



InterLink

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Featuring *Worldwide News* from UMR Communications

PERIODICALS

Volume 9, Number 10

November 26, 2004

For the sake of transforming the world through Jesus Christ, our Conference vision is: Each pastor a spiritual trailblazer! Each church a transforming and inviting community of faith!

NCD
Put me in coach!
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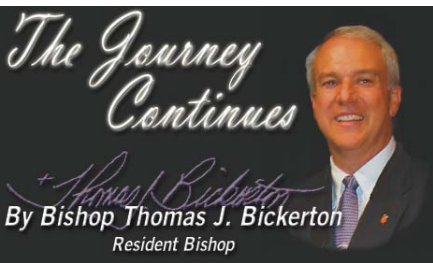
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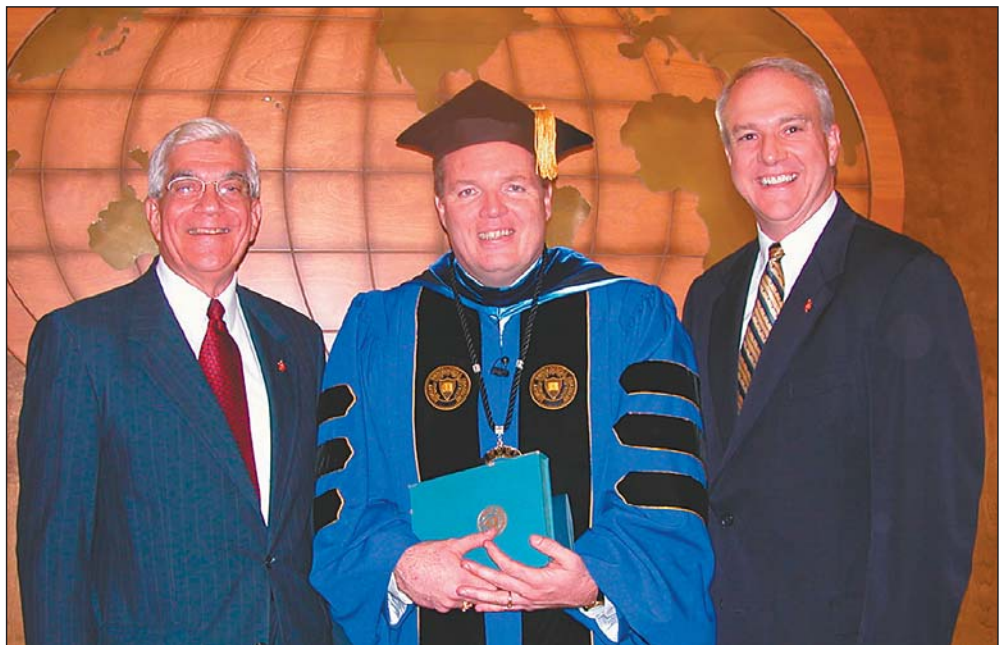


These days, I am often asked, "Would you say a few words to us?" or "Would you pray for us?" It's true what I was told at New Bishop's Orientation: Always have a sermon ready in your hip pocket.

When I am asked to pray I find myself going back to familiar words and phrases that I have used for years. One of those familiar phrases is, "We thank you God for heartbeat and breath that has brought us to this moment."

Those are not idle words. They are for me a dose of daily reality. They are profound reminders of the basic gifts of God that we in the human race take for granted each day of our existence. When we woke this morning, the miracle of life presented itself to us in the form of a heart that was beating without having to be plugged in and lungs that were breathing on their own without a "jump start" from anyone.

See BISHOP BICKERTON/page 4



Jackie Campbell
The Rev. Jeffrey Greenway, center, was installed as president of Asbury Theological Seminary on Nov.11. Bishops George Bashore, left, and Thomas Bickerton participated in the weeklong festivities. [See the stories on page 6.]

2005 Confirmand Tours of UM Center Set by Bishop

Bishop Tom Bickerton has announced the dates for the spring tours of the UM Conference Center by confirmation students in Cranberry Twp.

Bickerton will continue the tradition of the tours offered by the bishop's office and Conference staffers dating back to Bishop George Bashore. They have grown in popularity to become nearly a rite of passage for confirmands.

The two-and-a-half-hour tour will include a talk with Bishop Tom (ask those burning questions), and presentations by Conference staff.

Group reservations are limited, so call soon to Judy Drozynski at 800-886-3382, ext. 320.

Friday, March 11	10 am & 1:30 pm
Monday, March 14	10 am & 1:30 pm
Thursday, April 14	10 am
Friday, April 15	10 am & 1:30 pm
Saturday, April 16	10 am
Monday, May 9	10 am & 1:30 pm
Tuesday, May 10	10 am & 1:30 pm

Bishop Declares War on Poverty Key to Revitalizing Church

By Jackie Campbell, Staff Writer

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton has issued a "call to arms" for United Methodists to join a renewed War on Poverty.

"If poverty were truly addressed in our culture and by our government then we would be hearing about health care reform, Social Security, economic reforms, and more viable opportunities for providing quality education for our children," the Bishop told more than 100 Pittsburgh-area United Methodists at the annual meeting of UM Church Union earlier this month.

"I believe that if the poor were advocated for and ministered to in

more intentional and sincere ways in our local churches, we would be gaining a more viable answer to the question of evangelism in the 21st Century, turning around decades of membership decline, transforming and revitalizing local church ministries, and finding ourselves intimately involved and present in our cities," he said.

Citing a recent Newsweek article written for the 40th anniversary of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, the bishop noted that the effort resulted in government initiatives such as Head Start, expansion of the Food Stamp program and reform in health care for the needy.

"It worked!" he said. "Poverty rates fell and living standards among the poor rose."

Today, however, one in eight people are poor, he said. There is a dire need for overall healthcare reform, the future of Social Security is questionable, the cost of education is staggering and, since 2002, 1.3 million more people are living in poverty.

"The biggest difference between 40 years ago and today," Bickerton said, "is that there is no call to arms by those in leadership." As a new leader of the Church, he said, he is issuing that call to United Methodists.

See POVERTY/page 4

Western PA United Methodist Events

All meetings are at the Conference Center unless otherwise noted. To add or change announcements, contact Sharika Batiste at 800-886-3382, ext. 258 or e-mail umcal@wpaumc.org. Find more details in the Events section of the Conference website, www.wpaumc.org.

November 2004

- 26 UM Conference Center Closed
 27 Johnstown Dist. Council on Ministries Meeting, Belmont UMC, 9 am
 28 **Conference Keeping Doors Open Sunday & Offering**
 28 **United Methodist Student Sunday & Offering**

December 2004

- 1 Conference Steering Committee, 10 am
 2 Equitable Compensation Committee Meeting, 10 am
 2 Camping & Retreat Ministries Finance Committee Meeting, 3:30 pm
 2 Camping & Retreat Ministries Committee Meeting, 5:30 pm
 3 Butler Dist. Clergy Family Christmas Party, Riverview UMC, Beaver Falls, 6 pm
 3 Johnstown Dist. Clergy Christmas Party, Ebsburg UMC, 6 pm
 3 Washington Dist. Clergy Christmas Party, Grace UMC, Coal Center, 6 pm
 3 Greensburg Dist. Christmas Party, Vandergrift UMC, time TBA
 3 Pittsburgh Dist. Clergy & Family Christmas Party, Albright Community UMC, 5:45 pm
 3 Pittsburgh Dist. Clergy Children Overnighter, Albright Community UMC, 9 pm
 4 Franklin Dist. Christmas Party, Mercer UMC, 11:30 am
 4 *Christmas on the Mountain*, Wesley Woods, 6 pm
 11 Conference Archives & History Committee Meeting, 9 am
 11 Volunteers in Mission Leader Training with NEJ Coordinator, 9:30 am
 13-14 Interim Ministry Seminar, 9 am
 17 13-County Flood Response Meeting, 10 am
 18 Conference Camping Summer Program Staff Interviews, 9 am
 20 Keystone UM Federal Credit Union Board Meeting, 9:45 am
 21 Pittsburgh Dist. Comm. on Ministry Meeting, First UMC, Pittsburgh, 9:30 am
 24 UM Conference Center closed
 25 **Christmas**, UM Conference Center Closed
 28 Jumonville Site Staff Interviews, Jumonville, 9 am
 31 **New Year's Eve**, UM Conference Center Closed

January 2005

- 1 **New Year's Day**
 4 Spiritual Formation Committee Meeting, 9 am
 6 Franklin Dist. Ministry Team Meeting, Christ UMC, Franklin, 7 pm
 7-8 Jumonville Men's Retreat, Jumonville, 7 pm
 7-9 Jumonville Confirmation Retreat, Jumonville, 7 pm
 8 Spiritual Leadership Team Meeting, 10 am
 10-11 Interim Ministry Seminar, 9 am
 10-13 Olmsted Manor
 13 Outreach Ministry Team Meeting, 10 am
 13 *Developing Leaders in a Post-Modern Culture*, CCN Teleconference, UM Center/Charter Oak-Greensburg/Christ-Erie/First-New Castle/Lanes Mills, 11:30 am
 14-16 Jumonville Confirmation Retreat, Jumonville, 7 pm
 14 Conference Youth Ministry Team Meeting, Cabot UMC, 7 pm
 15 Conference Cooperative School of Christian Mission Meeting, 9:30 am
 17 **Martin Luther King Jr. Day**, UM Conference Center Closed
 20 Conference Trustees Meeting, 11:30 am
 20 Conference Supportive Ministry Team Meeting, 6:30 pm
 22 Christian Singles Fellowship, 2:30 pm
 22 *Growing Congregation Healthy Habits for the 21st Century*, Conference Leadership Event, Weis Library UMC (near Erie), 8:30 am

- 25 Keystone UM Federal Credit Union Board Meeting, 9:45 am
 25 Conference Council Meeting, 6:30 pm
 26 Cabinet Meeting, 9 am
 27 Cabinet Meeting, 9 am
 28 Cabinet Meeting, 9 am
 28-30 Wesley Woods Ski Weekend, Wesley Woods/Peek 'n Peek
 29 Conference Camping & Retreat Ministries New Deans Meeting, 8:30 am
 29 Johnstown Dist. Committee on Ministry Meeting, Trinity UMC, Portage, 9 am
 30 **Conference Camping Sunday & Offering**

February 2005

- 1 Butler Dist. Committee on Ordained Ministry Meeting, Harmony-Zelienople UMC, 8:30 am
 5 *Growing Congregation Healthy Habits for the 21st Century*, Conference Leadership Event, Faith UMC, Delmont (east of Pittsburgh), 8:30 am
 9 **Ash Wednesday**
 10 Franklin Dist. Committee on Ministry, Christ UMC, Franklin, 8:30 am
 10 *Becoming a Church that Transforms Children to Spiritual Champions*, CCN Teleconference, UM Center/Charter Oak-Greensburg/Christ-Erie/First-New Castle/Lanes Mills, 11:30 am
 10 Conference Board of Pensions Meeting, 7 pm
 13 Lay Ministry School, Harmony-Zelienople UMC, time TBA
 16 Cabinet Meeting, 9 am
 17 Cabinet Meeting, 9 am
 17 *Overcoming Overload*, CCN Teleconference, UM Center/Charter Oak-Greensburg/Christ-Erie/First-New Castle/Lanes Mills, 11:30 am
 17 Supportive Ministry Team Meeting, 6:30 pm
 18 Cabinet Meeting, 9 am
 19 Butler Dist. Night on the Town, Kaufman House, Zelienople, 6pm
 19 *Growing Congregation Healthy Habits for the 21st Century*, Conference Leadership Event, Evangelical UMC, Brookville, 8:30 am
 20 Lay Ministry School, Harmony-Zelienople UMC, time TBA
 21 Keystone UM Federal Credit Union Board Meeting, 9:45 am
 22 Conference Council Meeting, 6:30 pm
 27 Lay Ministry School Meeting, Harmony-Zelienople UMC, time TBA
 27 Johnstown Dist. Help Shop, Portage HS, 2:15 pm

March 2005

- 1 Cabinet Meeting, 9 am
 4 Camping & Retreat Ministries Dean's Meeting, 8:30 am
 5 Camping & Retreat Ministries Dean's Meeting, 8:30 am
 5 *Growing Congregation Healthy Habits for the 21st Century*, Conference Leadership Event, Sheffield UMC (near Warren), 8:30 am
 6 Lay Ministry School, Harmony-Zelienople UMC, time TBA
 7 Franklin Dist. Ministry Team Meeting, Christ UMC, Franklin, 7 pm
 8 Conference Board of Pensions Meeting, 7 pm
 12 Conference Spring Youth Rally, place TBA, 11 am
 12 Children's Ministry Team Meeting, 10 am
 13 Lay Ministry School, Harmony-Zelienople UMC, time TBA
 14 Confirmand Tour of the UM Center, 10 am
 14 Confirmand Tour of the UM Center, 1:30 pm
 17 Conference Board of Trustees Meeting, 11:30 am
 17 Supportive Ministry Team Meeting, 6:30 pm
 21 Keystone UM Federal Credit Union Board Meeting, 9:45 am

InterLink



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Submissions - Articles, pictures, church ads, story ideas, and letters to the editor, are welcome. Stories and pictures, with labeled subjects, may be submitted by e-mail, mail, fax, or hand-delivery to the Conference Center. Include contact name and daytime phone number with submissions. Materials returned upon request.

InterLink reserves the right to reject or edit submissions for content, spelling, grammar, and length. Views expressed are those of the individual and not necessarily those of the Conference or the *InterLink* staff.

Submission deadlines for the *InterLink* are two Mondays before the issue date. Material arriving late may not be included. For example:

Edition Date	Submission Deadline
December 10, 2004	November 29, 2004
December 24, 2004	December 13, 2004

News, opinions, and editorials in the *UMC Worldwide News* pages are those of the United Methodist Reporter, Dallas, TX.

Bishop Backs Natural Church Development

By Jan Woodard, Staff Writer

Expect to hear more about Natural Church Development (NCD) and taking steps to become "healthier congregations" in the coming year in the WPA Conference. Bishop Thomas Bickerton, the Conference Council and Conference Steward Larry Homitsky back the effort and over 100 churches here have already invested time and effort in the NCD process under the leadership of church consultant Sharon Schwab.

The Rev. Schwab says Natural Church Development is a hopeful way for churches to move toward becoming healthier congregations through assessing and addressing their strengths and weaknesses.

She said the primary motivation for NCD is to reach people for Christ. Currently less than 50 percent of Americans identify themselves with any church. "Churches need to be healthy to reach the harvest. Think in terms of every person moving from being part of the harvest to being a harvester," she said.

"NCD is a particular passion I share with you," Bishop Bickerton said, speaking to 35 clergy and laity trained recently as NCD "coaches" at the United Methodist Center. "I'm eager to get behind this effort with you. It's extremely important for our Conference."

He said the church is at a crossroads. "There's a cry from the local church for some direction. There are right answers out there - NCD is one of those right answers," said the bishop, who used the program in West Virginia before coming to Western Pennsylvania.

Developed by studying initially 1,000 and now 30,000 churches worldwide,

NCD is a process through which congregations can evaluate their "health" in eight areas that have been scientifically determined to be essential to a church's well being. The results of the survey enable congregations to learn their "minimum factor."

Each congregation develops its own plan to move toward becoming healthier in their weakest area.

"It's such a practical way for churches to discover what their minimum factor is," Bishop Bickerton said. Natural Church Development was used on the cabinet level in WV. Cabinet members here will receive training in January.

The vast majority of churches are surprised to learn what their "minimum factor" is, what area would benefit most from a church wide focus, Schwab said. More Conference churches have been weak in Passionate Spirituality than in any other characteristic, followed by Need-Oriented Evangelism.

"They can't believe it, whatever their minimum factor is," she said. "When Loving Relationships shows up, they're shocked. They think they love each other, so they assume this is one of their strengths."

Other characteristics relate to small groups, empowering leadership, church structures, spiritual gifts and inspiring worship. If a church's health is above average in all eight areas, it is a growing church. Trained coaches will help encourage churches through the NCD



Carolyn Holland

The Rev. Sharon Schwab, Conference church consultant, leads a Natural Church Development coach training event.

process. More coach training is planned for the spring.

Natural Church Development stresses growth principles found in nature, which depend on partnerships between God and his people. Like plants requiring water, nutrients and sunshine, churches need to have certain things to help them grow healthy. "We don't have to do it all," Schwab stressed. "Remember, God will do his part as we do our part."

Homitsky said the Conference is lifting up the NCD model because it helps churches thrive. "This is one of the most exciting tools used by churches across the nation," he said. Workshops on *Growing Congregations: Healthy Habits for the 21st Century* will be offered eight times from January to April at locations throughout Western PA to focus on the eight areas vital to healthy congregations.

NCD seminars also will be offered around the Conference to further explain the process. A Natural Church Development survey costs \$150. A \$1 booklet explains the basic concepts to congregations. For more information, visit www.umhelp.org or contact Schwab at 800-886-3382, ext. 225 or umhelp@wpaumc.org.

Connection Links UMs, Flood Survivors

By Jan Woodard, Staff Writer

Thanksgiving is a good time to celebrate our worldwide United Methodist connection and thank God for the way it links congregations together in faith and service. After a disaster strikes individuals, churches and communities can feel isolated, hopeless, and alone, but our UM congregations continue to pitch in to help survivors feel God's presence with them.

In response to September's flooding, the Conference-wide financial appeal for flood relief has now surpassed the original goal of \$100,000 and a long-term recovery plan is in motion to help churches and people over the months and years it takes for their lives to return to normal.

"So far so good," according to the Rev. Rick Nelson, Conference Disaster Response coordinator. Long-term recovery teams are now in place in Allegheny, Washington, Beaver, and Butler counties and the Meadville and Emporium areas. Two regional committees will help fill the gap for other areas.

Nelson trained about 150 people in five casework-training sessions and has two more scheduled. Two paid, part-time casework managers were hired and a third volunteers. Five part-time people are in Beaver County. The Conference was contracted by Beaver County Mental Health to provide disaster outreach services.

Conference Volunteers In Mission Coordinator Fred Watts prepared a list of about 50 Conference churches that sent volunteers to help flood survivors or served as recovery centers.

To help, contact Watts at 412-731-4329 or fcwatts@mcihispeed.net or Nelson at 724-347-5163 or nelsonrb@adelphia.net.

Teach in Russia this Winter

The Conference's Russia Initiative again seeks persons interested in teaching at the Pedagogical Institute in Syktyvkar, Russia, this coming winter. Teach students in the English department on American culture, religion in American society, the role of The United Methodist Church in world missions, and other topics of your background. You need not speak Russian.

The teaching mission should run February 22 to about March 17. Costs will range from \$2,000-2,500, depending on accommodations.

For information, contact Dennis Henley at 724-887-8534 or via email at revh47@hotmail.com.

Volunteers Needed for Clergy Women Celebration

A task force for the Celebration of the 50th anniversary of Full Clergy Rights for Women has organized into seven work areas and is seeking volunteers to help with small tasks for a 2006 event. Contact the Rev. Sharon Schwab at umhelp@wpaumc.org or 800-886-3382 ext. 225 to become involved with one or more of these subcommittees:

- ❖ Media
- ❖ Worship
- ❖ Table Display
- ❖ Visual Piece-Groundbreakers
- ❖ Contributions
- ❖ Retreat
- ❖ Local Church Celebrations

Keystone Credit Union Resource Packets Still Available

Now that membership in Keystone United Methodist Federal Credit Union (KUMFCU) has been opened up to all United Methodist churches and their members and staff, some churches in the Conference have asked for information for display around their facilities. In response, Keystone UMFCU has a "church pack" with useful tools and valuable information on services and membership the only credit union created by and for United Methodists in Western PA.

Each church pack contains an announcement that can be copied and used in bulletins and newsletters, posters for display, and Keystone membership brochures. There is even a brochure holder to display the brochures.

Some churches got church packs at last annual conference. If you need a pack, contact Keystone at (800) 886-3382, ext. 257 or umcredit@wpaumc.org.



Health Insurance Remains at '04 Levels

The Conference Board of Pensions, at its November meeting, established 2005 health insurance rates that require no increase in amount billed to local churches this year. The amount billed to local churches per month remains at \$1,200 and will include both medical and dental benefits.

"The board of pensions welcomes this rate hold and is glad to confirm that there will not be any rate adjustments to our churches and active group participants for 2005," said the Rev. Mark Stewart, chair.

The board also will maintain the same rate as 2004 for retirees in the Security Blue Medicare Replacement group program. The rate billed to each participant for 2004 is \$50 per month. Rates for retirees who have chosen to be in the AARP Medicare Supplement program are set by AARP, which will announce any adjustments directly. The costs of both Security Blue and the AARP Medicare Supplement are subsidized by the Conference board of pensions' funds.

UM Foundation Honors Fund Donor

PITTSBURGH --The United Methodist Foundation of WPA honored Frances Sperry of Fallowfield UMC in Atlantic, Franklin District, at its annual Founder's Day Luncheon and award ceremony Nov. 5.

Each year for the past 15 years the board of directors of the Foundation has chosen an individual whose long-term leadership and commitment to the mission of the Foundation has been exemplary.

In 1984, Sperry and her late husband met with the Rev. Fred Leasure, executive director of the Foundation to discuss how they could create a trust fund to provide annual income to support various missions. At the time, they also wanted to transfer their ownership in their farm to their two sons. By making a gift of non-voting stock in the farm, executing a buy-sell agreement with the corporation and the Foundation and taking care of a few other legal technicalities, the trust was funded, the stock was transferred and a new source of mission money was created.

Each year Sperry sends the Foundation a list of the missions to support that year from the income generated by the trust. Over the years, funds in excess of \$100,000 have been distributed to various missions within the US and abroad. She has also used the Foundation to establish gift annuities for each of her six children and to make other special gifts to ministries that have captured her interest.

Past recipients of the Foundation's award include Bishops Roy C. Nichols and James M. Ault, as well as Leon E. Hickman, retired counsel for Alcoa, Dr. James L. Carraway, Conference Council director, Robert M. Stewart, past chair of the Foundation, and William L. Steel, a former staff member.

In presenting the award, J. Cyrus Wolverton, chairman of the Foundation board remarked, "The Founders' Day Luncheon has become one of the high moments in the life of the Foundation. It is a time for us to celebrate the commitments of dedicated individuals that have provided the Foundation a legacy of which we can be proud. We represent a portion of that Biblical vision of "the cloud of witnesses". Together we have the opportunity to model stewardship as a response to our discipleship and enable the support of the mission of the church of Jesus the Christ.

For information on the United Methodist Foundation, visit www.umfoundation.org.



Courtesy UM Foundation of Western PA

From left, the Rev. Fred Monk, pastor of Fallowfield UMC, Frances Sperry, Fallowfield member and awardee, and J. Cyrus Wolverton, chairman of the Foundation's Board of Directors.

Recognize the Holy in Everyday Ordinary

From BISHOP BICKERTON/page 1

Thomas Moore wrote:

I think we would be able to live in this world more peaceably if our spirituality were to come from looking not just into infinity but very closely at the world around us – and appreciating its depth and divinity.

I love Moore's words. Every day provides us an immeasurable gift of "depth and divinity." There is depth in the sense that every day there are miracles all around us and deep within us. There is divinity in the sense that everything we see and possess is a gift from God.

The problem that has developed, most significantly in our own country, is that we have been seduced to believe that life is "ordinary" or "insignificant." How many times have you heard the words, "I'm bored" from your children or grandchildren? How many times have you been tempted to say it yourself? When presented with an opportunity, often we say, "No thanks. Been there; done that; got the T-shirt." We have a need to be entertained. Life is not progressing unless we are presented with a "new and improved" model. It has no meaning unless it's extra-ordinary!

That's the mindset - new models, new shows, new versions - out with the old and in with the new. And in the midst of all of this newness, God is forgotten, the mysterious is explained away, and the ordinary events pass with little or no recognition of the holy in our midst.

Once, three wise men were told to hide God so no one would ever find Him. They sat down at a conference table to ponder the possibilities. The first wise man said God should be hidden on the farthest star. But the second wise man

feared rocket ships would one day reach that star and God would be discovered. "Let's put God at the bottom of the deepest ocean," he said. The third wise man thought for a time. Finally he spoke, saying that he could foresee the day when food would be grown on the ocean's floor to feed the world and then God would be found. "The only place we can hide God so that no one will ever find him again is inside each person," the wise man said. "No one will discover God there."

God is inside of you - found each day in the ordinary events of your heartbeat and breath. It's up to you, though, to process what God has done for you and give that revelation expression in your word, witness, and action. It begins with recognition of the holy in the midst of the ordinary.

God is inside our churches, too - found each week in the hearts of Christians seeking peace and holiness. Our congregations must express the message inside the church through ministries and lifestyles that go outside the church. But this requires a daily recognition of the holy in the ordinary.

It's like the man in a crowded church service who refused when asked to take off his hat. Neighboring people were perturbed. So was the pastor. He told the man of the church tradition of removing one's hat during worship. "We would like to have you in our church," the pastor continued, "but I hope in the future you will be able to conform to our practice." "Thank you," said the man. "And thank you for taking time to talk to me. It's good of you to invite me back to your church. In fact, I joined three years ago and have been coming regularly ever

since, but today is the first time anyone paid any attention to me. After being an unknown for three years, today, by simply keeping on my hat, I have had the pleasure of talking with the ushers. And now I have had a conversation with you, who always appeared too busy to talk to me before."

Sensing the good in an unnoticed member may just lead us to be hospitable to the unexpected visitor. Likewise, recognizing the holy in the midst of the ordinary events of life may make us eager to see God more readily from day to day.

We are about to embark on a journey of the ordinary in the next few weeks. It is a journey that begins with a stop at Thanksgiving, travels methodically through Advent, and ends at a place called Christmas. It is a journey of the ordinary because we've been there before. We've been there, done that, and gotten many t-shirts along the way.

Yet, this journey has its opportunities as well: to externalize the moment, seize the day, and possibly realize the magnitude of God's love in the midst of the everyday moments of life. When that happens, the ordinary becomes extraordinary. It is there that God is found.

Will someone discover God in your life in these next few weeks? Will they discover God in your church? It's all about depth and divinity. Recognize the miracle of the ordinary heartbeat and breath. Respond with a shout to the heavens - "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

The journey continues...

War on Poverty Languishing Today

From POVERTY/page 1

Imagine the difference that could be made if our nation would spend as much time emphasizing the war on poverty as the war on terrorism, he said. "Likewise, if we were to emphasize the need in every one of our congregations, can you imagine where we would find ourselves and what we would be doing?"

The Bishop said there is power in numbers. Together, he said, United Methodists can make a difference by calling for health care reform, mobilizing our churches as mission centers and building new models of ministry, rather than just making small changes in existing programs.

He suggested that pastors should be appointed to communities, and should be supported and held accountable for leading congregations into the community, rather than simply maintaining an existing church.

"We have got to once again see 'the world as our parish' rather than simply the membership found within the walls of a church parish," Bickerton said.

"Many of our individual churches do not have the resources or the personnel to pull off significant, transformational community ministry. But, with 891 churches, many of which are separated by only a block or two, we DO have the collective resources and personnel to be in ministry to the poor and disenfranchised in our communities."

Members of the Church Union from 45 United Methodist churches in Allegheny County took a step toward such community ministry. They unanimously approved formation of a team to devise a strategy for metropolitan ministry that would include all UM congregations in collaboration with community agencies and resources.

The Rev. Erwin K. Kerr, Church Union president, said the action provides a process for all to "join in an effort to strengthen and expand United Methodist ministry in Allegheny County."



Mark Rehn

Kerr

The committee will make recommendations on the:

- Health and viability of congregations to continue in ministry
- Efficient and effective clusters of congregations and/or charge relationships
- Deployment of clergy leadership to congregations, charges and clusters
- Development or re-development of congregations within the metropolitan area
- Closing and/or merging of congregations

The recommendations will be reviewed by the Church Union board and voted on at the annual meeting in 2005.

Enjoy Many Conference Opportunities to Observe Advent, Christmas

Another Christmas Story: Ingomar UMC's Amazing Gift

Check out *Another Christmas Story* on Sunday, Dec. 19, at 7 p.m. at the **Ingomar UMC** in the North Hills of Pittsburgh.

Anyone who has attended the past two years knows that the show is not a typical church production. *Another Christmas Story* uses the music of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, along with electric guitars, rock show lighting and elements of drama and dance to celebrate the meaning of Christmas in a bold way.

Admission is free — a gift to the community.

"*Another Christmas Story* is a way that people from Ingomar can use their gifts and talents to present the Christmas story," explained the Rev. Tracy Cox, associate pastor. "This is a chance for us to reach out. We're giving people a beautiful gift because it's not something that we're buying, but something that we're giving from our hearts."

This year, the Ingomar UMC Orchestra joins the rock band, singers and actors. New music has been added, too.

Plans for *Another Christmas Story* began nearly a year ago with steady work over the past three months.



Don't miss this exciting new tradition. For information or directions, visit www.ingomarumc.org, call 412-364-3613 or e-mail iucm@ingomarumc.org.



Christ-Bethel Park Offers Christmas Concert

The entire community is invited to celebrate the season with a Christmas concert at **Christ UMC in Bethel Park** on Sunday, Dec. 12, at 7:30 p.m. *A Night for Dancing* will be a presentation of favorite Christmas anthems along with a few new ones. Featured are the Chancel Choir, Wesley Singers, and Carillon (Bell) Choir. Plan to sing carols, too. Childcare will be available.

For information, call 412-835-6621, or visit www.christumc.net.

Camp Allegheny Sponsors The Miracle of Christmas Trip

Join the Camp Allegheny family for *The Miracle of Christmas*, a play at the

Sight & Sound Millennium Theatre in Strasburg, PA, on Friday, Dec. 10.

Transportation departs at 7:30 a.m. from Camp Allegheny. Lunch is planned at the Hershey Farms Restaurant. After the show, shop at the Rockville outlets before arriving back at Camp Allegheny at about 10:30 p.m. The cost is \$80/person.

To learn more, call Camp Allegheny at 888-251-0771.

Monongahela Church Welcomes Visitors to Creche Show

Members of **First UMC in Monongahela** will welcome visitors to their Third Annual Creche Show, Dec. 3 from 3 to 9 p.m. and Dec. 4 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At least 250 Nativities of various sizes, shapes and materials will be displayed. There will be theme tables for lighted crèches, those with candles; water globes, children's nativities, and a table set with Nativity plates. On Friday evening church youth will offer a live Nativity on the front lawn.

The church offers the Crèche show each year as a way to ensure that Christ has a

part in the Chamber of Commerce's *Christmas on the Mon* celebration. With the show, said the Rev. Mike Milinovich, "we're getting back to the essence of what Christmas is." He said the event, chaired by Jane D'Amico, is "just awesome!" For directions, call 724-258-7054.

Olive Branch Gift Shop Offers Worldwide Handicrafts

The Olive Branch Gift Shop, featuring handcrafted items from poverty areas of the world, is now open. A mission project of **Salem UMC** at 350 Manor Road in Wexford, Olive Branch's hours from Nov. 5 through Dec. 18 are Fridays and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Additional hours are by appointment.

Special Christmas luncheons will be served Dec. 10 and 11 at 11 am or 1 pm. Cost is \$6 per person.

The high quality, unusual handicrafts made by artisans in some of the poorest nations of the world are available through SERRV International -- part of the Alternative Trade movement.

For information or to make luncheon reservations, call the office at (724) 935-1627 or Billie Warner at (724) 935-2465.



Retreat Challenges Youth to Life of Faith Through Healthy Choices

By Mark Rehn, Editor

"Don't live a life of fear instead of faith!"

Almost 450 Conference youth and adult leaders heard this challenge made by Shaun Hayes during the 2004 Fall Youth Retreat and Seminar at Wesley Woods, Nov. 12-14.

Hayes is a national youth speaker who travels to schools, churches and other venues to help teens cope with life's hardships and prepare for the future.

Teens face many choices in their lives these days. Lifestyle choices about drugs, sexual promiscuity, smoking, drinking, aggressive behavior and even suicide are just a few.

Teens deal with strong feelings of stress, confusion, self-doubt, pressure to succeed, financial uncertainty and other fears while growing up, according to the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. For some teenagers, divorce, the formation of a new family with step-parents and step-siblings, or moving to a new community can be unsettling and intensify self-doubts.

Suicides among young people nationwide have increased dramatically in recent years. Each year in the U.S., thousands of teenagers commit suicide — the third leading cause of death for 15-to-24-year-olds, and the sixth leading cause of

death for 5-to-14-year-olds. [From www.aacap.org]

"These kids are living the life ... on some level ... that I did," Hayes said. "They need to hear that there's hope, not just for survival, but for something far greater."

Through stories of his life as a teen and now at 30, married and living in Chicago with his wife, he challenged the youth to choose a life with Jesus Christ. "I challenge you to open your hearts ... open your hearts."

"You may be thinking, my story is not that important, but it is," Hayes said as he pulled a photo of a girl from his pocket and held it high. "I carry a picture of Amy."

"Amy Elizabeth was a 15-year old who heard my presentation (in March 2001). She went away determined to give her life to God. She wrote in her journal, 'instead of spreading gossip, I will spread love.' 'She basically became happy girl!'"

Hayes told the capacity crowd that for the next six months, Amy tried to bring joy to everyone she met. "Her heart was really right. She got it! She went home and changed the world."

In September of that year, Amy was diagnosed with an incurable disease and died quickly.

"In those six months, she became a star in her community" he said. Everyone talked about how she had changed.

"Her mom gave me this picture of her at the funeral and asked me to share her story," he said. "(Amy's) life meant something and she changed a lot of lives."

Hayes spoke at three sessions during the weekend retreat. After each talk, he drew in chalk on a large, stretched black cloth an illustration to reinforce his message. The art was auctioned off near the end of the weekend for \$1,250. Proceeds went to the Youth Service Fund that provides youth ministry grants here and throughout the world. In Western PA, YSF grants are administered by the Conference Youth Ministry Team, which sponsored the weekend with the Indiana District youth. Other YSF fundraisers included a snack booth and a pie-in-the-face contest. The total for YSF contributions from the weekend topped \$2,000.

Worship and praise throughout the weekend was led by the band Riz'n.



Shaun Hayes, on stage, challenged 400+ Conference youth to make healthy life choices at the 2004 Fall Youth Retreat at Wesley Woods. Hayes creates chalk drawings to reinforce his message.

Bishop Tom Bickerton came on Saturday to offer grace and blessings. Saturday's "awesome activity" was to build and eat a giant sundae constructed in a long roof gutter lined with foil.

During Sunday Communion, testimonies were given by several youth before the groups left for home.

To learn more about Conference youth activities and YSF (or make a contribution), contact Youth Director Renaye Hoffman at 800-886-3382, ext. 224 or umyouth@wpaumc.org.

Greenway Calls Christians to Remember Their Mission

By Jackie Campbell, Staff Writer

Too many churches today have developed a kind of corporate amnesia about their mission, the Rev. Jeffrey E. Greenway told more than 500 friends and colleagues gathered in Wilmore, KY on Oct. 11 for his inauguration as the sixth president of Asbury Theological Seminary.

As a district superintendent in Western PA for six years, Greenway said he saw too many congregations who had "forgotten why God has strategically placed them in their communities." Some had a fortress mindset and others had become museums where every artifact of a past time was preserved, he said. "Some of the congregations had become hospices. They would rather die than change, and they will," he said, unless they realize the times and context in which they live and "remember their mission, which is to offer Christ to people and give them the opportunity to live in response to grace."

Asbury Seminary, according to Greenway, "can help the Church by understanding its history and helping it read the signs of the times."

In the Apostolic Era when the Church began, he explained, following Jesus was a life-altering decision, posing great risk. The church was formed around the priesthood of believers and was a contagious, evangelistic, disciple-making, mission-hearted community of faith.

Today, after an era in which skeptics questioned the foundations of faith and the church became more an institutional organization in survival mode, the times again reflect the Apostolic Era, Greenway said.

"The Christian Church, whether we choose to realize it or not, is once again a minority sect in a prevalently pluralistic, pagan world culture," he explained. The problem is that "we keep trying to operate as though we live in Christendom. We spend all of our energy main-

taining organizational structures... we train clergy leaders who hold power and see themselves as the sole dispensers of grace rather than as fellow pilgrims on the journey whose role is to call people to faith, equip them for ministry and to set them free to minister to others in Jesus' name."

Greenway said Asbury Seminary was born for a time like this, and its mission has not changed.

"It is our mission to prepare and send forth a well-trained, sanctified, Spirit-filled, evangelistic ministry of men and women to spread scriptural holiness across the land and around the world," he said. "We train and send people who can read their culture, introduce people to Jesus in sensitive ways, disciple them in the best of our Wesleyan tradition, and then enable those disciples to live their lives in response to His grace."

Greenway said he wants to be sure the seminary doesn't forget that it serves the Church.

"Our message is grace," he declared. "We are called to teach and model grace in the fullness of the Wesleyan tradition... We need to live it, teach it, preach it, model it, be transformed by it and live in response to it."

Greenway said, however, that in an epiphany moment during debate at the UMC's General Conference in May, he realized that we don't really know what grace is.

"We don't expect the life change that grace is because we bifurcate it from the holiness of God," he said.

"We serve a God who will accept anyone where they are. But if that is all we preach we miss a very important part of the Wesleyan grace continuum," he said.

Holiness should flow out of a Christian response to God's grace, Greenway said.

"It is true," he pointed out,

"our holy God accepts us exactly where we are, at the lowest place we can come, but it's equally true that God loves us too much to leave us there. God wants us to become the people He had in mind when He first thought of creating us."

Christian lives should "reflect the holiness and the character of God to the people around us, so that God's grace might become so attractive that others will want to follow Jesus, too."

Holiness is not simply naming the sin in ourselves and others," he added. "It is discovering for ourselves and telling others what we have found to be right about Jesus and beginning to reflect his character in our lives. Holiness is not a laundry list of behaviors we are against as much as it is a reflection of the life of grace that calls us to become more like Jesus.

"I am not calling us to return to a condemning time of past evangelicalism," Greenway said. "I am calling us to look at Jesus and the early Church, and find the tender balance of naming sin and the brokenness it causes—while announcing grace and holiness...all that we have found to be right about Jesus.

"We need to reclaim a gracious call to repent from one way of life to follow another," he noted.

Greenway said he intends to follow Jesus' model as seminary president, taking the role of a servant leader. Then, noting that it was time to stop talking, and do it, he closed his message by washing the feet of three members of the Asbury community.

WPA Friends Help Install Asbury President

By Jackie Campbell, Staff Writer

The Rev. Jeffrey E. Greenway, former Pittsburgh East District superintendent, was installed as the sixth president of Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, KY, on Thursday, Nov. 11, during an evening service attended by several Western PA United Methodists.

Bishop Thomas Bickerton, a long-time friend of Greenway, and Bishop George Bashore, who appointed Greenway to the Cabinet and acted as a mentor while serving as episcopal leader here, participated in the ceremony.

Also involved in the service were Greenway's father, the Rev. Harold Greenway; the Rev. Roger Shaffer, who served as pastor of **First UMC in Butler** when Greenway was appointed there as an associate after graduating from seminary; and the Rev. Dan Aleshire, Conference member who serves as executive director of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

As part of weeklong inaugural events, the Rev. David Streets, who began serving as pastor of **Wesley UMC in Erie** the same year Greenway was appointed to pastor **Christ UMC** there, preached at a Tuesday chapel service. Greenway's father preached on Wednesday while his son Nathan illustrated the sermon with a drawing. On Thursday, Bashore was the chapel speaker.

Also attending the inaugural day festivities were retired Bishop Hae-Jong Kim, who traveled from Drew Theological School in New Jersey; several Cabinet members, Conference Lay Leader Nancy Denardo, and other Western PA colleagues.

Asbury Seminary, founded in 1923, is a multi-denominational seminary with about 1,800 students at campuses in Kentucky and Florida and online.



Jackie Campbell

The Rev. Joel Garrett, right, pastor of Trinity UMC in McMurray, talks with the Rev. Harold Greenway in a hallway near Asbury's Estes Chapel, where Greenway's son was installed as president of the seminary.

Video Corner

By Kim Shockley, Media Resource Director



The Media Resource Center (MRC) is ready to meet your ministry needs this Christmas season.

► A new video to the MRC is

The First Christmas from the Billy Budd collection of clay animation. In 21 minutes, the story of Christmas is told with familiar dialogue and music.

► For children, choose **The Star of Christmas** from Veggie Tales! Set in 1880s London, Bob the Tomato and Larry the Cucumber are

preparing for a spectacular Christmas musical to teach people to love. The video provides a simple explanation of God's love for all people! Action-packed and hilarious, this 45-minute story is in true Veggie Tale style!

► For teens, try the Emmy Award winner **Lighting the Way**. This 26-minute program highlights the faith traditions of Kwanzaa, La Posada, Hanukkah, and Christmas.

► **The True Christmas Story** provides two 20-minute lessons from *That the World May Know* study. Ray Vander Laan in Jerusalem teaches us about the Living Water and the Christmas Story. The lessons are packed with faith-building truths that

may speak to your heart well beyond the Christmas season.

► **Bethlehem Year Zero**, in six 15-minute, news format segments, presents the events surrounding Christ's birth as they happen. Reporters cover the threat to Herod's succession and possible repercussions of his failure to control the unruly province of Israel. *Year Zero* is a fascinating depiction of the world into which Jesus was born.

Lent starts earlier this year with Ash Wednesday on Feb. 9. Browse the MRC website now to plan your Lenten studies and resource needs. Visit www.wpamrc.org and search these topics: "Easter", "Jesus" or "Christian living".

MRC church membership invoices will be sent in early December. For 2005, annual membership is \$40. Any Western PA United Methodist church can access the MRC collection through membership, or a small rental fee per resource.

Contact me at 800-886-3382, ext. 259 or ummedia@wpaumc.org. The MRC is open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Make an appointment today to review or borrow resources or just visit.



Conference Briefs

Woodcock Offers Coloring Book

Woodcock UMC in Saegertown has come up with an interesting fundraiser - a coloring book. The historical, spiral bound, 32-page booklet is both informational and scriptural with a salvation message. It can be a great gift idea! Each is \$4 or 2 for \$7, plus \$1.50 shipping & handling. Contact the Rev. Audrey Lovewell, pastor, at 814-796-4920 or tomlovewell@aol.com.

Church & Society Announces Internship

The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) seeks qualified applicants, 18-22 in age, for the Ethnic Young Adult Summer 2005 Internship Program. The 11 eight-week Internship in Washington, DC, run June 6-Aug. 1, 2005. Each includes roundtrip airfare, accommodations and \$1,500 stipend.

Gain a unique education and professional experience in public policy. Placements include governmental and non-governmental offices, faith-based advocacy agencies, and grassroots organizations.

Young United Methodist are selected to represent the five ethnic caucuses: Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native-American and Pacific-Islander communities.

Interns commit to return to local churches, colleges and conferences to interpret the ministry of GBCS.

Apply by Feb. 1, 2005. For information and to request an application, contact Neal Christie at 202-488-5611 or email at nchristie@umc-gbcs.org.



Volunteer in Mission Team & Leader Training

with
Greg Forrester
coordinator

Northeastern Jurisdiction UMVIM

Saturday, Dec. 11
9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

United Methodist Center
Cranberry Township

\$35 (pay at the door)
includes training manual & lunch

featuring stories and photos
of UMVIM missions

To register, call Sara McLain
800-886-3382, ext. 237.

In Memory

✠ **Florence I. Nicholl Dempsey**, 90, died Nov. 6. Preceded in death by her husband, Edward Mansell Dempsey. She is survived by her son, the Rev. David Dempsey of Bellvue:Central & Evergreen UMCs. The funeral was Nov. 11 at the Orion C. Pinkerton Funeral Home in Avalon.

✠ **Geraldine V. Smith Lilley Olszewski**, 88, of McKean, died Oct. 27. She was preceded by her first husband Lewis Lilley. Surviving are her husband of 10 years, Alfred Olszewski; daughter Sandra Cady of Towanda.; son, the Rev. Reginald Lilley of McKeesport; four grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. The funeral was Nov. 1 at St. Francis Xavier Church in McKean.

Questions about the UMC?

<http://infoserv.umc.org> infoserv@umcom.umc.org
Call (800) 251-8140, 9am-5:30pm EST, M-F



Develop Leaders in a Postmodern Culture

Like it or not, we live in a postmodern culture. Tomorrow's leaders have grown up with a perspective on God, Jesus, truth, the church, community and the world that is radically different than the era that precedes it. Join George Barna, Erwin McManus and Rex Miller as they provide practical insights on how to identify, equip and mobilize leaders from the emerging generation. On Jan. 13 at 11:30 am, explore postmodern culture and our ministry opportunities in a live teleconference offered at sites throughout Western Pennsylvania, listed in the adjacent box. Ask questions and listen to the dialogue among with experts and leaders and people just like you across the country.

George Barna, head of the Barna Group that conducts Christian research and a leading author, will host this event. Among the books he has written is *A Fish Out of Water*. Also on the panel is the Rev. Erwin McManus, author of *Unstoppable Force*; *Becoming the Church God Designed*; *Your Church To Be*; and Rex Miller, author of *Millennial Matrix*.

Since 1998, Church Communication Network (CCN), an ecumenical group, has offered in-depth, powerful programming covering a broad spectrum of ministry areas — everything from NextGen to Women's ministry, Leadership to Children's ministry. Find out more about CCN at www.ccnonline.net.

For information on this and other CCN teleconferences offered within our Conference, contact Kim Shockley at 800-886-3382, ext. 259 or ummedia@wpaumc.org.

Volunteer

✠ **Summer VBS volunteers** sought by **Henderson UMC in Erie** for a day camp for inner city kids. Make this a summer mission trip for your church. To learn more, contact Darya Hackenbush at 814-864-3650 or colorslide@verizon.net. (111504)

✠ **Volunteers** are sought by **Etna Team for Neighborhood Assistance (ETNA)** to help victims of the Sept. 17 flooding in Etna, Allegheny Co., to rebuild homes. Volunteer one day or more to repair homes under the direction of pro builders. Work is done seven days a week. Other volunteer opportunities also available. ETNA is an ecumenical group. Call Sister Margarite Kropinac, director, at 412-252-2412 or 252-2338. (111504)

Free

✠ **Choral robes**, 10 light gray with mauve trim and a Cross & Flame emblem, in good condition, offered free by **Trinity UMC in Clarendon**. Entire collection must be taken as a whole. Contact the office at 814-723-5435. (110404)

Help Wanted

✠ **Summer program staff** (counselors) sought by **WPA Conference Camping & Retreat Ministries Team** for Wesley Woods, Jumonville & Camp Allegheny in 2005. Interview at UM Center Dec. 18 & Apr. 9, 2005. To apply, contact 800-886-3382, ext. 232 or umcamp@wpaumc.org. (100704)

✠ **Summer site staff** (life guards, kitchen, multi-media, drivers, etc.) sought by **Jumonville**, near Uniontown, for 2005. Interviews are Dec. 28 & Mar. 12, 2005. To apply, contact 800-463-7688. (100704)

✠ **Organist/choir director**, PT, sought by **Crafton UMC** to play contemporary and classical church music for a Sunday service and choir rehearsal. Send resume to the church at 43 Belvidere St., Pittsburgh, PA 15205 or umcrafton@worldnet.att.net. (100704)

✠ **Sunday school teacher** for 1:45-3:15 pm sought by **Greater Pittsburgh Korean UMC** (Mt. Lebanon). Reasonable compensation includes delicious Korean food! Contact the Rev. Sang Choi at 412-977-1538 or sangkongchoir@yahoo.com. (111704)

✠ **Youth Leader** sought by **First UMC, Jeannette** to start youth group & teach Sunday school class, 8-10 hrs./wk. Send resume to 100 S. 2nd St., Jeannette, PA 15644 or fumcjenet@aol.com. (111504)

✠ **Assoc. Director of Finance/Admin./Operations** sought by **UM Stewardship Foundation of Central PA**. Skills desired in strategic, fiscal, and operational management; staff management; presentation; oversee accounting system; and familiar with UM policy. Degree in accounting or finance (or equiv.) desired. Send cover letter, resume with salary reqs., writing samples and three references (including a pastor's) by Nov. 30 to: Dennis Cathcart, President-Stewardship Foundation, 559 Willow Ct., York, PA, 17402 or denny@sirsales.com. (111504)

2005 Mission of Peace to China Announced

High school juniors and seniors, apply for the Dec. 2005 Mission of Peace to China, sponsored by the UMNortheastern Jurisdictional Council on Youth.

Travel to a number of cities in China and spend valuable time with Chinese people exploring your faith and theirs. You will join United Methodist youth and adult leaders from conferences across the Northeast.

MOP trips average two to three weeks. Costs are about \$4,500, including flights, accommodations, meals, guides, adult leaders, tours, museums, and program fees.

By Jan. 7, apply or learn more about the 2005 MOP trip by contacting WPA Youth Coordinator Renaye Hoffman at 800-886-3382, ext. 224 or umyouth@wpaumc.org. Information can also be found at www.wpaumc.org.



CCN Satellite Teleconferences

More information online at www.ccnonline.net

Developing Leaders in a Postmodern Culture

with George Barna, Erwin McManus, & Rex Miller

Thur., Jan. 10, 2005, 11:30 am-2 pm

Becoming a Church that Transforms Children Into Spiritual Champions

with George Barna

Thur., Feb. 10, 2005, 11:30 am-2 pm

Overcoming Overload

with Dr. Richard Swenson & Kevin Miller

Thur., Feb. 17, 2005, 11:30 am-2 pm

at 5 WPA Conference sites:

UM Conference Center

Cranberry Township
Kim Shockley, 800-886-3382, x259

Charter Oak UMC in Greensburg

Betsy Hunt, 724-837-2141, x20

Christ UMC in Erie

Roger Scarlett, 814-833-6398

First UMC in New Castle

724-658-5577

Lanes Mills UMC, Indiana Dist.

Clair Lundberg, 814-265-8727

\$10/first person & \$5/each thereafter



By Mark Rehn and Renaye Hoffman

Scenes from the Fall 2004 Youth Retreat at Wesley Woods, Nov. 12-14, (clockwise from above): chalk art by nationally-known speaker Shaun Hayes; lunch line; Conference Youth Director Renaye Hoffman, right center, with youth from First UMC, Greensburg; another chalk talk by Hayes; the lead singer for the worship band Riz'n; and Nick Rehak plowing through his part of a mega-sundae. Conference youth set out to build the world's longest sundae during the retreat. The word's not in yet from the Guinness World Records people. [See the story on page 5.]

