

The Church Herald

Stony Brook Community Church (United Methodist), Stony Brook, New York



NYAC VISION STATEMENT

**The New York Annual
Conference, through the
grace of God, embodies a
beloved community of hope,
building up a healthy Body of
Christ, with heartwarmed
United Methodists
in mission for the
transformation of the world.**

STONY BROOK COMMUNITY CHURCH

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**TO VIEW *THE HERALD*
IN FULL COLOR, VISIT
OUR WEB SITE AT:**

stonybrookcommunitychurch.org

The Pastor's Column

As I am sure you are aware, I spent 10 days in Fort Worth, Texas, attending the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church. This is my fifth General Conference. I first went in 1980 as a reserve delegate and then attended again in 1996, 2000 and 2004. In those years, my chief interest was to observe as a member of both the Methodist Federation for Social Action – a 100-year-old Methodist organization committed to justice issues – and the Reconciling Ministries Network seeking the full inclusion of all persons regardless of sexual identity. This year, I attended as a working member of The Connectional Table, the coordinating body of the global church charged with the task of setting the direction of the denomination and linking the mission and finances with the vision. So, I was viewing General Conference after four years of working with representatives of the General Agencies, the Council of Bishops and those, like me, who represented the various conferences and regions of the world.

Elsewhere in this issue of *The Herald*, I have attempted to name some of the highlights and significant decisions that were made. More details can be found at www.umc.org (click on General Conference box at the top). In this column, I want to share some personal reflections.

First of all, I went to General Conference reluctantly. After experiencing more and more division and, I felt, downright rudeness at the last two General Conferences, I had not planned to return, but my work with the Connectional Table required that I be there. I am pleased to say that I came home with a different attitude. The Council of Bishops, which presides over the sessions, did everything in its power to keep the debates and conversations respectful and endeavored “holy conferencing” – an attitude of careful listening, prayer and respect that comes out of Wesleyan tradition. John Wesley is quoted as having said, “Even if we cannot think alike, surely we can love alike.” There were still deep divisions among the delegates on con-

Continued on page 6

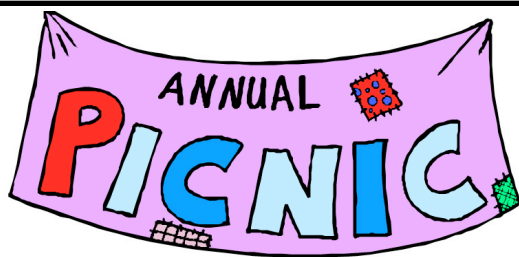


UMW resumes for summer, looks ahead to fall

At the May 13 meeting, our members created their own flower arrangements with the help of Marilyn Barone from the Three Village Garden Club. Marilyn also made centerpieces for the dining room table that she donated to the lucky winners!

The sisters of UMW ended the year by sharing a bountiful meal June 3 at the Spring Dinner at Mauricio's Orlando's Restaurant. This is Pledge to Mission Month. We are committed to supporting local, national and global missions that respond to disasters. This year's pledges can be placed in the Sunday collection plate, or delivered or mailed to the Church Office throughout the month of June.

Looking ahead to the fall, some possible programs include "Bad Women of the Bible," crafts and East End farm workers. We welcome your suggestions. Please join us at our next meeting on Tuesday, September 9, at 7:30 p.m. Happy summer!



Friday, June 27

6:30 p.m.

**On the grounds of the
Stony Brook Community Church**

**Bring salads, side dishes and
desserts. Hamburgers and
hot dogs will be provided.**

Games for all ages!

Rain or shine.

Supper at West Meadow Beach



SBCC has introduced a new summer activity, "Supper at the Beach." Every Wednesday at 6 p.m. (weather permitting), church members and guests gather near the covered pavilion at West Meadow Beach for supper and fellowship. All are welcome. Bring all that you need for your own dinner. Don't forget chairs, blankets and bug spray! A quiet time for Taizé meditation is offered at sunset. Shown at left are those who turned out for the first beach night on May 14. As the weather grows warmer, the crowd is growing. Come when you can. See you at the beach!

Spring Retreat 'just perfect'

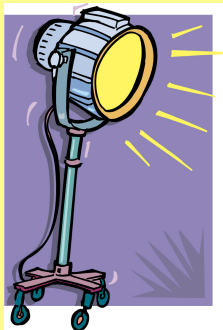
Eighteen people attended the Spring Retreat at Camp Quinipet (Shelter Island) the weekend of May 16-18. It has been 12 years since SBCC's last retreat at Camp Quinipet. The Jesse Lee house, where we stayed, was in beautiful condition, "just perfect" for the group gathered, according to Pastor Liz.

Those who arrived on Friday night were greeted by a warm gas-powered fire. "We woke up to beautiful sunshine on Saturday morning and enjoyed a delicious breakfast, bike rides, walks and sitting on the front porch as we awaited the Saturday attendees," Pastor Liz reported. After a good lunch and lots more conversation, the group had a great croquet match with Pat and

Jack Martin winning as usual. The evening brought on more delicious food, a beautiful sunset and a night of singing led by guitarists Mark Borak, Malcolm Bowman and Michelle Dexter. Both nights we were also entertained by some wonderful songs by Jessica and Jeremy Cutler. On Sunday, following pancakes and sausage, we met for worship in the gazebo overlooking the water. Our theme: "Do no harm, do good and stay in love with God." Having re-established the tradition, we look forward to making the retreat at least an annual event.



Some of the 18 SBCC members who attended the retreat gather for a group photo.



Performing Arts Camp at SBCC **A Musical Theatre Workshop For Ages 7 to 15**

Session 1: June 30 - July 18 Session 2: July 21 - August 8

Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Classes in acting, improvisation, dance and voice and rehearsals for an Open House performance.

**Intensive, small camp workshop taught by Actor's Equity performer Erik McCormack.
Open to all children in the community, with or without previous performing experience.**

**Cost per session: \$495 with a 10% discount for siblings and double-session enrollment.
(Children may enroll in one or both sessions. Limited to 20 campers per session.)**

Enrollment applications may be downloaded from the SBCC website:

www.stonybrookcommunitychurch.org

**For more information, call Camp Coordinator Sherrill Jones at 751-6740
or e-mail sherrilljones@mac.com.**

2008 General Conference Summary

by Pastor Elizabeth Braddon

The overall theme of the 2008 General Conference was “A Future With Hope – Making Disciples for Jesus Christ and the Transformation of the World.” The conference opened with worship celebrating the 40th anniversary of the day the Evangelical United Brethren Church joined with the Methodist Church in America to form the United Methodist Church. There was a strong emphasis on “holy conferencing.” This meant that the bishops were committed to making sure antagonistic or inflammatory language not be used in disagreements; allowing extra time for persons for whom English is not their first language; and to not cutting off debate too quickly.

The Conference had a more global focus this year. 278 of the 992 delegates were from outside the U.S. – an increase of 100 from 2004. There were 1,564 pieces of legislation received for consideration – 540 fewer than 2004 – but delegates had one less day to work.

A \$642 million budget for the quadrennium was adopted, a 4.8% increase. That’s only 1.2% for each year (about \$.03-.04 of every dollar collected by the local church). Areas of focus for the church over the next four years emerged: Developing principled Christian leaders; creating new congregations and reviving existing ones; engaging in ministries with the poor; and improving global health.

We were well inspired by the daily worship and preaching by the bishops. Other speakers included Liberian President and active UMC minister Ellen John Sirleaf, the first African leader and first female head of state to address the UMC; William Gates, Sr., a “Nothing but Nets” partner who helped raise over \$20 million for anti-malaria bed netting; and seven-year-old Kathryn, who has personally raised over \$40,000 for Nothing but Nets since beginning her campaign at age five.



CONCERNS AND ISSUES

The UMC Mission Statement was revised to read, “The mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ *for the transformation of the world.*”

Abortion: A resolution to withdraw from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice was narrowly defeated (416-384). A statement was added to the Social Principles offering “ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies” and to assist the ministry of crisis pregnancy and support centers that help women “find feasible alternatives to abortion.” Also added was the phrase, “respects the sacredness . . . of the unborn child.”

Divestment from Israel was defeated, and instead a petition was adopted calling for the church to continue to advocate for a peaceful settlement of the conflict “through negotiation and diplomacy rather than through methods of violence and coercion.”

Homosexuality:

- Rejected changes proposed by the Legislative Committee on Church and Society acknowledging that church members disagree on homosexuality. Instead voted 501-417 to adopt a minority report that retains language in the 2004 Discipline describing homosexual practice as “incompatible with Christian teaching.”

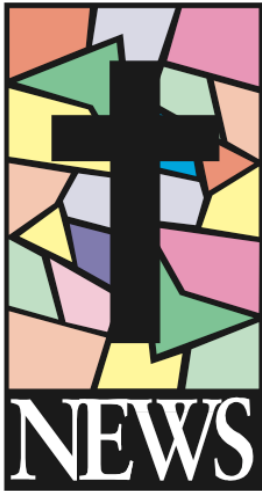
- Retained language defining marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman.
- Retained language affirming that all people are “individuals of sacred worth created in the image of God” while asking “families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends.”
- Did not take action to remove transgendered persons from ministry.
- Let stand in the Discipline language regarding pastoral authority over church membership.
- Voted to retain language that prohibits UM pastors from conducting civil unions.
- Adopted new resolution opposing homophobia and heterosexism and requesting the distribution of study materials.

The bishops allowed and even participated in a 20-minute mournful witness by 250 demonstrators (with hundreds more standing in place) after there was no movement toward more inclusive language or actions.

Many other issues were addressed – war and peace, capital punishment, economic justice, etc. – with no substantive changes to previous positions. There was some good strengthening of the language concerning environmental stewardship. A new litany was adopted to go along with our United Methodist Social Creed.

OTHER ACTIONS

- **Hymnal Revisions** were approved. A revised collection of hymns and worship aids will be presented at the 2012 GC. The current hymnal was adopted 20 years ago.
- **Judicial Council:** Five new members were elected, all of whom had been put forth by the Council of Bishops. New members viewed as centrist, a defeat for the right wing.
- **The Ordination Process** was made more accessible, reducing the possible years from entry into candidacy until ordination by two years and further opening the process.
- **Global Health Initiative** was approved. The campaign seeks to raise \$75-\$100 million to fight malaria and other diseases. During General Conference, nearly \$500,000 was raised for the Nothing but Nets Campaign through a creative “auction” of a basketball initiated by the Kansas Conferences in recognition of their NCAA championship team.
- **Church Structure:** A group was set up to study the viability of reorganizing the 11.5 million-member UMC into “regional conferences,” so that it no longer appears as if the UMC is comprised primarily of the U.S. with satellite groups in Africa, Asia and Europe.
- **Full Communion** agreement reached with the Lutherans, recognizing the authenticity of each other’s baptism and Eucharist and the interchangeability of all ordained clergy. ECLA will vote on the agreement in August 2009.
- **Retirement Age** of bishops and clergy was raised. Bishops now may not begin a quadrennium over the age of 68 (was 66), and clergy retirement was raised from 70-72. A plan was adopted to reduce by one the number of bishops in each U.S. jurisdiction (except in the southeast) in 2012.
- **Phrase Added to Membership Vows** in which new members will now pledge to be faithful in “their witness” as well as in their “prayers, presence, gifts and service.” This highlights the mission and evangelistic responsibility of membership.
- **\$20 Million Approved for Africa University** in Zimbabwe, half through apportioned funds and half through special gifts. Also, \$2 million was earmarked for strengthening the Black Church. The 700,000-member UMC in Cote d’Ivoire, Africa, was received into the UMC.



Congregational News

SBCC is participating in the Three Village Community **Vacation Bible School** July 14-18. Registration forms are available in the Community Room. Volunteer adult/youth teachers are needed, as well as people to help with crafts, snacks, etc. For details, call Sue Murphy at 871-2368.

* * *

The **Sunday School** students are joining children from throughout the Annual Conference as they raise funds to fill 10 “arks” with animals to be donated to needy families through Heifer International. Some will be attending Children’s Day at the NYAC on June 14 at Hofstra University. The children will make a special presentation at Sunday worship on June 8.

* * *

Wanted: **Soloists or small musical groups** to perform on Sundays during the summer, while the choir is off. Music is needed from July 6 to Labor Day weekend. For info, call Joan Wingerter at 544-9430.

Continued from page 1

tentious issues such as: the proposal to change the structure of the global UMC; some social justice concerns; and the church’s stand on homosexuality. But there was also hard work done in legislative committees to offer new alternatives to the polarization of previous conferences. Some of those were passed on the Plenary floor, others failed – but the work was holy work.

It was a pleasure to participate in wonderfully creative worship services each day, and all of the presentations about the work of the church were done in a new multimedia fashion that really communicated that the mission of the church is global yet centered in the local churches that have been resourced by the General Agencies. Particularly inspiring was the first-ever address by youth. Four articulate young people led the call for “holy conferencing” and to keep God’s mission for the church first and foremost in our deliberations. There were some wonderful light moments as well.

I was deeply saddened by the outcome of the deliberations about the church’s stance on homosexuality. The Church and Society legislative group, led by Fred Brewington (husband of our new district superintendent), had proposed new language for the social principles that recognized that the UMC has been deeply divided on this issue (about a 45%-55% split) for over a decade. Instead of saying the “church believes homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching,” the proposed new language reminded us of the sacred worth of all people. Unfortunately, that report did not prevail, reminding us that there is still strong conservative sentiment among the Southeastern U.S. delegates and the African delegations. There was a powerful, respectful demonstration, sanctioned by the Council of Bishops, in response to that decision and others that inhibited the full inclusion of all persons in the UMC.

I think we came out of this General Conference with a clear unified positive focus for mission and an opportunity for the worldwide church to look at who we hope to be as the United Methodist Church of the 21st century. At the same time, we have a long way to go to become the church of open hearts, open minds and open doors. May God continue to move us along on that journey.

June 2008

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| 1 Worship, Eucharist & Sun. School, 10 a.m. Fellowship, 11 a.m. | 2 | 3 UMW Ladies Night Out Spring Dinner | 4 Supper at West Meadow Beach, 6 p.m., with Taizé meditation at sunset | 5 6 p.m., AA Chancel Choir Reh., 7:30 p.m. | 6 10 a.m., Al-Anon | 7 |
| 8 Worship & Sunday School, 10 a.m. Fellowship, 11 a.m. Sunday School children will lead part of worship | 9 Bible Study, 10:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. 7 p.m., AA Bd. of Trustees, 7:30 | 10 Finance Committee, 7:30 p.m. | 11 Supper at West Meadow Beach, 6 p.m., with Taizé meditation at sunset NY Annual Conference begins | 12 6 p.m., AA Chancel Choir Reh., 7:30 p.m. | 13 10 a.m., Al-Anon | 14 Children's Festival at NY Annual Conference, Hofstra University, 10:30 a.m. |
| 15 Father's Day Worship & Sunday School, 10 a.m. Fellowship, 11 a.m. | 16 Bible Study, 10:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. 7 p.m., AA 200 th Anniv. Comm., 7:30 p.m. | 17 Church Council, 7:30 p.m. | 18 Supper at West Meadow Beach, 6 p.m., with Taizé meditation at sunset Car Show Comm., 7:30 p.m. | 19 6 p.m., AA Chancel Choir Reh., 7:30 p.m. | 20 10 a.m., Al-Anon | 21 |
| 22 Moving Up Sunday Worship & Sunday School, 10 a.m. Fellowship, 11 a.m. Vintage Car Show at SBCC, 12-4 p.m. | 23 Bible Study, 10:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. 7 p.m., AA Book Club, 7:30 p.m. | 24 | 25 Supper at West Meadow Beach, 6 p.m., with Taizé meditation at sunset | 26 6 p.m., AA | 27 10 a.m., Al-Anon Annual Church Picnic at SBCC, 6:30 p.m. (rain or shine) | 28 |
| 29 Worship & Sunday School, 10 a.m. Fellowship, 11 a.m. | 30 Bible Study, 10:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. First PAC 3-week session begins, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. 7 p.m., AA | | | | COMING SOON! July 14-18: Vacation Bible School July 21-Aug. 8: 2 nd PAC Session | PLEASE NOTE: The news deadline for the July/August issue of The Herald is JULY 1. |

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR SBCC'S



FRIDAY, JUNE 27

(See inside for details.)

All are welcome to join us for the popular summertime tradition!