan a week later! What a miracle! I was about to faint!! Indeed, the Teacher clearly revealed himself in both strangers and friends. In June, as the cherry trees brought forth their colors and ripe fruits, my preparation for the journey brought forth peace in mind and gifts of finances to match my passion. It was an amazing experience how the pieces came together in the last moment. Even the gift of 100 copies of the tri-language (English, Korean, Japanese) Upper Room devotional magazine was ready to board with me to Japan!

Japan, indeed, is a beautiful country. From Tokyo to Yamagata, I



was impressed to see how the sky, mountains, farmland, and houses were so well balanced. Highways were full of cars and trucks. I could not tell that anything was wrong in this country. It was so peaceful. I arrived and stayed at a reasonable hotel in Yamagata city. I rested well the first night and in the morning, I went to breakfast. Everyone was so kind and nice to me. But I almost felt like I was blind and deaf because I could not read any Japanese nor understand. But I was not afraid because I had a good guide. Rev. Myeounghsin Lee, a mission-oriented person, who visited and served many disaster sites already, became my host and guide. After breakfast my six-day journey to Northeast coast, Sendai areas began. What am I going to see, Teacher?

Throughout the 250 miles of the Northeast coast of Japan, once upon a time, the sky and the sea were blue, and mountains and fields were green. People and animals were content. The coastlines weaved between mountains, fields, and the sea. It was God's most beautiful

natural tapestry, but after March 11, the sky and sea were grey, and the mountains and fields were empty. People and animals were swept away by the wave.

The tsunami swallowed not only houses, shopping centers, factories, restaurants, hospitals, schools, city hall, children and grownups, men and women, puppies and cats, cows and pigs, chickens and ducks, trees and crops, but also their entire history.

Miles of crumbled roads, twisted railroads, and broken bridges forced us to detour. Hundreds of fields and farmlands became salt lakes. Thousands of mountain trees turned reddish-brown and began to die because the salt water enveloped them. In the midst of this disaster, there were unspeakable odors and the sound of bulldozers. On top of this, the crows flew circles around and around, wailing and moaning for thousands and thousands of souls who died and disappeared.

Indeed, once upon a time, these communities were full of life with people, animals, cars, and buildings; yet today, 100 days after the earthquake and tsunami, they were empty and only silence and fear exist.

"Teacher, where are you staying?" The Teacher replied, "Come and you will see." I followed his call. "Teacher, I came, but I cannot see you. Where are you?" I called. I looked up the dark gray sky but the Teacher was not there. I looked around the empty lots but the Teacher was not there. I looked carefully inside of the broken buildings, but the Teacher was not there.

Each step I took, gradually I saw ownerless broken plates and dishes, forks and knives, pots and pans, cups and glasses, baseball gloves and golf clubs, toys and CDs, blankets and baskets, piles of smashed cars and boats. I wanted to pick them up and return them to the owners. The hollow and empty communities were filled with thousands of tons of household goods and debris. Thousands of foundations stood unknown, unclaimed, with no house numbers. I came to see where the Teacher was staying. However, at this time, the teacher was not in a city full of buildings and people or happiness and joy, but the Teacher was staying in the midst of fear and despair.

The remaining broken buildings in these communities symbolized the Teacher's heart torn open. I cannot describe this scene with human words. My body, mind, and spirit were crushed. The pain and suffering was so great that my bones, skin, and heart ached. Only streams of tears were my true language and the Pilgrim's Prayer was only prayer in my lips and heart unceasingly through the Northeast coastlines. "Lord, have mercy on Japan. Teacher, have mercy on your people. Have mercy on your land."

Rev. Im Jung continues her reflections in Part II of "100 Days after the Earthquake and Tsunami" in our September issue of the Reporter and can be found online at www.umcnic.org.



Conference United Methodist Men Host 2011 Spiritual Conference

All NIC United Methodist Men and Clergy are invited to a UMM Spiritual Conference the weekend of **September 16-18** at Williams Bay, Wisconsin. The emphasis the year will be on *Spiritual Formation*. The leaders of the Conference will be Dr. Jerry Haas, who is a primary consultant in the development of *The Upper Room's Worship* book, co-editor of *Rhythm and Fire: Experiencing the Holy in Community and Solitude* and Dr. Norval Brown, a leader of retreats, revivals, and individual spiritual direction and current pastor of Thornton and Park Forrest UMC.

Rich Rubietta, who established the Abounding Ministries program, will lead us in music. Rich has led many worship services in churches throughout our conference. His message through music is inspiring and compelling. Saturday evening, Alleluia Quartet will provide a music program along with various other musicians from many of the districts.

Workshops on Mission, Wesleyan Quadrilateral, Letters from Dad, and Finding the Meaning in Retirement will also be held. This year's attendees will have the opportunity to participate in two of the workshops being offered. The workshops are designed to stimulate our thinking and strengthen our walk with God.

This is the 51st year for the Spiritual Congress and over the years men have given witness to God's work in their lives. Each pastor and lay members to Annual Conference have been provided at least one registration form. If you do not have one please contact Steve Nailor, Conference President at sd-nailor@comcast.net or George Bush at gbushdos@gmail.com or your district president or go to www.nicumm.org to print a copy. Invite a friend and spend a relaxing weekend in one of the most beautiful settings in our area.

Steve Nailor, President of the Northern Illinois Conference United Methodist Men

NIC JOB OPENINGS

A number churches have job openings.

Visit www.umcnic.org/jobs for a detailed listings.



From left to right: Linda Frana, UMM President Rita L. Smith and Missionary Clara Biswas of Bangladesh serving in Cambodia. Biswas presented at the 2011 School of Christian Mission on July 22 and was given a special UMW Bible.

2011 School of Christian Mission Highlights

by Ann Genther

On four of the hottest and wettest days of the summer, the School of Christian Mission sponsored by the Northern Illinois Conference United Methodist Women was in session at Judson University in Elgin. The school committee and mission team members as well as the study leaders arrived on Wednesday, July 20, 2011 to prepare for the three different options to come.

Early Thursday morning, 71 participants from across the conference began to arrive. They participated in three one-hour sessions on the three study topics—The Journey: Forgiveness, Restorative Justice and Reconciliation led by Diana Facemyer; Haiti: Challenges and Hopes led by Steve Good and Julie Fleurinor; and Joy to the World: Mission in the Age of Global Christianity led by Karen Hewitson. They also enjoyed lunch and participated in a plenary session ending in worship. Bishop Jung and some of the NIC Conference staff were present for part of the session.

As they were leaving Judson, 49 weekend participants arrived for the longer session. Some stayed on campus and some commuted if they lived close by. They all were a part of the spiritual growth study (The Journey) and also chose to participate in one of the other studies. During the weekend, they had a chance to learn from Clara Biswas, a missionary to Cambodia, attend a social action session concerning the issue of gambling, take part in a Haitian Festival and learn about being green by reusing and recycling. Many visited the

resource room, learning center and displays as well as join in fellowship with others over meals and between sessions.

On Saturday, the third group of participants arrived along with 17 Korean language speakers and 15 Spanish lan-

guage speakers for their sessions. Elizabeth Loredo-Rivera led the Spanish spiritual growth study, Eun-Hye Choi led the Korean spiritual growth study and Soon Sun Lee led the Korean geographical study on Haiti. They were able to participate in the Haitian Festi-

val as well.

In all, 178 persons were a part of the School of Christian Mission, either as a participant or as a leader. It was a challenging, up-lifting, eye-opening, wonderful opportunity to learn and grow. Plan to join us next time.



Bishop Hee-Soo Jung talked with residents and team members of the School of Christian Mission which was held July 21-24 at Judson University in Elgin.

NIC 2011 Appointments

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung makes formal announcement of appointments set within the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church. United Methodist Clergy are appointed on a year-to-year basis; usually from July 1st until June 30th. Appointments are effective July 1, 2011 unless otherwise noted. As of July, 2011:

July Announcements:

- Jim Bell (Elder, Libertyville: Assoc) to Harvard/Alden 8/1
- Barbara Morgan (Elder, Chicago: New Gresham) to St. Mark Associate, 8/1
- Delian Stone (346.2) Chicago: New Gresham, 8/1.
- Penny Thomas (Retired) to Ivanhoe—Interim 7/15
- So Young Kim (Local Pastor) to Chicago: New Hope 7/15.
- Brenda Morris (Local Pastor) to Stockton: Wesley 8/1.
- Jum Sook Kim (346.1) Manhattan 7/15.
- Preston Price (Retired) to Grace of Logan Square—interim 7/15
- Mark Scholl (Local Pastor) to Grace of Logan Square—1/15/12
- Darius Thomas (Retired) to Chicago: Green Stone 7/15
- Larry Hilkemann (Retired) to Winfield 9/1
- John Rathod (Retired) to Carpentersville: Trinity 7/15

Early Response Team Training

Would you like to be one of those trained United Methodists responding with UMCOR? Then you are someone who will want to attend the Northern Illinois Conference Early Response Team training on **Saturday, October 29 from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.** at the Conference program office, 217 Division St., Elgin.

The mission of an early response team is to provide a caring Christian presence in the aftermath of a disaster, under very specific guidelines that enable a team to be productive and caring while causing no further harm or being a burden to the affected community.

Authorized UMCOR staff will teach us the why, when and how of responding to disasters in our local communities as well as elsewhere in the US and globally.

SPACE IS LIMITED TO 20. COST: \$35.00 includes: notebook, lunch, t-shirt, and Safe Sanctuary background check. Contact: Bruce Nelson orm@niccamp.org



Stewardship Conference: Funding Your Church's Vision

The United Methodist Foundation will host Lovett H. Weems, Jr., Director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership for the 8th annual conference-wide stewardship event on **Saturday, August 27** at Wheatland Salem UMC, 1852 95th St., Naperville. This year's theme is "Funding Your Church's Vision".



Lovett H. Weems, Jr.

Once again the Foundation will offer access to the seminar via live-stream video at these locations:

- Chicago: St. Mark UMC
- Freeport: Faith UMC
- Rochelle UMC
- Roscoe/Machesney Park: Hilltop Ministries Center
- Park Ridge: First UMC
- Zion: Memorial UMC

Dr. Weems and the Lewis Center are working to build a new vision for leadership that is grounded in faith, informed by knowledge and

exercised in effective practices. The Center, located at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington DC, serves as a resource to churches and leaders through educational programs, research and publications.

Costs for the seminar are as follows:

\$40—Main Event: Wheatland Salem UMC (includes light breakfast and lunch)

\$110—Group Rate for the Main Event:

Three or more from the same church

\$25—Satellite location

\$70—Group Rate at Satellite location

Child care (on request), Cokesbury display of materials and lunch/snacks will be available at the Main Event (Wheatland Salem UMC) site in Naperville only. Those attending a satellite location may bring a sack lunch or go to a nearby restaurant during the lunch break. Clergy attending the entire event will receive 0.5 CEU credit.

Register online by visiting the UM Foundation website at www.nicumf.org. For hardcopy registration materials, contact the registrar, Carolyn Cook at the Foundation office, 312.346.9766, ext 104. Registration deadline is August 20.

A Summer Internship of Culture and Social Justice

by **Wayne Rhodes*** and **Anne Marie Gerhardt**

Two young adults from the Northern Illinois Conference are spending their summer learning about social justice. They're working in Washington D.C. under the Ethnic Young Adult (EYA) Summer Internship program of the United Methodist General Board of Church & Society (GBCS).

"It's just been great to see faith in action," said Urpi Pariona, a Latin American college graduate from St. John's United Methodist Church in Oak Park. Pariona is interning with Interfaith Worker Justice, which educates, organizes and mobilizes the religious community in the United States on issues and campaigns to improve wages, benefits, and conditions for workers. "Last year I was looking for a job," said Pariona, who recently graduated from Yale University majoring in political science. "God puts you in certain places, now I'm here in D.C. helping other people find jobs."

20 year old Justin Cain, an African American college student also from Oak Park is interning at the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, the nation's oldest organization dedicated to ending capital punishment. "I'm thoroughly enjoying my experience in D.C.," said Cain. "Working here has given me the facts and language to support my position against the death penalty."

Young adults are selected annually from the five ethnic minority caucuses of The United Methodist Church (UMC) to participate in the internships. To qualify, applicants must be passionate about social justice and active in the denomination, according to the program's director, Rev. Neal Christie, GBCS assistant general secretary for Education & Leadership Formation. Fourteen interns were selected this year from 11 United Methodist annual (regional) conferences. Three of the interns are from the Congo Central Conference.

Christie, a 1984 EYA intern himself, said the internship is the United Methodist Church's only leadership development program with a public policy and advocacy focus that reaches out to under-represented racial and ethnic young adults of color.

"This summer we have students from across the United States as well as three studying at



Justin Cain

Urpi Pariona

Africa University," Christie said. "This is the first time we have had such significant involvement across the global church."

The 2011 interns include four African Americans, two Hispanic/Latina Americans, four Asian Americans, one Pacific Islander and three Africans. The diversity has given Cain a greater appreciation for people's differences. "I've learned how to live with people from different cultures," said Cain. "It's taught me to be a better person and to be more accepting."

This year's placement sites included the Global Campaign for Education, the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (NCADP), Churches for Middle East Peace and National Council of Churches of Christ-USA (NCC).

Pariona hopes her internship will open up doors and opportunities to continue working on social justice issues. "I'm sure looking back a year or two from now, I'll see how God put me in a position to help other people," said Pariona. "I've learned that that religion and faith can have power in public policy discussions." Pariona is still on the job hunt and Cain says he will be entering the seminary after he graduates from Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Ark.

More information about the EYA program can be obtained from Rev. Christie at 202-488-5611 or nchristie@umc-gbcs.org. Application details are available at www.umc-gbcs.org under the "Leadership Development" tab.

Wayne Rhodes is the communications director for the United Methodist General Board of Church & Society (GBCS).

Shaping a Life of Significance for Retirement

A one day conference for people who are recently retired or are contemplating retirement. (not just clergy) Presented by co-authors R. Jack Hansen and Jerry P. Hass.

When: Friday, September 16
9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Where: Kingswood UMC
401 W. Dundee R1d.
Buffalo Grove, IL

Cost: \$40/single or \$50/couple
(includes one book and lunch)

Register and pay online at www.kingswoodumc.com, click on the donate link then retirement seminar or contact the church office at office@kingswoodumc.com or by phone at 847-398-0770.

How to Contact Us

Please submit items at least two weeks prior to publication date. Include your name, address, phone number and name of local church. Space is limited.

For editorial content, subscriptions and address changes:

Anne Marie Gerhardt,
Director of Communications—
agerhardt@umcnic.org
(847) 931-0710, ext. 14
217 Division St.
Elgin, IL 60120

The Rev. Christopher Pierson—
Director of Connectional Ministries—
cpierson@umcnic.org