



NEWSCOPE

THE WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR UNITED METHODIST LEADERS

• ELIMINATION OF POVERTY •

Pilot Ministry Launches in North Carolina

Three counties in North Carolina are the focal points of a new UM pilot ministry to eliminate poverty. They will become training stations for the denomination in the United States. Anson County in the south and adjoining Wilkes and Yadkin Counties in the north are sites of an initiative aimed at bringing out of poverty those whose families have been poor for at least two generations. All three counties have fairly stable populations. All three are also low-income areas and have high levels of unemployment in the best of times. Partners in the work include the Western North Carolina Annual Conference and the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), along with church districts and congregations. A significant partner is [The Circles™ Campaign](#) of the Move the Mountains Leadership Center in Iowa, which is providing the poverty-elimination model and training. Local governments, school districts, and social service agencies are also involved.

“This is the first of five global models for dealing with poverty that are part of our Ministry with the Poor priority,” said Rachel Lieder Simeon, interim deputy general secretary and executive responsible for the Ministry with the Poor task force at GBGM. “We expect that the pilot in North Carolina will inform our work across the US and in other parts of the world.” A pilot project of this kind is stipulated in a plan for UM ministry with the poor that originated with GBGM and was subsequently approved by the Connec-tional Table and Council of Bishops.

The circle model, developed by Scott Miller, founder of the Move the Mountains Leadership Center, works with people in generational poverty and uses social capital to lift them out. Each “circle” has a leader who is in poverty and three “allies” who are in a position to be of help. The overall goal for the pilot is to bring 75 families to places of economic self-sufficiency within the society. The circle leader—someone from generational poverty—is paid for taking part in 13 weeks of training. Weekly sessions last for two-and-a-half hours. “Allies” also receive training. Move the Mountains provides training for the trainers.

Move the Mountains Leadership Center, the originator of Circles, was organized in 1992 with a long-term grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Headquartered in Ames, Iowa, it has the goal of helping people to become economically self-sufficient and, thereby, eliminating poverty in the US. Circles™ has a network of 40 communities in 18 states. The North Carolina project is seen as a springboard for more Circles sites in that region. It is expected that within a year UMs will be coming to the three counties to be trained. UMs are involved or considering involvement in several locales, including Syracuse, N.Y., where University UMC is a program center for a new Circles partnership with Housing Visions Unlimited, which itself grew out of the congregation. Funds for the N.C. pilot beyond what GBGM and the conference can provide are still being raised from foundations and church sources. A small staff is expected to be in place by July. —*Elliott Wright, GBGM*

UM Web Site Opens Church Doors

There are thousands of ways to be church in the world, and UMs do not want to miss any of them in an innovative Web site inviting a new generation into a life of faith and service. Backed by a national advertising

campaign, The UMC on April 20 launched tentousanddoors.org. The site is part of the Rethink Church campaign, which is using nontraditional methods to reach young adults and others in relevant ways. There are more ways to enter church and begin a spiritual journey than just coming into the front door of a building, say designers of the interactive Web site. "Faith itself is a bridge by which we see God and the work of God present in our world," says the Rev. Larry Hollon, General Secretary of United Methodist Communications (UMCOM). "God is not contained in the walls of our sacred buildings. God is in the streets, at the well, in the least expected places."

The Web site, dedicated to helping young adults find new ways to connect to the church, offers hundreds of virtual doors that visitors can enter to allow them to make a difference in their lives and the world. A viewer entering the Watch Door is able to see video about people in their local communities and across the world who are making a difference. Video and stories range from people dealing with current events to a reporter visiting the dentist for the first time in five years. Have a question or an opinion about prayer, spirituality or current events? Click on the Talk Door and ask or answer away, or engage in a dialogue with others. A virtual door called Now features the latest headlines, such as the flooding in the Dakotas, and allows users to see topical items of interest on Twitter. Through the "Friend Connect" door, site visitors can join several social networks and engage in real-time conversation about things that matter to them. The Find Door lets people interested in topics such as environmental issues, health advocacy, day care, disaster response and the arts type in a zip code and locate UM churches near them that offer ministries and opportunities around their areas of interest.

The campaign also is a response to the Four Areas of Focus. "Each of the four areas of focus is about creating engaged, active disciples committed to Jesus for the transformation of the world. The four areas are practical doorways," Hollon said. The method may be contemporary, but it promotes the work of faith in ways rooted in worship, prayer, service and Bible study—tenets of Wesleyan tradition. Faith is the bridge—the understanding, the vision, the hearing, the belief and the affirmation that God is in the world, healing, changing, forgiving, comforting and making people whole. —Linda Green, *UMNS*

Proposed Amendments Would Change Language on Inclusiveness and Would Extend Voting Rights

[As promised in our April 15 issue, Newscope is providing an overview of all 32 amendments to the Constitution of The UMC that members of 134 annual conferences around the world will consider in the coming months. Voting members may debate a proposed amendment, but they cannot change it. They must vote either for or against an amendment as it stands. The April 22 issue presented the 23 proposed amendments that deal with changes to name and structure of The UMC. This issue presents overviews of Proposed Amendments 1 and 19. The May 6 issue will cover the remaining seven proposed amendments. —Newscope]

Proposed Amendment 1 would clarify that all people are eligible to attend worship services and receive the sacraments by striking the words "without regard to race, color, national origin, status or other economic condition." The Constitution now states that after baptism and taking vows declaring the Christian faith, people may become professing members in any local church. The proposed paragraph adds a clause stating they must also declare their "relationship in Jesus Christ." Writing in the March/April 2009 issue of *Good News* magazine, the Rev. Walter B. Fenton, a clergy member in New Jersey, calls this amendment "potentially divisive" and "an indirect attempt by special interest groups to ensure the acceptance and full participation of self-avowed practicing homosexuals in all areas of the life of the church." Following a 2005 Judicial Council ruling supporting the decision of a pastor in Virginia not to allow a gay man to join his congregation, the Council of Bishops issued a letter stating: "We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."

Proposed Amendment 19 would allow all clergy members of annual conferences to vote to elect clergy delegates to general, jurisdictional or central conferences. Only ordained elders and deacons in full connection now vote. This amendment would extend voting privileges to associate members, provisional members who have completed all of their educational requirements and local pastors who have completed course of study or a Master of Divinity degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment immediately preceding the election. The Rev. Mary Ann Moman of the Division of Ordained Ministry of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry said that if this amendment

passes, associate members, provisional members and qualifying local pastors would be able to vote for delegates to the 2012 General Conference in spite of the fact that Para. 602 of *The Book of Discipline 2008* states that they are ineligible to vote. — *J. Richard Peck, UMM*

Michigan UMs to Plant Trees

Thousands of northern Michigan UMs will help plant 12,000 trees across a 400-mile area of Michigan's Upper Peninsula in honor of Earth Day 2009. The interfaith Upper Peninsula EarthKeeper Tree Project will distribute the white spruce and red pine seedlings to more than 100 congregations in all corners of the region, said Gail Griffith, EarthKeeper Implementation Team co-chair. The Rev. Grant R. Lobb, UM Marquette District superintendent, called planting a tree "a gift for the next generation," improving air quality, stabilizing the soil, providing shade, and giving beauty. A blessing of the trees ceremony took place at 3:30 p.m. on Earth Day, April 22, next to the Presque Isle Park pavilion in Marquette. Congregations will pick up trees at local conservation district offices in the Upper Peninsula on May 2 and plant them anywhere they decide.

The EarthKeeper team includes ten faith traditions—UM, Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Unitarian-Universalist, Bahai, Jewish, Zen Buddhist and Quaker—with over 150 participating churches and temples. Other participants include the Superior Watershed Partnership and the Cedar Tree Institute. "Environmental health has always been a concern for UMs," said Lobb, whose district has 8,372 parishioners and 60 northern Michigan congregations.

Experts say 12,000 mature trees absorb 3 million pounds of carbon dioxide annually and produce enough oxygen to support 24,000 humans. "Our interfaith tree planting effort is more than another conservation project," explained the Rev. Jon Magnuson, Cedar Tree Institute executive director and EarthKeeper Initiative co-founder. "With prayers, hymns and the blessing of 12,000 seedlings, it's a gentle proclamation of a new consciousness and commitment among our faith communities to care for God's creation." —*Greg Peterson, for UMNS*

Short Takes

UMs lead the nation in number of God and Country Awards. Over 7,000 young people received one of four awards offered by Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (PRAY) during 2008. That total leads all denominations in usage of the St. Louis-based program that provides God and Me, God and Family, God and Church and God and Life for young people of various ages. The God and Country Award Program uses Bible lessons paired with service projects to help young people grow in their Christian faith and to express that faith by serving others. Some pastors combine the awards program with confirmation classes. The UM portion of this program is coordinated by the General Commission on United Methodist Men (UMM). A total of 28 denominations participated in the PRAY program, including independent denominations, Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Episcopalians, and Evangelical Lutherans. For information about PRAY, contact Larry Coppock or Marc Stowe, staff executives with the UMM (866-297-4312; mstowe@gcummm.org). —*UMM*

A federal court on March 30, 2009, directed Boulder County, Colo. to approve an expansion proposal by Rocky Mountain Christian Church of Niwot, Colo. The ruling follows a trial last November in which a jury found that the county had violated the church's civil rights under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). The court's order directs the county to approve a zoning application filed by the church in 2004, seeking permission to expand its existing facilities, which are used both by the church and by Rocky Mountain Christian Academy, a private school. The jury found that in processing the church's application, the county had violated RLUIPA by treating the church less favorably than a similarly situated secular school. RLUIPA was passed unanimously by both houses of Congress and signed into law by President Clinton in 2000. "Congress heard massive amounts of testimony concerning the abuses suffered by religious organizations in the land use process, and those same abuses happened in this case," Tom Macdonald, one of the attorneys representing the church, said. ". . . and without RLUIPA, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to develop the evidence necessary to prove the case," he added. —*Arizona Ecumenical Council*

Forthcoming Events

A pair of Fair Trade artisans from Peru will visit 12 cities and towns in Colorado, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois from May 1-17, 2009. The tour—sponsored by Partners for Just Trade and Green America—will help to put a human face on the enormous changes that fair trade can make in the lives of individuals in developing nations. Fair trade is an ethical alternative to conventional trade that ensures that farmers and artisans receive a fair price for their products. The two artisans, Evangelina Pizarro (the founder of a cooperative of jewelers) and Ayde Riveros (a member of a cooperative of knitters), will be traveling for the first time from Peru. The pair will provide firsthand accounts of how the purchase of Fair Trade products directly improves the lives of farmers and artisans in the global south. For the bios of the artisans and more details about the Partners for Just Trade/Green America tour, Resonating Change: Connecting Communities Through Fair Trade, go to <http://www.fairtradetour.org>.

The Rev. Dr. James C. Howell, senior pastor of Myers Park UMC in Charlotte, N.C., will preach May 17 and 24 on Day 1, a nationally broadcast radio program also accessible online at Day1.org. Each program features a sermon preached by Howell along with interviews conducted by the programs host and executive producer, Peter Wallace. Formerly known as The Protestant Hour, Day 1 has been broadcast every week for 64 years, winning numerous awards in the process, including the George Foster Peabody Award and the Communicators Award for Excellence in inspirational radio. Distributed to more than 190 radio stations, Day 1 is produced by the Alliance for Christian Media in association with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ and The UMC. Before coming to Myers Park in 2003, Rev. Howell served for 12 years as senior pastor of Davidson (N.C.) UMC. A frequent contributor to a number of journals and periodicals, he is the author of a dozen books, including *Conversations with St. Francis* (Abingdon Press, 2008; available at Cokesbury.com). Howell is also an adjunct professor of preaching at Duke University Divinity School, where he earned master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees.

Personalia

Colleen Perry Keith has been named as the seventh president of UM-related Spartanburg Methodist College, effective July 1. She is replacing retiring college president Charles Teague, who served for 12 years.....**Dan McAlexander** was elected as the 25th president of UM-related LaGrange (Ga.) College, effective July 1. He replaces college president Stuart Guley, who will become the president of Woodward Academy in Atlanta.....Westminster John Knox Press is deeply saddened to report the death of executive editor, **Stephanie Egnotovich**, who passed away on April 13, 2009, in Arlington, Va., after a brief illness. Stephanie had been with WJK since 1992. Condolences may be sent to the family at 821 Larch Valley Court, Leesburg, VA 20176. Donations in Stephanie's memory may be made to the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation, 383 Main Avenue, 5th Floor, Norwalk, CT 06851. <http://www.multiplemyeloma.org>

Positions Available

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