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## XII Reports

### BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray, ...too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, ...Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Colossians 4:2-6

The vision for the Board of Discipleship, as developed by the conference Director of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation in early 2012 was stated as such: “To foster and promote a holistic approach to the development of Christian disciples through prayer, preparation and practice.” Goals were developed so that the board might work with local congregations, age level ministries and districts to strengthen discipleship throughout Western Pennsylvania. Spiritual formation was a central component to the board’s vision and goal setting process.

The Children’s Ministry Team, with the support of the Board of Discipleship and the 2012 annual conference session’s team, initiated and presented a children’s ministry affirmation at annual conference. A liturgy in support of children, written by Jim Ritchie, was read by the delegates during a worship service. Colorful chair covers, made by children throughout the conference, gave the delegates a gentle reminder that the WPA conference values children and affirms leaders in ministry to children.

In February, the annual Children’s Leaders Forum was held at the conference center. The forum began as a gathering of church leaders in a regional setting. Each year the gathering – and the subsequent network of participants – expands to other regions of the conference. In 2012, the participants engaged in discussions that were pertinent to their responsibilities. Written evaluations concluded that sharing vital resources, procedures and mutual concerns were valued by all participants. This type of networking within the conference is a model for how other age level ministries might communicate.

Each year the board spends discussion time on the annual conference vision, mission and core value. It should be stated that those on the board take seriously and care deeply about “igniting and sustaining a passionate, spiritual connection with Christ among ALL people in Western Pennsylvania.” Thus, the words of Paul to the Colossians speak to us today. The board works toward and prays for the awakening of our people to the full body of Christ both within and outside our church doors. We grow stronger in faith and more positive in hope as we acknowledge the possibilities.

Mary Lou Lazear, Chair

### EVANGELISM

The Evangelism Team continues to plan and organize training events focused on equipping laity and pastors for more effective and fruitful evangelistic efforts. Under Ken Duffee’s leadership, we held three Schools of Evangelism at sites throughout the conference in order to equip as many people with practical help to reach the culture around them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We continue to vision ways to reach out into the individual districts and churches to identify evangelists, both lay and clergy, to equip them to do the work of evangelism and to motivate them to go!

During 2012 we planned the 2013 Clinic on Evangelism scheduled for April 20th at Charter Oak in Greensburg District and April 21st at Indiana Grace and Lakeside

UMC in DuBois. Mark Mittelberg will be keynote as a motivational and equipping speaker as well as a Christian apologetic teacher. This event will help ordinary Christians feel comfortable sharing their faith in every day circumstances and will give them answers for the tough questions that sometimes keep us fearful of sharing our faith. The Conference Parish and Community Development committee has partnered with us to bring this event to our conference and provide resources in the form of books to equip our people to go and make disciples.

We continue to fulfill our relationship with our Conference General Evangelist. Our responsibilities with the General Evangelist include annual evaluations, recommending them to the Annual Conference and promoting them throughout our conference. We have policies and guidelines for General Evangelist. This information will inform those who desire to explore the calling of General Evangelist and provide guidelines and expectations for those who are currently approved General Evangelist.

One of our ongoing challenges is to develop ways to provide training opportunities throughout our conference on the district and local church levels. Another ongoing challenge is develop a holistic understanding of evangelism. In essence evangelism is witnessing the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed by proclaiming it in various settings and contexts and living it out in practical and visible ways. It is an integral part of discipleship and not just a segmented part of the Christian life; therefore, a holistic understanding of evangelism will encompass the varied theological focuses of our conference and inform all of the different avenues of ministry and mission carried out by our local churches.

We covet your prayers as we seek to fulfill our responsibilities in the Western PA Conference to provide leadership, connection and resources to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world through an effective evangelistic outreach.

Paul Morelli, Chair

#### CONFERENCE CONNECTIONAL TABLE

The leadership structure of the Western PA Conference of The United Methodist Church has changed. The desire is that this new structure will allow our leaders to feel more connected with one another and our mutual ministry. Our hope is to minister in the following ways:

- As servants, coordinate the work and ministry of the Annual Conference.
- As decision-makers, address the policy and fiscal questions regarding the work and ministry of the Annual Conference.
- As representatives, listen and (not being in conflict with the *Book of Discipline*) respond to requests, ideas and questions for the conference laity, clergy, churches and agencies.
- As communicators, provide information related to General boards and agencies (such as the Connectional Table) to and from district committees and local congregations.

Our Connectional Table consists of the chairperson of the Table, The Chair of the four Ministry Teams (Nurture, Outreach, Witness and Administrative), eight members at large (four clergy and four laity) Conference Lay Leader, Dean of the Cabinet, Director of Conference Ministries, Director of Administrative Services, and Bishop.

The four Ministry Teams meet with their Chairs at self-determined times and as often as deemed necessary. The Conference Connectional Table meets on a monthly basis “to coordinate the mission, ministries, and resources of the” (§901 *Book of Discipline*) Conference and to continually keep before us our mission and vision and core value.

Louise Patterson, Chair

#### CONFERENCE TREASURER

The Finance Department at the Annual Conference continues to change and grow and find different ways to serve our churches and our pastors.

2012 was a year for making changes that will further accommodate our billings to local churches. The Conference Board of Pensions voted in 2012 to bring the billing for hospitalization and pension back in to the Conference Finance Department. After two rather disjointed experiences with third party billing companies we decided that our churches would be better served if our Conference Finance Staff did the billing in these areas. Staff spent several weeks in training and the launch for in house billing will be in April 2013. Kathleen Lasky, Administrative Assistant in Benefits, has been brought to full time.

Our Finance Staff has also begun the process of offering ACH payments for local churches to pay apportionments, health care and pension on line. This will be launched sometime in 2013 as well.

We added a new event in 2012 – a two-day opportunity for clergy to meet one-on-one with staff from the General Board of Pensions to look at their retirement projections. We had close to eighty pastors take advantage of this provision.

Our ministry to surviving spouses continues. We have created a ministry team for Surviving Spouses and we called them all into active duty in 2012 as they each had difference delegates to General Conference from Western Pennsylvania to pray for.

In 2012 our Finance Staff began to meet on a regular basis. Our first focus was on our web page. We are planning many improvements in our page. All forms are now available to be completed online. In the future we will have voice overs on all the forms to give specific instructions on how a form should be completed.

The 2011 audit is complete and the full audit is available in the 2012 Conference *Journal*.

We continue to be thankful for people who volunteer to serve our Annual Conference in so many ways. We especially want to thank those individuals on CFA, Trustees and the Conference Board of Pensions.

Personally I need to express my love and gratitude to the Finance Staff. Their support, dedication and experience are invaluable to me and to all members of our Annual Conference. I’m very proud of our staff and want you to know that you, too, can be proud of them.

Patricia A. Morris, Treasurer

#### COUNCIL ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

In 2012, General Conference met and made several changes to our United Methodist *Book of Discipline*. In the area governing the operation and instructions for the Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A), ¶611-619, there were no

significant changes. However, ¶611 states that every Annual Conference shall have a Council on Finance & Administration whose purpose is to provide for the functions of this ministry and maintain the connectional relationships. It is further stated in ¶612 that CF&A is directly amenable to the Annual Conference, and is required to report to the annual conference. While the Council on Finance & Administration is primarily tasked with developing, maintaining, and overseeing the financial plan for the Western PA Conference of The United Methodist Church, it is also tasked with creating administrative policies and procedures by which the supervision of the financial management services for the Annual Conference may be accomplished.

The mission of the Council on Finance & Administration is, and has always been, to faithfully assist, sustain, and support all of the ministries of our Annual Conference. This is done in order to live up to the requirement of maintaining the connectional relationships in this Annual Conference. This is not only a service that is provided for the conference center staff, but for the Conference Agencies and their representatives, the conference Committees and Ministry Teams, and more importantly, for the local church as well. The standards to which the Council on Finance & Administration holds itself and the financial and administrative services of the Annual Conference are the highest Christian ethical principles of integrity, transparency and trustworthiness, as well as faithful fiscal accountability.

As required by the *Discipline*, the Council on Finance & Administration recommends an annual budget to the Annual Conference that consists of anticipated income from the Connectional Apportionment, designated investments, and other fund sources such as program fees, capital campaigns, and other revenue sources. The annual budget lists all expenditures related to the anticipated benevolences, programs, clergy support, General Church obligations, and administrative costs. In addition to the annual budget, the Council on Finance & Administration monitors income and distribution of funds to insure that spending is in accordance with the directive of the Annual Conference as expressed through the approved budget, and consistent with generally accepted and approved financial practices.

The Council on Finance & Administration works closely with the Financial Department at the conference center, and is responsible for the oversight of the Conference Treasurer and the financial and administrative staff of the conference. CF&A and the Conference Finance Department staff also directly work with our auditors, overseeing the teams work to insure that the conference's fiscal responsibilities are carried out with the highest possible accuracy and integrity according to accepted standards of accounting. We also work carefully and are directly responsible for the oversight of the auditing function performed by the Conference Finance Staff, and report all of those audits in the Annual Conference *Journal*.

Every year, the Western PA Conference reviews its' operating instructions, and every year CF&A also reviews those rules and regulations as outlined in Conference Rule 3.4. In 2012 at our gathering, the churches of Western Pennsylvania passed legislation to change how the structure of the Conference Committees and Ministry Teams function as a group. RS201 was adopted not only to change the name of the Conference Leadership Team, but also how those committees and groups report to it. This means that we will be changing the look of our Annual Conference Budget for 2014 in order to live into the changes that our local churches asked of us. Part of our work on CF&A is to continue to

keep the connectional relationships operating, and we look forward to working with the new Conference Connectional Leadership Team and the Ministry Teams in the upcoming years.

We continue to strive to provide the best overall plan for financing the ministries of the churches of Western Pennsylvania, and we continue to keep the ministry of the local church at the forefront of those prayers. This year, Bishop Bickerton is asking the Cabinet, all of the Leadership Teams, all of the Conference Committees, and all of the local churches to look for ways to fill several gaps in our ministry, and live into these four categories of ministry focus. I encourage everyone to read through the 2014 budget with the “lens of ministry” that will see a focus on disciple making, renewed spirituality, principled leadership development, and new places for new people.

The Council on Finance & Administration is privileged to serve the Annual Conference, its ministries, and its agencies. As we venture together in ministry with one another, we continue to ask for your prayers and support as we try to find ways to reduce our operating costs while staying consistent and true to our task of ministry. Please continue to keep us in prayer, and keep the ministry of the Conference Connectional Leadership Team and their Ministry Teams and Committees in your prayers, as they look for ways to develop ministry opportunities that bring us together as an Annual Conference, and give each of our churches the opportunity to do ministry together that we could not do alone.

Thank you for your support and prayers, as we serve Christ together.

Paul Ritchey, Chair

#### BOARD OF PENSIONS

Finance Committee, Board of Pensions

Jesus said “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:47-48).

The Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits has been entrusted with much. Every year our local congregations entrust us with valuable congregational resources to be used to provide for the healthcare and retirement needs of those who serve our congregations. As a Board and in particular as a Finance Committee, we recognize that managing these resources is an incredible responsibility that demands much of us.

In the 2012-2013 appointment year the Committee has worked hard to ensure that our financial resources are distributed with faithfulness and integrity. To that end we have focused our efforts in the following areas: the utilization of the Pre-82 plan overfunding, the adequacy of our reserves for active and retiree medical, investment and investment manager review, and documentation of our investment policies.

With respect to the Pension Plan, there are currently three parts to the plan. Years of service prior to 1982 are part of the Pre-82 plan. Years of service from January 1, 1982 through 2006 are under the MPP, Ministerial Protection Plan, and a defined contribution plan during the years of accumulation. Service beginning January 1, 2007 to the present is covered under the CRSP, Clergy Retirement Security Plan, with both defined benefit and defined contribution elements. Each segment of this three-part plan has its own set of rules for benefit calculations.

As in prior years the Pre-82 plan has continued to be overfunded. Each church with a full time pastor participating in the current CRSP plan has been relieved of about \$6,000 a year for each of the years 2007-13 as the result of designating a portion of the overfunding of the Pre-82 plan to cover the required contributions to the Defined Benefit portion of the CRSP plan. The Committee reviewed the funded status of each component of the plan and has proposed legislation to the Board to continue redirection of Pre-82 overfunding to cover the Conference's required contribution to the Defined Benefit portion of the CRSP plan in 2014 and the Committee expects to do the same for 2015.

With respect to our active medical reserves, the Committee closely reviewed the increased medical claims experienced in 2012. The analysis centered on the adequacy of the reserves and whether any excess amounts exist to permit the allocation of medical costs (apportioned monthly) to the local churches to be maintained at 2012 levels. After careful review and deliberation, the committee recommended to the Board that the full increase in healthcare costs/ premiums could not be absorbed by our medical reserves. Consequently, after four years local congregations will see an increase in healthcare costs for 2013.

In 2011, the Finance Committee recommended and the full board implemented the redirection of \$4.5 million from the Pre-82 overfunding to cover a considerable portion of the underfunding of our post-retirement medical liability. As a result of the current year's review of the retiree medical obligation and the market returns on the Pre-82 funds, it was determined to defer any additional redirection during 2012.

This year we formalized our investment review process and conducted review meetings with two of our investment custodians and advisors, Wespath and the United Methodist Foundation. These periodic review meetings will allow the Committee to more closely monitor investment results and seek changes in investment strategy with respect to specific funds. Also, the Committee has undertaken to document our investment policies including the creation of specific account documentation to provide information on the intended use for each account, board or other account restrictions, investment strategy, etc. We are working toward a comprehensive funding plan for all benefit obligations.

We celebrate these decisions as fruit of faithful stewardship over many years in our Conference. We are thankful to serve in this way and pray God's blessing on all those who have so faithfully served our congregations.

Steven White, Committee Chair

#### Administrative Committee, Board of Pensions

The primary tasks of this committee are as follows: We support our conference Benefits Officer and Treasurer's staff in all that they do for our congregations, clergy, and conference. We work at resolving any concerns our clergy may have about their retirement. We review, source and administer Carnahan Grants and other hardship grants (such as the Farmer fund, etc.) We plan implementation of legislation, rate changes and identify issues of equity and process.

This past year we sponsored a day of one on one retirement conferences at the conference center to give clergy an opportunity to speak with representatives from the General Board of Pensions. There were 44 who took advantage of this opportunity, and we had a waiting list.

We continued our efforts to keep in contact with our surviving spouses. A team is at work to provide activities to help keep our surviving spouses involved in our conference. Many were active participants in a prayer ministry or our Conference delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences.

We also continued making contact with our clergy who are on disability leave and those receiving Carnahan Grants to keep the connection alive and well for them.

The committee's biggest task this past year was supporting our staff in the preparation for transition from CDS, our outside billing and collection company for health and pensions, to in house billing and collection. A special thanks to Larry Bridge, Kathleen Lasky and Sally Bickerton for their hard work.

Gary Grau, Committee Chair

#### Health Care Committee, Board of Pensions

During 2012 the Health Care Committee continued to wrestle with many of the issues surrounding health care for clergy, their families, and lay employees participating in our plan. Given the rise in our health care claims over the last few years, we are faced with a possible 10-12% increase in our program costs for the coming years. As a result, we are seeking ways to control costs while maintaining a quality plan. To this end, we increased the deductibles and out of pocket maximum amounts in 2013.

Another, more effective, strategy for reducing costs is to increase awareness of preventive health measures that can lead to healthier plan participants. Active participation in preventive care programs have been shown to significantly reduce the cost of health care plans. To that end, we made plan changes to remove copayments for preventive care activities. We are also exploring ways to give plan participants incentive to make healthy choices each and every day. To date, we have had minimal participation in our preventive care programs. As we continue on this path, it is important for our plan participants to take an active role in their health care, by taking advantage of preventive health measures, such as the wellness awareness profiles offered by UPMC. By working together and helping each other make healthy lifestyle choices, we can begin to positively affect our health care costs while also improving the overall health of our plan participants.

In the ever changing and increasingly expensive world of health care, we are doing everything we can to make our plan sustainable into the future. While the work is hard, we are committed to staying the course and securing a quality health care program for our participants.

Don Inman, Committee Chair

My thanks to our Pension Board members and to our conference staff for their help, support, patience and hard work. Much good work is being accomplished by the Pension Board.

Terry Lyon, Board of Pensions Chair

#### UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

The Board of Directors and Staff of the Foundation continue to look to the future and assess how to respond to ever changing needs. They are constantly seeking to be more responsive to the needs of congregations, individuals and agencies. To this end,



many exciting changes have occurred this year to enhance our ministry. The following outlines the highlights of our 2012 accomplishments.

As the electronic dependent culture continues to grow, the Foundation responded by providing three webinar based program. Karen Petrucelli presented a broad brush overview of the grant writing process that resulted in much greater quality in the submissions to the Foundation. The Annual Meeting was broadcast live to anyone that could not be present. In the fall, Lisa Young led a webinar on preparing for a capital campaign. Lisa has also authored our new Capital Campaign program, Growing Faithful Ministries. In all instances, following the live presentations, they were available on our web site.

In a continuing effort at convenience and simplicity, PDF forms were added to the website. This now allows churches to complete grant applications, requests for services and memorandum of agreements electronically and submit them by email.

In addition to the electronic presentations, several face to face events were also presented. The popular Clergy Tax program was repeated. A fourth class of the Pastors Academy for Stewardship Formation was initiated. And, seminars were presented on financial planning for Provisional Members as well as a high level session on Investing in Turbulent Times.

With the continual changes in the investment markets, the Foundation revised its long standing Investment Policy in order that changes in investments could be made on a more nimble timeline. Also, some new asset classes were added to assist in mitigating the long term volatility of the fund. In addition to these changes, Millcreek Capital Advisors was hired to replace Gallagher Fiduciary Advisors as our Investment Consultant. Over two million dollars in new funds were deposited this year to provide the long term support of ministry. Board has acted to keep the income distribution for 2013 at 4.45% of the trailing 3 year average market value. This is the same level of income distribution as 2012, but will result in a higher distribution in real dollars.

In November the Foundation celebrated its traditional celebration of Founders Day. The recipient of the 2012 award was Franklin Blackstone, Past Chair of the Jumonville Foundation.

The Foundation also experienced changes with the addition of four new members of the Board of Directors as well as the change in Legal Counsel. However, perhaps the more daunting activity was the creation of a search committee to ultimately replace our Executive Director with his retirement in 2014. With a committed Board and a talented staff, we continue to seek to provide programs and education that will result in long term support for ministry.

N. James Sekel, Chair, Board of Directors  
Frederick H. Leasure, Executive Director

#### ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

The role of the Commission on Archives & History is “collect, preserve, and make accessible the historical significant records” (§641.2, *Book of Discipline*) of the conference, its agencies, and the churches.

One of our goals is to make the Archives Center more accessible. We believe that our archive is one of the best kept secrets in the Conference. We are looking into ways we can have the center open to both visitors and students at Allegheny College.

Norman C. Young has compiled pastoral records for as long as anyone can remember. His last edition was completed and is being published. He has turned over the updating to our Conference Secretary, John R. Wilson. This Conference owes Norman a huge debt of gratitude for his dedication, research, and time in compiling these records.

We continue to maintain the Research Center. Several work days have allowed us to record and file records that come into the center during the year.

We look for other ways that we can be of service to both the conference and to the local churches.

Edwin J. Herald, Chair

#### EQUITABLE COMPENSATION

The purpose of the Commission on Equitable Compensation as expressed in the 2012 *Book of Discipline* is to “support full-time clergy serving as pastors in the charges of the annual conference” (§625.2). This includes “recommending conference standards for pastoral support...administering funds to be used in base compensation supplementation... providing counsel and advisory material on pastoral support to district superintendents and committees on pastor-parish relations...and submitting an arrearage policy to be adopted by the annual conference.” (§625.2)

One of the major roles of the Commission is to review carefully each year the application form for Equitable Compensation Grants. Each local church discerning a need for additional pastoral support may make an application to receive grant money from the Annual Conference to support their local church’s pastor’s salary. Once the application is signed by the District Superintendent and all the necessary supportive documents (i.e., an audit from the previous year, and a budget for that year) are received, the application is reviewed by the commission. If the application is in order and is approved, a grant is issued not to exceed 30% of the conference minimum base cash compensation. If Equitable Compensation is needed for more than a year, it is reduced each year by 25%. During the 2012 year the Commission on Equitable Compensation or the CEC’s budget funded pastoral support for twelve (12) appointed clergy in relation to over sixteen (16) local churches with five appointments receiving funds for both six month periods.

The Chair currently serves on the Conference Connectional Network and meets with other groups and agencies when necessary.

Corben M. Russell, Chair

#### DISABILITY CONCERNS COMMITTEE

The Disability Concerns Committee has spent the last 18 months in a period of re-visioning who we are and what God is calling us to do. While the *Book of Discipline* is a good starting point, there is a lot of leeway in how we move forward in accomplishing the tasks we are charged with doing. With new leadership and many new members we have been spending time dreaming dreams and making plans for how those dreams might become reality in the WPAUMC.

We began an awareness campaign at the 2012 Annual Conference along the theme “Who Do You See/Who Does God See” that focused on getting people to examine how they view persons with disabilities. The culture in our churches will only change as each one of us examines our own attitudes toward those often pushed into the margins. When each of us owns our prejudices it is then, that we can begin to make the changes

that will create places of love, acceptance, and true belonging for all people. We were also successful in passing legislation that will add one member from each of our ten Districts to our committee. This will position us to be better able to meet needs for training and providing resources in our local churches.

We held a spirituality retreat for persons affected by disability at Olmsted Manor in the fall. This annual event is a time of fellowship and spiritual renewal for its participants. Several grants for local churches to assist with the cost of accessibility and attitudinal changes were awarded. One of these will help provide hands on training for our clergy and laity in the area of serving those affected by autism spectrum disorder. We also were able to get a web page set up on the Conference website. It is here that we are attempting to make a variety of information and resources available to assist local churches and groups move toward full inclusion and acceptance of those affected by disability.

Several cooperative projects have been initiated. Collaboration with the Health as Wholeness Team has resulted in an initiative to train and equip both clergy and laity as they minister with those affected by mental illness. Collaboration with the United Methodist Task Force on Disability Ministries (as of 1/1/2013, it now has standing committee status) resulted in the completion of an updated disability accessibility audit for use in each local church. This instrument will help our churches identify physical and attitudinal accessibility issues and then plan and make the needed changes to eliminate areas of concern. Training for clergy, trustees, and other interested laity learning to use this audit will begin in WPA in the spring 2013. A second project with the UM Committee on Disability Ministries is working to develop an advanced lay ministry course that will equip laity in our churches to make the needed changes in their context that will create places of welcome and belonging for those affected by disability. This will be piloted in the North Alabama Conference this year and will hopefully be offered in WPA within the next year.

2012 has produced positive strides and much planning within the Disability Concerns Committee. We are hopeful that in 2013 we will begin to see positive change in the culture of our churches and agencies in how those affected by disability are included within the full life of the church. While we know these changes will take time, we believe that with God all things are possible. We look forward to a time when all our churches will welcome, include, and create true places of belonging for all God's children.

Debbie Hills, Chair

#### HEALTH AS WHOLENESS

The mission of the Health As Wholeness Team is to provide leadership, connections, and resources that will assist the people of Western Pennsylvania in living lives that are wholistically healthy---in body, mind, and spirit. This will enable them to more effectively fulfill the mission of The United Methodist Church, "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Our vision is to develop "communities of wholistic wellness" throughout the conference.

This past year we again co-sponsored another 38 hour Faith Community Nurse Course. Twelve (12) nurses (3 United Methodist) and 3 health ministers completed the course and were commissioned. We would like to create a data base of all faith

community nurses and health ministers within the conference in order to better provide information and resources.

Mentoring and consultations regarding Faith Community Nursing, Health Ministry and wholistic health programs and resources have been provided as needed.

We collaborated with a Partnership between Church Union, Hill Top Health Ministry Consortium, and Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program which received a grant from the National Library of Medicine to train faith community nurses and health ministers in the use of their vast and vetted online health information resources.

Interest in the Golden Sneaker Award/On-line Walk Challenge and programs related to it continue. Getting information about the program into the appropriate hands in the congregations remains our biggest challenge. This has become a wonderful tool to provide health education and promotion information.

We also collaborated with the Disability Concerns Team to co- sponsor a conference for clergy on mental illness - The Cross between Spirituality and Mental Illness: Caring for persons with mental illness.

A team member was sent to be trained to facilitate the Mental Health First Aid 12 hour course. This person will be available to provide these trainings for all WPA UM congregations and agencies. We will continue to provide trainings and resources on mental illness in the next year.

Work with Erie United Methodist Alliance (EUMA) in developing health ministry's for the homeless and underserved included participation in a 7 week Preceptor Program with a LECOM first year medical student who provided various health education and promotion opportunities.

Barbara Lewis, Coordinator

#### COSROW

The WPA Conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. We presented the Bishop and Annual Conference with cake to celebrate.

COSROW worked with an ad hoc committee to perfect and co-sign RS 206 Crisis Response Study Team and RS 207 Sexual Harassment Policy. Both pieces of legislation were approved by Annual Conference.

COSROW sponsored the HiRho Park, Director of Clergy Lifelong Learning at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, to speak at the Clergy Women's Lunch and the UMW dinner during AC'2012. She also addressed the Annual Conference. Unfortunately, at a time when she was without an escort after having addressed the body, she was approached by an older, white male who demanded to know by what right she addressed the body.

COSROW monitored Annual Conference 2012. This is the second year of monitoring. This year Gender and Race were collected on the registration material. The delegates were 93% White, .41% Asian, .16% Hispanic, .16% Native American and 1.97% African-American.

COSROW continues to focus on assessing the inclusiveness of our leadership throughout the conference, monitoring of AC'13 and addressing needs identified through the monitoring.

Peggy Ward and Lota Jones, co-chairs

#### CRISIS RESPONSE STUDY TEAM

The 2012 session of the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference approved legislation entitled RS 206 "Sexual Harassment Policy for Professing Members and Clergy of the Western PA Conference of The United Methodist Church." This legislation obligated the Conference Connectional Network to name a study team.

After consultation with the Bishop, the Cabinet, the Conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women, the Conference Commission on Religion and Race, and Disability Concerns Committee, the Crisis Response Study Team was formed. The work of the team will be funded from the Conference Connectional Network Pool.

In December, the Cabinet reviewed the history and obligations of RS 206. The bulk of the discussion revolved around how the annual conference might respond to people and churches in crisis.

The Crisis Response Study Team held an organizational meeting in January. A general description of the team's scope and responsibilities was given.

After reviewing the purpose and history of the study team, the team made two decisions at its organizational meeting to meet its reporting deadline of March 2013. First, Cindy Schneider, Chair of Outreach on the Connectional Leadership Table was to be contacted to be the liaison between the Study Team and the Connectional Leadership Team. Second the Study Team adopted a three year framework to guide their work and reporting requirements.

The goal of completion of our work is Annual Conference 2015. In order to get there, we have been developing a history of the actions to date and are in the process of studying the issues and problems we face. We have received \$10,000 from the CLT for the purpose of resourcing our work for Conference year 2013-2014. By Annual Conference 2014 we will have recommended solutions to our issues and problems. By 2015 we will have an implementation plan for responding to crises within the churches of our conference and a request for resources to sustain the response teams.

Bob Zilhaver and Keith Dunn

#### POVERTY TEAM

The Poverty Team is very pleased to report that the funds we have provided to local ministries have reaped exciting rewards as the congregations and communities strive to work WITH the poor in their communities.

From the beginning, we set our goals to be:

- Educate clergy and laity regarding poverty concerns
- Ignite a passion for social justice
- Empower churches to make a difference by providing valuable resources

With much discernment we have been able in the last two years to see these goals realized in several ways by providing grants for both poverty related ministries and training grants.

- We have provided start-up funds to two Circles Programs:

- o Center Ave. UMC in Pitcairn, which has also mobilized considerable additional fundraising from foundations in order to hire staff and expand their Circles ministry
- o Arnold UMC who are in the beginning phases of Circles, but have graduated a class of “Getting Ahead” Families.
- Slippery Rock UMC received funds for their “Brady Hills Bunch” program which provides summer programming and expanded to other supports for the children in a low income community in Slippery Rock.
- Eighth Avenue Place for Internship program
- Jefferson Ave. & West Washington UMC in Washington PA for street health ministries in partnership with Turning Point, Inc.,
- Brush Run UMC for supplying additional items to a food pantry, such as cleaning supplies, loaning vacuum sweepers, paper products.
- Hot Metal Bridge faith community for two of their feeding programs
- Pine Run UMC, Clairton, expansion of Parish Nurse Program
- Cherry Tree UMC for supplements to a local food bank program
- Kane District, Love INC; an ecumenical ministry with six UMCs involved which provides resource coordination and services
- Erie United Methodist Alliance for necessary renovations and to provide seed money for further grants
- Connellsville Community Ministries for renovation of living spaces for families and moving expenses
- Newell UMC for a program that will help people navigate the bureaucracy of welfare and social security

In addition we have provided training subsidies to Connellsville District for a special event featuring Tanya Rains from the Upper Sand Mountain Parish in Alabama.

We also provided training subsidies to nine people to attend conferences and training events related to poverty ministries. As the result of this money Baldwin UMC is holding a study on poverty and beginning to plan ahead for other outreach programs. Several other ministries have benefited from the return on participants attendance at the training events.

Additionally we purchased new supplies for Poverty Simulations. We presented a Poverty Simulation at the 2012 School for Christian Mission. We are planning a minimum of one simulation per year, however we have projected at least three this year.

There is considerable interest in expanding and developing additional Circles programs throughout the conference.

During the fiscal year of 2012 we granted \$11,100 to poverty ministries, and \$190 to training subsidies. During the fiscal year of 2011 we granted \$8,000 to poverty ministries, and \$707 in training subsidies.

Glenna P. Wilson, Chair

#### HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAMPUS MINISTRY

Higher Education and Campus Ministry continues to assist in funding ministries to campus ministry outreach through local churches. There are also scholarships awarded to students for higher education.

In 2012 the following scholarships were awarded: One Merit Scholarship (\$850), and Three Endowment Scholarships (\$9,000). The Merit Scholarship is awarded

from funds received by our Annual conference portion of the United Methodist Student Day offering. There are several endowments for scholarships, each with particular requirements. This year not all of them had sufficient funds available to award scholarships.

Five Campus ministry grants were distributed for a total of \$7,000. These went to Clarion University, Community of Reconciliation UMC, California UMC, Edinboro UMC and Indiana UMC for ministering to college students.

Linda Chambers, Chair

#### GENERAL BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND MINISTRY

Since returning from Tampa last May, GBHEM staff has been busy with two initiatives assigned to the Board by the 2012 General Conference — the Young Clergy Initiative and the Central Conference Theological Education Fund. In addition to these two major new initiatives, here are some other ways GBHEM is working hard to resource our church:

- GBHEM's Division of Ordained Ministry trained Group Candidacy Mentors for 32 annual conferences, and about 1,000 BOM members, BOM staff, dCOM members, and DSes in ministry legislation for the new quadrennium. Webinars of some trainings are posted at [www.gbhem.org/bom/webinars](http://www.gbhem.org/bom/webinars).
- Work began on the Young Clergy Initiative with a summit held in Nashville. Staff are surveying data about young clergy, mentoring, and debt; and also considering forming partnerships, sharing best practices, and creating or supporting pilot programs to test what works.
- The Commission on Central Conference Theological Education meets August 25-29 in Copenhagen. The commission will set the policies and procedures governing disbursement of funds from the Central Conference Theological Education Fund.
- Africa University just celebrated its twentieth anniversary and is launching a major new fundraising campaign to ensure its financial independence. Since its founding, more than 4,000 AU graduates are changing the face of Africa.
- More than 560 college students, campus ministers, and chaplains attended Imagine What's NEXT last fall, an event which focused on helping students consider the next faithful steps for their vocations, communities, churches, and the world.
- For the 2012-2013 academic year, GBHEM's Office of Loans and Scholarships awarded 2,204 recipients a total of \$4,803,604, all accomplished while converting to a new loans and collections software. Read more at [www.gbhem.org/loansandscholarships](http://www.gbhem.org/loansandscholarships).
- For the first time, an issue of Interpreter magazine was devoted to a single topic — United Methodist higher education. The March / April 2013 issue chronicles the commitment of the denomination to education, with a special emphasis on students.
- Planning is well underway and registration is open for Exploration 2013, a three-day event for young adults age 18-26 to hear, discern, and respond to God's call to ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church. The event will be held in Denver, Colo., on November 15-17. Read more or register at [www.gbhem.org/exploration](http://www.gbhem.org/exploration).
- GBHEM is collaborating with GBOD to raise \$30,000 to buy 100 electronic books preloaded with text for professors and students at the Gbarnga School of Theology in Liberia. Donate online at [www.gbod.org/ereaderproject](http://www.gbod.org/ereaderproject).

- Training materials for annual conference BOMs, presentations from a churchwide sexual ethics summit, and a lecture by a well-known civil rights activist are among the materials now available through the UMC Cyber Campus, part of the new UMC Learn Portal. See the presentations at [www.gbhem.org/umccybercampus](http://www.gbhem.org/umccybercampus)

Terri Hiers, Executive Director, Office of Interpretation

#### AFRICA UNIVERSITY

Africa University is deeply grateful to the Western Pennsylvania Conference for its exemplary leadership in giving to the Africa University Fund (AUF). Thank you, Western Pennsylvania, for your 100% investment to the AUF in 2012. In total, 27 annual conferences met 100% of their asking. Other annual conferences also increased their support and overall giving to the AUF reached a new record of 93.35%.

Your continuing investment ensures that Africa University has dedicated faculty to inspire, train and nurture a generation of new leaders. By giving generously, you provide financial aid and scholarships for needy students. Thanks to you, the university can plan with confidence, knowing that it can rely on the church's ongoing investment in the AUF to meet its day-to-day and operational expenses.

We urge you to continue to invest in the AUF at 100% of the asking, or higher. Demand for an Africa University education is growing. More than 1,200 qualified applicants sought admission in August 2012. The university had space for only about 400 freshmen. Currently, women account for 52% of the total enrollment, which stands at 1,386 students. In addition, 25 African nations are represented in the student body.

Scholarships and financial aid grants are vital to access. More than 90% of the students at Africa University need assistance—scholarships, financial aid grants and work study—in order to pay their tuition and other fees. For the vast majority, a direct or endowed scholarship award made possible by your generosity is their only means of attending university.

Throughout 2012, the 20th anniversary celebrations highlighted the crucial role that Africa University is already playing in the life of our global church. Laishi Bwalya, for example, is superintendent of the Zambia Provisional Conference and a member of the Connectional Table of The United Methodist Church for 2013-2016. Africa University graduates serve as directors on general agency boards and in regional leadership roles. Across Africa, graduates are helping to eradicate hunger, poverty, disease, conflict and hopelessness. When disaster strikes, they lead the church's efforts to mitigate suffering and help communities rebound.

Africa University's full potential is not yet realized. For every graduate, there are hundreds of gifted persons who are praying for a chance to be equipped to serve. That's why Africa University is doubling its efforts to raise scholarships and develop more online distance learning programs. With your gifts and prayers, you have helped to establish a life-changing ministry. Help us to grow this ministry in ways that will continue to make disciples of Jesus Christ who transform communities.

Thank you and please pray for your Africa University. Changing Africa: Learning here. Living here. Leading here. Serving God. All the time. Everywhere.

James H. Salley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement



### BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

What a Year! I am dazzled by the achievements of our faculty, students and staff here at Boston University School of Theology in 2012. This has been a year of deep reflection as we underwent the BU Academic Program Review and the United Methodist University Senate Review. Both reviews went very well and revealed vital strength in our faculty, students, and administrative staff. This has been a year for celebration – our largest ever incoming class, excellence in teaching and learning, and a vibrant community life.

Some highlights from the previous year were:

- Reaching into the greater community through service days, “vocations vacation,” seminary singers tour to Florida, and contextual internships.
- Building up intentional living communities for students: Theology House, Green House, and Mason Terrace.
- Enhancing spiritual life through weekly worship, reading retreats, winter retreat, daily morning prayer, and small groups.
- Creating a “greener” school with: 26 green offices, Carbon Rally Challenge, expanding programs for composting and recycling, and now a 2013 renovation to create a green community center.
- Hosting Lowell Lecture Series on “Restoring Civil Discourse,” featuring Dr. Virginia Sapiro, Bishop Melvin Talbert, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, and Chief Justice Barbara Smith (Chickasaw Nation).
- Traveling with seminar groups to Ephesus (Turkey) and to Israel and Palestine.
- Advancing communication through a new website, the launching of STH Connect, and production of webinars and video resources.

This has been a year for strengthening master’s education and reviewing doctoral programs. It has also been a year for deepening relations with faith communities, service agencies, and global research initiatives, as we seek to intensify STH’s contributions to our fragile world.

Thank you for being a friend of Boston University! We welcome your stories, suggestions, and support for us. STH is on a mission, and we especially covet your prayers for our people and our work. We are praying for you!

Mary Elizabeth Moore, Dean

### CANDLER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Candler School of Theology prepares real people to make a real difference in the real world. Our commitment to authentic discipleship and relevant ministry enables us to develop uniquely well-rounded leaders who are challenged academically, encouraged spiritually, and immersed in Christian service from the first day they arrive on campus.

As one of the 13 official seminaries of The United Methodist Church, Candler is grounded in the Christian faith and shaped by the Wesleyan tradition. As one of seven graduate professional schools of Emory University, Candler provides a rich context for learning and formation supported by the extensive resources of a top-tier research university. As a school located in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Candler offers a learning environment that reflects the highly diverse communities of our 21st century world. There is no better place for ministry preparation that addresses our major

denominational priorities: developing leaders, starting and growing churches, ministry with the poor, and improving global health.

Candler's student body continues to reflect the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful. Our enrollment stands at 478, with 365 seeking the Master of Divinity, 50 the Master of Theological Studies, 30 the Master of Theology, 18 the Doctor of Theology, and 15 enrolled as Special, Non-Degree students. The student population is 32 percent U.S. ethnic minority, 10 percent international, and 50 percent women. Half of MDiv students are United Methodist, with forty-three denominations represented in all programs. The median age of our entering class of MDiv students is 27, with 58 percent under thirty.

Candler remains steadfastly committed to making theological education financially feasible, dedicating nearly \$5 million to financial aid. Eighty percent of eligible students received Candler-based financial aid, with the average award covering 66 percent of tuition.

Construction preparations for the second phase of the Candler's new building got underway at the end of 2012 thanks to an extraordinary gift of \$15 million from the O. Wayne Rollins Foundation. The new building, which will house Pitts Theology Library, community space, additional classrooms and offices, group study areas, and the Wesley Teaching Chapel, will be completed in late spring of 2014 in time for Candler's Centennial Celebration. Candler's phase one building was named in memory of Rita Anne Rollins, the first grandchild of the foundation's namesake, in honor of its generous financial gift.

Candler had an excellent presence at the 2012 General Conference in Tampa. In addition to my attendance, Associate Dean Anne Burkholder took a class of 20 students so they could learn firsthand about United Methodist governance. Assistant Dean Mathew Pinson and Dr. Alice Rogers attended as delegates, and the Candler Singers, directed by Barbara Day Miller, performed at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry reception and the plenary session.

We continue to emphasize preparing our students for leadership in an increasingly global context, and now offer 19 academic exchanges with theology schools across five continents and 15 countries, including many related to The United Methodist Church. In addition to our ongoing summer internship program with the Methodist Church in the Bahamas, this year's travel seminars included the Middle East and World Methodist Evangelism Institute evangelism seminars to Zimbabwe, Peru, and Israel.

Our public events supported our commitment to strengthen the church by offering opportunities for clergy and lay people to hear fresh, new voices. Last fall we hosted Christian activist and bestselling author Shane Claiborne for two major addresses, "Jesus for President" and "Resurrecting Church," with nearly 1,000 in attendance. Our Spring Conference, "The Singing Church," gathered experts to lead an exploration of the best practices and emerging trends of congregational song.

Candler draws considerable strength and inspiration from its relationship with The United Methodist Church. Our ability to fulfill our mission of educating faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries in the world depends upon your support, gifts, and prayers. Thank you for the countless ways you advance this vital ministry in the life of our denomination. Visit us online at [candler.emory](http://candler.emory).

Jan Love, Dean and Professor of Christianity and World Politics

#### DREW UNIVERSITY THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

Drew Theological School, deeply rooted in its United Methodist heritage, is a place that empowers its students to conceive and implement dynamic ministries. Drew offers the MDiv, MA, MAM, STM, DMin, and PhD degrees, as well as certifications in Camp and Retreat Ministry, and Spiritual Formation. Academically rigorous and spiritually engaging, Drew develops religious leadership prepared for these ever-changing times. Drew welcomes people of all faiths, but we are particularly interested in building up the United Methodist ethos that is part of our historic Wesleyan heritage. Drew offers 100% tuition scholarships to all United Methodists who meet all admissions requirements and have a 3.2 undergraduate GPA or higher.

In June 2012, I was pleased to welcome to Drew's campus representatives from 8 of the 13 United Methodist seminaries, staff members from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, one Bishop, and representatives from three annual conferences. We hosted the first annual conference on Theological Education and Clergy Health co-sponsored by the Center for Clergy and Congregational Health and Wholeness at Drew and the Center for Health of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits. This three-day conference addressed issues of the current poor state of clergy health in relationship to Theological Education in order to begin to understand the impact of seminaries on students' health.

It was also my pleasure to host the September 2012 Theological Conference at Drew entitled, *The Future of Christian Spirituality and Interreligious Interaction* in honor of Dr. Pyun, Sun Hwan. Over the course of the three days, an array of speakers from the U.S., Korea, and other countries engaged attendees and one another on topics such as "Interreligious Dialogue Versus Interreligious Theology," "The Future of Comparative Theology," and "Interreligious Theology, Liberation, and the Church."

It was also a great pleasure to welcome alumni/ae back to campus for the Tipple Vosburgh lectures in the fall. This year's topic was "Faith, Race, and Politics" which provided opportunities to hear the voices and visions of activists, scholars, and church leaders responding to this unique and timely dilemma.

Creative, cutting-edge, inclusive, multi-cultural, social justice ministry is part of the legacy of Drew, and I am proud to be associated with it! Below are just a few other ministries that make me proud to be associated with Drew.

For more information about Drew, please visit us at: [www.drew.edu](http://www.drew.edu).

Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan, Dean

#### GARRETT-EVANGELICAL

In 2013, Garrett-Evangelical celebrates 160 years of creating skilled, bold, and articulate leaders for the church, the academy, and the world. We remain committed to our core purpose: to know God in Christ and, through preparing spiritual leaders, help others know God in Christ.

Garrett-Evangelical is the result of the interweaving of three institutions:

- Garrett Biblical Institute, the first Methodist seminary in the Midwest, was established in 1853 by largely the same church people who founded Northwestern University.

- Chicago Training School, established in 1885, was an important force for women in ministry and for developing service agencies throughout Chicago. Chicago Training School merged with Garrett Biblical Institute in 1934.
- Evangelical Theological Seminary, located in Naperville and founded as a seminary of the Evangelical Church (later the Evangelical United Brethren) in 1873, joined with Garrett Theological Seminary in 1974 to form Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Last fall the seminary welcomed 107 new students, raising total fall enrollment to 390—the third consecutive year of increase. The average age of the entering Master of Divinity student is 31. Fifty-one percent are women. The ethnic/racial profile is 52% white; 20% black; 5% Asian; 3% Hispanic/Latino. Thirteen percent of the students are international.

More than 30 religious traditions, four continents, 12 countries and 32 states are represented in the student body. Two hundred twenty-four students are United Methodist. Thirty-four additional students come from other Pan-Methodist denominations.

Currently one student from the Western Pennsylvania Conference is enrolled in the various degree programs at the seminary.

Garrett-Evangelical's commitment to making seminary education affordable is reflected in the awarding of more than \$2 million in institutional financial aid to students each year. The seminary has created the Linked in Ministry Scholarship program. This 100 percent scholarship is awarded to the first student admitted to Garrett-Evangelical from his/her United Methodist annual conference who maintains a 3.3 GPA or above and who is a registered candidate for UMC ministry.

In January, Garrett-Evangelical completed a successful campaign to fund the Rueben P. Job Endowed Chair in Spiritual Formation. One of the first chairs in spiritual formation among Protestant seminaries, the award is named in honor of Garrett-Evangelical's distinguished alumnus Rueben P. Job, retired bishop of The United Methodist Church. The position is a legacy to Bishop Job's lifelong work and will ensure that Garrett-Evangelical continues to prepare well-formed spiritual leaders for many generations.

Garrett-Evangelical has long been at the forefront of Protestant seminaries in this area. The seminary proposed the curriculum structure for United Methodist certification in spiritual formation, formally adopted by the denomination in 2000. Since Garrett-Evangelical has adopted a specialized master of arts degree in spiritual formation and evangelism as well as a Doctor of Ministry in Spiritual Direction.

Garrett-Evangelical serves over 550 students in degree-related courses, certificate programs and the summer Course of Study School. We encourage you to visit our website, [www.garrett.edu](http://www.garrett.edu), and to visit us on campus. We are grateful to serve The United Methodist Church and the church at large.

Philip A. Amerson, President

#### UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Is God calling you or someone you know to the ministry of Jesus Christ? If so, we invite you to explore how United can assist you in fulfilling God's purposes for your life and how you can help others in this journey. Come and check us out in person or online at [www.united.edu](http://www.united.edu)!

United is one of the fastest growing, accredited seminaries in North America. Why are Christian disciples and leaders signing up for our traditional and online programs? They are doing so because United is committed to teaching the Bible and the historic Christian faith, cultivating spiritual formation for personal and social holiness, and renewing the Church for the mission of Jesus Christ in the world. What could be more important or exciting?

United's hybrid/online UMC FLEX Master of Divinity degree was designed specifically to meet the requirements of the UMC for ordination and it is accessible anywhere with good Internet service. Our hybrid/online UM Course of Study is expanding each semester, along with UM Certification offerings.

United provides an In-Context Mdiv degree in West Virginia, coordinated by Dr. Janet Flanagan. Please see <http://united.edu/Master-s-Degree-Programs/Master-s-Degree-Programs/menu-id-477.html> or contact Dr. Flanagan at [JFlanagan@united.edu](mailto:JFlanagan@united.edu) for more details.

What's new at United? Three new professors joined our excellent team of faculty in 2012 and a search is underway for yet another. United and Aldersgate Renewal Ministries have developed a new partnership, and we have piloted a new certification program focused upon ministries with persons with disabilities. Each year, United's doctoral program adds new mentors and focus groups for advanced ministry study.

Please let us know if you have questions about how we can best assist you or, if you would like to help make it possible for an American or international student to study at United.

Enrollment at United continues to grow, and we invite you to call or visit soon! For more information, please contact [admissions@united.edu](mailto:admissions@united.edu).

Thank you for your prayers, partnership, service and support in the ministry of Jesus Christ!

Wendy J. Deichmann, President

#### CAMPING AND RETREAT MINISTRIES CORPORATION COMMITTEE

The 2012 Annual Conference passed RS 204 creating the Camping and Retreat Ministries Corporation Committee. This new committee replaced the former Camping and Retreat Ministries Committee.

Our new structure looks like this:

**The Annual Conference:** Camp Allegheny, Jumonville, Wesley Woods and Olmsted Manor remain affiliate corporations of our Annual Conference with the members of the Annual Conference functioning as members of the corporation, electing board members, approving funding and approving by-law changes.

**Camping and Retreat Corporation Committee:** The Camping and Retreat Ministries Corporation Committee will function as an administrative committee not as a program team. This committee will safeguard and protect the rights of the Annual Conference by reviewing mission, vision and values of our camping and retreat ministries, and our four sites, to make sure they reflect the priorities of our Annual Conference.

**Our Three Camps and One Retreat Center:** Camp Allegheny, Jumonville, Wesley Woods and Olmsted Manor will have full oversight of ministry, programs, finances and operations of their site. Full responsibility for our Summer Camping program will be at each site.

This Past Year: We have met and restructured financially with all four of our sites paying all of their own bills and payroll at the site level. We have divided campership monies, and revenue from invested funds to support the summer camping program at our three camps.

We met with our Bishop to hear and discuss a cooperative vision among the Annual Conference and our four sites. We have met and reviewed nominations to each site board of directors and recommended nominations to the Annual Conference. We will review audits and the financial health of all four of our sites.

The Future: We will continue in old ways and in new ways to bring both young and old people into a relationship with Jesus Christ on the Holy Ground that is Camp Allegheny, Jumonville, Wesley Woods and Olmsted Manor.

Allan K. Brooks, Chair

#### CAMP ALLEGHENY

Praise the Lord! What a magnificent year of ministry. We have so many things to celebrate here on the top of the mountain. The ministry of Camp Allegheny continues to be blessed and be a blessing to so many.

The Camp Allegheny board continues its work on defining and refining the board policies and procedures. This includes a SWOT analysis, board policy manual, criteria for board membership, job descriptions, committee functions, evaluation forms, nomination process and dashboard of leading indicators. The significant changes made by the board of Director's signifies a desire to do whatever it takes to ensure a positive uplifting faith filled ministry. Significant work still lies ahead but the changes are getting clearer by the day.

We were blessed in 2012 to have 13 new groups. This is amazing. In the last two years we have had 28 new groups. We continue to strive to provide loving Christian hospitality to everyone. We continue to be honored by serving numerous United Methodist churches, the United States Naval Academy Navigators program, Penn State Campus Crusade for Christ and now the Easter Seals Society of Western Pa. Each group that comes to camp receives a twenty question survey to let us know how we are doing. They evaluate us in the areas of; reservation process, reception, facilities and food service. A possible maximum of seven can be achieved. Our overall score was 6.52 out of 7. While there is room for improvement, overall it is an extremely positive affirmation of all of our work. Our entire staff should be commended.

Our summer program was once again a huge highlight of ministry. The children and youth that come here experience not only a fun filled week but they leave knowing they are loved. They leave with having been told about our savior, Jesus, and all that he has done. Our Thursday evening worship time continues to be a highlight of the week. What a blessing to see the children and youth be touched by the Lord. We began a process of analysis and work to update and make some changes to our summer program. We will be adding many new exciting and dynamic energy filled activities in the future.

We can once again celebrate a balanced operational budget for 2012 without the need to utilize gifts, outside donations or reserve funds. The support from the conference, local churches and individuals cannot be overstated. We did face numerous challenges in balancing this budget. A slow economy, aging facilities and a continued increase in regulations put extra strains on the budget. We were also blessed with over \$74,000 in

donations from 222 different churches and individuals. This money was used to help pay our debt on the Heartwood center, send children to summer camp and make improvements to our facilities.

We were blessed with over 1,000 volunteer hours as we made improvements to our facilities. We completed a new pony barn, built a new pony corral, added black lights to our gym, installed new carpet in the office and Hemlock lodge and stained the exterior of several lodges. It continues to be a challenge to keep up with aging facilities on very tight budgets.

The Camp Allegheny Board of Directors and staff want to thank the conference for their faithful support of Camp Allegheny. Camp Allegheny; Where you can reach up and be touched by God!

Dennis D. Tawney, President/CEO

#### JUMONVILLE

It is hard for me to believe that I have been serving full time at Jumonville for over thirty years. What a privilege to be a part of a ministry that continues to give youth and adults the opportunity to experience God's love and grace in such a special way. What a blessing to be a part of seeing campers and guests meet Christ on God's mountain as they take part in summer camp and retreat events throughout the year. I'm now starting my fourth decade as the President/Executive Director. My father, William Beatty, served as Executive Director of Jumonville for ten years and it seemed like he and my mother, Elva, were there forever. Where does the time go?

Jumonville's Facebook page continues to grow in popularity. We recently reached 21,583 people and had 2,227 people talking about our posts... all in one single week. This past year we also had over 1.5 million page views on our Jumonville website! While these virtual encounters with Jumonville continue to grow, we are grateful that our campers and guests continue to travel to Jumonville to have personal life transforming experiences with Jesus Christ. As so many Jumonville alumni post on our Jumonville Facebook page about their wonderful experiences as campers and retreat guests, it is satisfying to know that we continue to do all that we can to make sure that Jumonville remains a vital part of proclaiming the Gospel to a world that will always need Jesus.

Our Kidz2Kamp program continues to be a huge blessing. It has allowed us to continue to reach out to families and individuals that need assistance to pay for their mountaintop experience. I read so many letters from families who struggle to make ends meet. Many have mounting medical bills and families are still struggling with either unemployment or underemployment. They recount how their time at Jumonville was one of the favorite experiences of their life and in many cases was the start of their Christian journey. They desperately want their kids to have the experience of attending a summer camp at Jumonville, just like they did. A very special thanks to our many donors who have made camp and retreat events possible. On top of that, one of our past friends of Jumonville, Jon Cline, left an extremely generous estate gift to Jumonville designated to fund our Kidz2Kamp program as well as HOPE Camp. This was "God's perfect timing" since, beginning in 2013, there are no more campership funds available from the UM conference. All campership funds now come from Jumonville or from the local churches. We can now assure that any needy camper who wants to come to camp will be able. Praise God from whom ALL blessings flow!

Our outstanding maintenance staff has continued making many campus improvements that help keep our facilities in great shape. Some of the more significant projects included the completion of the main Chapel roof, a new handicapped access ramp into the upstairs of Ann Murphy Lodge, a new roof on the Welcome Center, a new roof on the Craft Room, installation of a new nine hole disc golf course, and a major overhaul of our water treatment building (a \$50,000 project). We are indeed blessed!

For quite a few years we have been conducting an online survey of our summer campers to get their feedback about their summer camp experience. We continue to have very positive results. On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the highest) last year's campers rated their week a 9.4 when asked "How was your week of Camp?" 88% of the campers said 9 or 10 when asked "What are your chances of attending camp next summer?"

In addition to our online survey, at the conclusion of each week of last summer's camp events, we asked our campers to complete a paper survey form with different questions than the online survey. We wanted a much broader sampling of our campers and were specifically addressing questions that could help us to show the value of attending a Jumonville summer camp experience. Here are the results for the 2012 summer camping program:

- 100% of our campers had an awesome time at camp.
- 99% of our campers felt like they learned more about God.
- 95% of our campers tried something new.
- 100% of them made a new friend. (60% came to camp with a friend.)
- 98% of our campers feel good about themselves.
- 91% of our campers enjoyed the worship time.
- 95% of our campers learned something new.
- 82% of our campers worked at solving a problem.
- 97% of them were comfortable with their cabin group & counselors.
- 95% of our campers learned to care for God's creation in a new way.

Jumonville has a wonderful supportive board and a fantastic dedicated staff! Our donors, deans and counselors, group leaders and guests, and friends make Jumonville a special place for so many. Thank you for helping Jumonville to be a vital part of making disciples for Jesus.

Larry Beatty, President

#### OLMSTED MANOR

Olmsted Manor exists to serve you, the United Methodist Clergy, laity, and churches of the Western PA Conference of the UMC. We are proud of the common heritage we share with The United Methodist Church. It gives us great satisfaction to see you come and go from Olmsted. Our retreat center is here to be used and if you have not yet been here, we invite you to, Come Away.

Program promotion has always been vital to our event attendance. We have recently been reminded that our old method of sending out brochures for events is still preferred by many people. The Church Music and Worship Arts was proof of this. We tried a new post card mailing to the churches to promote this retreat along with the Church Secretaries Events. This resulted in a number of phone calls concerning questions about dates, times, and leadership information. This is all accessible on the website; however, many people do not use the internet for this purpose. Therefore, we will



continue to do mailings as we have done in the past to repeat attendees for upcoming programs. As always, good lead time and promotion are keys to successful events.

Last year had begun with lower retreat and residential use. March was much better than January and February, while April, May, and June were moderately busy with some week long gaps. The Methodist church use continues to be somewhat stagnant with some of our long standing groups showing lower total numbers than in past years. Other church use is steady yet occasionally we have had a few cancellations due to financial constraints. These are challenging times for all our churches and it should not be surprising that it has had an affect our residential income. Our camps share this struggle with us in this trend.

The challenge we face as we move forward is to explore an approach to encourage other spiritual based use of the facilities that perhaps has not been considered before. It may be necessary to continue to "think outside the box" as we consider way to encourage new and different uses for this facility.

Olmsted Manor has merged into the new Camp and Retreat Ministries Corporations Committee. This committee was re-formed as a result of a major restructuring of the Annual Conference regarding the Methodist homes, camps, and Olmsted Manor. Kaleidoscope Inc., a camp & retreat consulting firm, was hired by the Annual Conference to propose a structural realignment for this committee. We continue to work together to discover how we can collectively do ministry together.

We have two Board members whose terms expire in July 2012. They were Brenda Thompson and Aaron Kerr. We thank them both for their faithful service and contribution to the mission and ministry of Olmsted. There were two new board members elected for first terms, William Grant and Mike Baker. Also, there are three other Board members who were re-elected to a second 4 year term. They include, Jeff Sterling, Joan Reasinger, and Eric Leonard.

You will notice several improvements and a few things that have been replaced in the buildings and around the property. To mention a few, the flag pole was recently scraped and painted and the wall in front of Hickman Hall was rebuilt. All of the windows have been replaced in the guest rooms in Groves Lodge. Finally, the demolition of the Olson House located across route 6 was completed in October.

We recently installed a new multi-media conference projector in Hickman Hall. We purchased an EIKI 5,500 lumen projector which was installed by Grise' Audio Visual Center from Erie. A new screen and network control panel was included in the project. This is a much needed addition and will be a great asset to our presenters and groups.

We are grateful to all the individuals and group that have used our facilities in the past year. Lives continue to be changed and spiritual growth abounds as we continue to journey forward in ministry.

Jody Z. Larson, Executive Director

#### WESLEY WOODS

As a ministry several significant changes have occurred at Wesley Woods. We continue to be a ministry that reaches out to children, youth, families, and groups to provide a "place apart" to renew, recharge, and reconnect with God and each other. Wesley Woods is open year round offering, skiing in the winter, hayrides in the fall,

horseback riding in all the seasons and of course there is summer where over 45 United Methodist Conference summer camps come for a week.

2012 brought some new direction and vision for the board and staff. In order to be better stewards of the financial and volunteer resources Wesley Woods Fully winterized the five cabins of main camp during the months of November through February. We still offered small group options with no food service for those who wished for a place of “retreat”. We also reduced our staff by cutting our Marketing/Program Director position and making our Food Service Director a part-time position. This unfortunately required us to say good bye to Andy Blystone and Paul Myers. They both will be missed and gave a great deal of themselves to this ministry and served God faithfully at Wesley Woods. The board began a visioning process to look at what Wesley Woods does well and how can we improve. We will take the savings from staff reduction and limited winter usage and put that into promotion and growing our summer camp and family ministry programming. Another change was to hire a new maintenance director, Doug Woodcook, and hire an on-site bookkeeper, Karen Woodcook. Sadly our previous bookkeeper, David Anderson, passed away in January. He was a god-send as we moved into a new financial operating model in 2013. David spent many hours helping us get ready for this change during 2012.

During the April 2012 workweek at Wesley Woods’ over 75 volunteers came and helped get camp ready for the summer season. We have also added two new events to our calendar. In April we held a Campership Concert and in May a 5K run event were planned for families and camp promotion.

Marketing took on another new look in 2012. Along with increasing visits to congregations, and having booths at both the Crawford and Warren County Fairs, we created a new Facebook page and updated our website to be more interactive and informative. We have added the option to donate and make deposits online to make it easier for people to support the ministry and sign up for retreats and summer programs.

The 2012 Booster Dinner was held in October and over 90 were in attendance. Karen Bregenti received the Hall of Fame Award. Karen has been a Dean of two different weeks for years and has been the driving force behind “Summers Last Swing” our annual golf outing for nine years. This year we raised more money than ever before. Brian Butchart of Grace UMC, Oil City, was awarded Volunteer of the Year, and Cabot UMC, of Cabot, and Evans Memorial, of Lewis Run received Volunteer Groups of the Year for their many hours of work at camp.

Summer usage for 2012 was 763 CRM Campers which matched the 2011 numbers. For the first time in 10 years our summer numbers did not decrease. We have still not seen resurgence in retreat groups, many still cite economic reasons for not renewing their usage. But on a positive note we have seen some new groups register and hope that 2013 will be the year that we can turn the corner.

Rick Frederick, Executive Director

#### COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN UNITY AND INTERRELIGIOUS CONCERNS

The Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns (CUIC) acts as a contact point between our WPAUMC and other Christian traditions and Churches, as well as non-Christian faiths. One of the most obvious actions, in fulfillment of our purpose, is to support and promote ecumenical relationships.

The General Church's parallel body to our conference CUIIC was changed at the 2012 General Conference. That body is now the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships. It has been restructured as an office of the Council of Bishops. Tracy Merrick, who sits on our conference CUIIC, has been part of the transition team in creating this new organization. Because of this connection, we have been able to maintain a liaison with the new General OCUIR.

Our WPA CUIIC was able to send a representative to the annual National Workshop on Christian Unity, held this past year in Oklahoma City—financial support from the Commission on Church and Society helped make this possible. The National Workshop is the leading gathering focused on the subject of ecumenism, at the national-level. The United Methodist Church is one of the main organizers of this event. By our participation, we are able to increase our understanding and keep up-to-date on ecumenical issues. Furthermore, we are able to maintain contact and make new connections with others specializing in ecumenism, both inside and outside our denomination.

In response to the recent establishment of full communion partnership between the Evangelical Lutheran Church and The United Methodist Church, we have continued in dialogue with our counterpart agencies in the Southwestern and Northwestern Pennsylvania Synods of the ELCA. It was this contact, for example, that enabled Lutheran Bishop Jones's participation in last year's ordination service.

In addition to our own initiatives in ecumenical relations, we support regional ecumenical bodies through funding. Our commission vouchers funds in support of four outside organizations: The Pennsylvania Council of Churches, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania, Inter-Church Ministries of Erie County and Christians United of Beaver County.

As we have done in previous years, the CUIIC has made an effort to publicize and provide information regarding the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which takes place in January.

In 2012 we began sending a representative to sit on the Public Witness Committee of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. The WPAUMC is the only denomination in Western Pennsylvania to be actively participating on this committee.

Another development in the past year is that CUIIC is prepared to offer workshops on subjects related to ecumenism, both informational and practical. For more information, contact CUIIC Chair.

Dai Morgan, Chair

#### CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATES OF SOUTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA

If one only reads the popular media, one would assume that the "one, holy catholic and apostolic Church" was in a state of collapse and irreparable decay. Indeed, there is much to support such a claim – declining worship attendance; scandals attributable to those in authority; the growing secularization of our culture; intra-Nicene conflicts over social issues which fracture institutions, destroy friendships, depletes our strength for mission, and tarnishes our witness to Christ. But there is another story about the health and vitality of the Church, a local story about diverse Christian leaders taking the risk to tackle a tough topic, finding some consensus, but respecting each other's

priorities; and in the end found a closer bond of genuine Christian affection for each other. Such has been the ecumenical journey of Christian Associates (CASP) this year.

The presenting issue was a request by the Catholic members of the Council to address Religious Freedom and the HHS mandate related to healthcare reform legislation. Together our Council studied, listened, discussed, and drafted a statement, then discussed and debated some more. Liberals and conservatives, Catholic, Anglican and Protestant were able to sign in support. Even those who could not speak on behalf of their judicatory were supportive of the statement. That shared experience has led the Council to commit itself to three core values – Collegiality, Connectedness, and Collaboration.

What enabled the Council to undertake a risky conversation was a long history of intentionally working at building trusting relationships among our diverse constituency – 26 Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant judicatories across the region. Fostering Collegiality among our Christian leaders enables Christian Associates to continue to be “a unifying voice in the name of Jesus Christ for the mission of the Gospel and the wholeness of communities.”

As we move forward the Council has pledged to expand the Connectedness of our judicatories at every level – judicatory staffs, clergy, and local congregations. Our Connectedness takes visible expression in our committees, especially in our chaplaincy at Allegheny County Jail and our sponsored ministry, The Foundation of H.O.P.E. (pre-and post-release training and mentoring for the incarcerated). Christian Associates Television remains connected, but under the operation of the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh. Funded by a grant from The Forbes Funds, Christian Associates is conducting an inventory and assessment of our various outreach endeavors of member judicatories. Are there ways in which we can strengthen our residential geriatric ministries or camping ministries by collaborating across denominational lines? I pray that next year’s report will include new initiatives at “Life and Works” ecumenism which grows out of the current inventory and study.

Already we are valued collaborators within our community and region - Pittsburgh Pastoral Care Conference, Religious Leadership Forum of Southwest Pennsylvania (promoting dialogue among the three Abrahamic religions), Veteran’s Conference, VOAD (Volunteer Organization Active in Disasters) Long Term Recovery, Allegheny County Emergency Food and Shelter Board, SW PA Food Security Partnership, and Bread for the World. Collaboration remains a strength of this regional ecumenical journey.

Personally, and on behalf of the Council of Bishops and Judicatory Executives, I want to express our sincere thanks and deep gratitude to your bishop, Bishop Thomas Bickerton for his unwavering support of Christian Associates even when his episcopal duties and international travel prevent him from being present personally. Robert Higginbotham, Assistant to the Bishop has represented the Conference with integrity and I deeply appreciate his consistent presence, engagement in our mission, and supportive voice to our staff. I especially want to thank the Conference for their consistent and steadfast financial support of this ecumenical journey. Know that we are extremely grateful for the generosity of your people in providing consistent financial support to us in 2012! Thank you! The Western PA Conference, UMC has been and continues to be a model of trusting obedience to God’s Word and promise. Thank you for being a model for our other judicatories to emulate.

In conclusion, I do not believe that ecumenism is optional for any Christian – laity or clergy. While proud of Christian Associates’ heritage and witness, I recognize that the future of our witness and service is dependent upon a new generation of Christians who take seriously our Lord’s High Priestly Prayer, “that all may be one.” Unity after all is not about a “Kumbaya” moment among fellow believers, but about the authenticity and integrity of our witness to Christ and his saving work for the wholeness of humanity and all creation.

While I treasure the heritage of CASP, I do believe that the future of the ecumenical journey lies in the grass roots. Ordinary folk, clergy, religious, and laity striving to find the Shalom for which our Savior prayed. May the Spirit empower your call as a disciple to persevere in the quest for unity within the Body of Christ, the Church. May the Spirit also dwell within your 2013 Annual Conference!

Donald B. Green, Executive Director

#### PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

**A NEW CENTURY:** In 2012 the Pennsylvania Council of Churches entered its second century of working for Christian unity for the sake of the world. Rooted in an understanding of conciliar ecumenism in which its member church bodies “...seek to manifest their fellowship (koinonia) with one another, to engage in common ministries of witness and service, and to advance towards the goal of visible unity,” the Council’s 2012 programs and ministries have sought to express those commitments.

**FELLOWSHIP:** In 2012 the Council worked to build and sustain fellowship among the leaders of its member church bodies by engaging in common worship and prayer at board meetings, encouraging the sharing of both the opportunities offered by and the concerns of member church bodies around Pennsylvania, and hosting a December overnight retreat for religious leaders at the Nittany Lion Inn in State College.

**COMMON MINISTRIES OF WITNESS AND SERVICE WITNESS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE:** Through its Commission on Public Witness and its public advocacy ministry, the Council witnessed on behalf of social justice and for the common good. Highlights in 2012 include: rewriting the Council’s Principles for Public Advocacy, the document that authorizes the Council’s engagement in social and public policy issues; approved by the Board of Directors in October, Principles... is available at [http://pachurchesadvocacy.org/index\\_files/Page394.htm](http://pachurchesadvocacy.org/index_files/Page394.htm); preparing—and securing Board of Directors approval—for a resolution calling for a moratorium on new Marcellus Shale well development; work on the Council’s two broad priorities—human needs (which includes housing, food, energy, and health care—those things needed to create a decent life) and the environment (including climate change, clean air and water, toxic chemicals reform, and better regulation of oil and gas drilling); continued collaboration with numerous coalitions around issues of concern to the Council; and distributing resources on voter rights and advocating for recall in response to the passage of Pennsylvania’s voter ID law. Information about these highlights and other activities can be found at [www.pachurchesadvocacy.org](http://www.pachurchesadvocacy.org).

**MINISTRIES OF SERVICE:** The Council supported local churches engaging in trucker and traveler ministry along a portion of I-80, where a chaplain served along with volunteers and local church leaders. The Council also supported local churches (in the Fruitbelt and in Chester County) engaged in ministry with migrant and seasonal farm

workers. Field chaplains and volunteers offer farm workers and their families worship services, spiritual counseling, clothing and other material aid, assistance with immigration issues, emergency transportation for medical care, translation services, emergency housing and food, and recreation. For these ministries of service, the Pennsylvania Council of Churches' business office handled payroll. Funds raised by local committees meet the basic expenses of each program.

**WITNESS AMONG PERSONS AT LEISURE:** The Council also worked with local park ministry committees to assist in chaplain recruitment and program administration. The annual training held just after the Memorial Day holiday ensured that chaplains were equipped for their ministry and a mid-season retreat gave them opportunity to share experiences and further hone skills. Seventeen chaplains served over 9,000 campers in 36 state, federal, and private campgrounds across the state.

**CONCLUDING NOTE:** The Council ended 2012 with an operating deficit and continues to project deficits for the future. The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors is exploring options for increasing revenue and/or restructuring the Council's program and ministry.

Gary Harke, Executive Director

#### ERIE UNITED METHODIST ALLIANCE

The Erie United Methodist Alliance (EUMA) is committed to combating homelessness by providing Christ-centered ministries of shelter, support and service to families, Veterans and individuals in Erie, Pennsylvania. EUMA's roots can be traced back to 1888 as a pastoral fellowship and church planting group which led into outreach programs in the mid-1980's. EUMA serves approximately 2,400 people each year through five ministry programs.

**The Refuge** is an emergency homeless shelter for families with children. It is one of the only shelters in the Erie area which keeps the family unit intact by housing each family in their own room together. Because of this arrangement The Refuge can shelter single dads, single moms, and two parent families with their children – up to 32 people on any given day. The average stay at The Refuge is 30 to 45 days, during which the family's basic needs are met and they are able to take a breath. Then their case manager begins meeting with them to determine their reasons for homelessness and create a plan and action steps to help them move forward to secure stable housing. This process has become increasingly difficult in the past year as resources have disappeared and people's situations have become more desperate. Despite the challenges last year, The Refuge provided shelter and care for 54 families including 64 adults and 116 children.

**Hope House** is a four-apartment transitional program for homeless families with children, providing more time and assistance to address each family's individual reasons for homelessness. With average stays of up to nine months, families are able to address financial instability, follow through on educational and vocational opportunities, and secure employment. Last year EUMA staff provided support and encouragement as well as life skills classes to six families including six adults and fourteen children through the Hope House program.

EUMA continues to provide a child and youth specialist to focus on the specific needs of the children and youth at both The Refuge and Hope House. This person

coordinates volunteers, sets up tutoring, encourages positive family interaction through activities of everyday life, arranges special activities and field trips, and provides one-on-one help when needed as well as referrals for assessments and counseling.

**Liberty House** is the only transitional housing program in Erie County created specifically for homeless, honorably discharged Veterans. The house is a safe haven for men who proudly served our country and are now in need of new beginnings. Last year this program provided 26 Veterans advocacy and support within a structured living environment to allow them to develop the skills necessary to deal positively with life issues.

**Project Hope Outreach** is a unique on-the-street ministry to the homeless community. Outreach workers seek out and meet homeless individuals and families, wherever they may be – soup kitchens, downtown parks, the public library, area shelters – offering care and assistance. Last year, Outreach helped 212 people by providing hygiene items, new socks and undergarments, assistance obtaining government identification documents, referrals to available shelters and housing, transportation assistance, and vouchers for free clothing and necessities.

**Rainbow Connection Thrift Store** is EUMA's thrift store with a mission. The Rainbow Connection serves dual purposes in providing financial assistance to EUMA programs and helping people in the community obtain low-cost quality clothing and household necessities. In addition the store also serves the homeless community and those in need by providing these same items free of charge through a voucher assistance program coordinated through Erie's homeless shelters and social service agencies. Last year, the Rainbow Connection distributed \$47,345 worth of clothing and items to 1,979 people, almost double the distribution of the previous year.

Chaplain Program: EUMA also provides a chaplain who meets weekly with program clients for group Bible discussions and individually for discussion and encouragement, provides weekday email devotion for staff, distributes individually appropriate topical Bibles to clients and staff, and reinforces God's unconditional love for each person and their worth as a child of God.

We at EUMA are very thankful for the prayers and support that allow us to meet such wonderful people and help them renew their spirits and their lives. God bless all of you for your prayers and support.

Cheryl Davis, Executive Director

#### UNITED METHODIST CHURCH UNION

Our present focus is to serve as a catalyst to build strong, vibrant congregations and agencies in the Pittsburgh region, seeking transformation of lives and communities. Over the past few years, with a collaborated spirit, the following ministries have assisted hundreds of individuals and truly have made a difference in their lives.

**NEW HOPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH & CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR** – Aiding with financial recording and reporting so these ministries can remain focused and valid in some of the most challenging neighborhoods in Pittsburgh. Also helping with the coordination of Vacation Bible School for our Northview Heights Community and providing general oversight for these congregation's redevelopment and expansion of ministry and mission. For example, over the past two years Church of Our Saviour has doubled its attendance while providing ministries: Eye Care Clinics; Youth

Ministries; Weekly Bible Studies; and a Health and Wholeness Ministry with our 50 individuals.

METHOUSE AND METOWERS LP – Provides over 225 low income seniors with a safe and healthy living environment. Also sharing information through dozens of programs for these 200 plus seniors on a variety of topics: Financial solicitation, health care, dietary, and general safety issues. Metowers, LP has completed substantial facility improvement, while Methouse will face a major renovation project in the very near future.

METHOUSING NORTH, INC. – Opening in 1983, Methousing North Inc. (Wrenshall Apartment Building) has continued to provide modest, safe and comfortable living areas by providing eight apartments for individuals and families. There are four one-bedroom apartments and four two-bedroom apartments providing transitional housing for recent parolees and persons recovering from addiction. Each seeking a new start!

“THE DAILY BREAD” continues the tradition of our Northside Congregate Feeding Program serving over 15,000 meals annually to the homeless and unemployed on the Northside of Pittsburgh. Over two dozen United Methodist congregations join us in making this basic need ministry possible, and this past year has brought on board a number of companies and community groups.

BETHANY HOUSE ACADEMY – Enabling over twenty preschool children in our Northview Heights neighborhood to experience a healthy academic start within one of our most challenged communities. This Northview Heights site also provides computer training and tutoring for the children and youth on a daily basis. Summer programs expand these contacts with daylong programs and field trips. We also provide training in drumming and the arts, plus a substantial outreach to African American males entitled, “Rites of Passage”.

LOW INCOME PRESCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS – Helping to coordinate over 100 scholarships with 16 different preschools in Western PA. These scholarships assist both the families and the schools to nurture our young children at a very important stage in development.

MENTORING PROGRAMS – There are now seven United Methodist congregations included in this Elementary School Reading and Mentoring Ministry. Over 60 children are being assisted weekly to encourage and increase their reading and comprehension abilities. We believe this is a great step in breaking the cycle of poverty that over 90% of these students live with every day!

WORK TEAMS – We have also started a work team division of our ministries hosting five different teams here in the Pittsburgh area over the past three years and sending our first team to Joplin, MO last August.

EIGHTH AVENUE PLACE – Collaborations with this ministry located in Homestead for space and ongoing support. Dozens of individuals and families are provided with a daily drop in support base, plus weekly worship experiences, with food and fellowship. Youth ministries are now in place for middle and high school ages.

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM – We have entered a partnership with Southwestern Pennsylvania Food Security, an initiative of Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank, which will make a big impact on childhood hunger this summer by providing food/meals at various Allegheny County church locations.



Presently the United Methodist Church Union is exploring a number of other areas of need within the Pittsburgh and now Annual Conference geographical boundaries. It is our prayer and passion to see many newer ministries begin to take shape during 2013.

Larry P. Homitsky, President

#### PARKVIEW TOWERS, Methouse, Inc.

The mission of Parkview Towers is to provide safe, comfortable and affordable housing for those who are 62 years of age or older or for persons with mobility impairment under the age of 62 who require the design features of an accessible unit.

Parkview Towers offers a variety of support services and activities for all the residents. The caring and competent staff includes a Service Coordinator who works closely with the residents and local area agencies in order to meet the special needs of an aging population as well as sponsoring various programs that enhance the lives of many. We offer many opportunities for socialization, education, and spiritual growth.

The 113 units have easy access to laundry rooms, community areas, and computer and internet access. Non-denominational services are also offered on Sunday evenings.

The Parkview Towers continues to provide an atmosphere that allows individuals to age in place with respect and dignity with the support of the United Methodist Church Union and the Methouse Board of Directors. Welcome Home!

Kathryn E. Williams, Director of United Methodist Housing

#### METOWERS ASSOCIATES, L.P.

The early vision of the United Methodist Church Union resulted in the construction of a 10 story high rise for the elderly and those who were mobility impaired under the age of 62 with very low incomes. In conjunction with the Department of Housing and Urban Development that vision became a reality in November 1980. Eighty eight single bedroom apartments designed for the elderly and ten, designed for those with mobility impairments were quickly filled. A long waiting list soon followed.

Metowers, a Section 202/8 federally subsidized building has been a safe, comfortable and affordable home for those with limited incomes. Aging in place, with dignity and support, has been successfully accomplished through the dedication and direction of the United Methodist Church Union and the Metowers Board of Directors. The recently remodeled building continues to be a secure place for all residents.

The residents of Metowers enjoy a variety of social activities provided by an active Resident Council. Our Service Coordinator sponsors numerous programs and services that further enhance the lives of the residents. The goal of the supportive services is to enable the residents to remain their homes all throughout life states.

METOWERS IS: Staffed by competent caring people; supervised by a Board of Directors that shares the same commitment; clean, safe and comfortable; supportive of spiritual growth and socialization; moving forward to continue to meet the needs of an aging population; and, HOME!

Kathryn E. Williams, Director of United Methodist Housing

#### BETHANY HOUSE ACADEMY

Bethany House Academy also known as Bethany House Ministry strives to bring the love of Jesus to the public housing community of Northview Heights, which is rated #1 in poverty in the City of Pittsburgh. The heart of our ministry is service to children and youth. However, offering crisis intervention, referral and counseling services, tangible aid of food, clothing, and school supplies has become an integral part of our ministry today. Financial support for the ministry is received from the Western PA Conference Mission Support, Trust Funds allocations from the United Methodist Church Union, Advance Specials, United Way of Allegheny County, The Heinz Endowments, The Pittsburgh Foundation, and personal donations from United Methodists. Food, clothing, Christmas gifts, and program materials are also donated and appreciated when received. Most of all, the prayers of many committed supporters are of vital importance to us.

**NORTHVIEW HEIGHTS LOCATION** The ministry in Northview Heights through collaborative efforts has afforded our agency the ability to provide a broad spectrum of services. Bethany House recently received a grant from The Heinz Endowment to offer a Rites of Passage program for African-American males and funding to provide a quality Arts program. Additionally, The Pittsburgh Foundation provided support for Bethany House for a Community Garden, Health and Wellness, and Entrepreneurial Skills Development that focuses on self-sufficiency. Our core services continues to offer high quality academic and spiritual programs in our Pre-School and After-School initiatives which include: Computer literacy in Mac-based computer labs., arts and crafts, entrepreneur training, tutoring/study skills services, college preparation services, study abroad opportunities (Ghana, West Africa), spiritual development, and the P.O.W.E.R. (Positive Outcomes With Excuses Removed) Program. The majority of the staff employed are members of the community or persons who live at poverty level. Empowering the community through employment opportunities and vocational development is what keeps Bethany House relevant and with United Methodist support, we will continue doing the necessary work for those labeled as “poor” but have great spiritual resolve.

Keith Murphy, Executive Director

#### ARBUTUS PARK RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

The significance of the Christian spirit was felt at Arbutus Park Retirement Community throughout 2012 as we drew inspiration from the many staff, residents, and volunteers that so graciously gave of their time and talents to support our mission.

We are blessed and humbled by the ongoing support of our Arbutus family as they once again opened their hearts to make the annual Memory Star and Christmas Angel Appeals our most successful efforts to-date. Through collective giving, the faithful contributed and supported those affected by depleted financial resources to enable continuation of the finest care, while others benefitted through added services and facility upgrades. It is through these yearly appeals we are impacted by the graciousness of donors that are steadfast and ably reach a deeper level of faith and service.

To improve Arbutus’ appeal and expand its marketing locally and to surrounding areas, we decided to integrate a social media network plan into our goals. So in the fall, Arbutus established a Social Media Team (comprised of employees, marketing

consultant, and activities specialist), to generate leads, and promote the many special services offered at our facility. This use of social media led to the development of our Facebook page—a way to improve communications and gain valuable insights into how to better prepare for the future. Additionally, Wi-Fi internet access and the Arbutus Website is fully-functional allowing donors to contribute online to the project or fundraiser of their choice, as well as for independent living and current residents to view services, activities, and events.

To remain competitive region wide as a leading continuing care retirement community, we are excited to share that Arbutus acquired 32-acres of undeveloped land on Parker Road, nearby our current facility, to build spacious cottages with modern furnishings and amenities for the active retiree looking to take that next step. These units will offer a multitude of living choices with a modern flare and stylish vision for the best in senior living. This multiphase expansion project is in the preliminary stages with the construction timetable being driven by available funding, which will be critical to its completion. Our committed board members and supporters are embracing this opportunity and foresee Arbutus becoming an industry leader by providing superior lifestyle choices to serve older, active adults well into the future.

In December, Arbutus was delighted to hold the first annual “Home for the Holidays” event in conjunction with the Arbutus Park Manor Auxiliary. The event kicked-off with a tree lighting ceremony and festivities including a Christmas Shoppe, Christmas Café, Holiday Train display, Classic Clowns, holiday crafts for kids, musical performers, pictures with Santa, and over 300 lighted luminaries to brighten our campus. The event was very special for our residents and their families and we look forward to hosting it for many years to come!

In closing, we know that each day we are reminded of the Lord’s goodness and are thankful to be able to fulfill our Christian purpose and commitment. We welcome the opportunity to care for the many individuals that come to Arbutus Park Retirement Community and make it their home.

Richard Wilson, Administrator

#### RUTH M. SMITH CENTER

The Ruth M. Smith Center located in Sheffield, PA on the Kane District is the only National Mission Institution under the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries that is in the Western PA Conference. It is supported by the Conference, District, and local United Methodist Women, local congregations, individuals, and the General Church. It celebrated ninety years of Christian service in September, 2012.

A new Executive Director, Kimberly Adams (returned to her hometown of Warren, PA) was hired and began her service on April 9, 2012.

During the past year residential numbers have increased to twenty-four, with two more applications in process as of February 28, 2013 - nearing capacity. The Day Care/PreSchool Program is full with forty plus children and a waiting list. With fine leadership and staff it is acclaimed throughout the area.

We are working hard at stabilizing our financial base. We are especially grateful to the Conference United Methodist Women for the gift of twenty thousand dollars from its Elizabeth A. Bradley Fund.

The facilities and programs are all properly licensed and up to date.

We have added additional trainings for staff. Collaborations with Hospice for activities and training and the YMCA to put classes/programs in our Community Center /gym are ongoing. Having increased our presence in the community, men who use the gym have provided new heaters, fans, and some other maintenance. Better communications with others through tours of the facility as well as presentations to United Methodist Women units and churches help get the Ruth M. Smith story out. The Board of Directors for the Center has worked hard through a very hard transitional and successful year. We have tried to live up to the purpose, standards, and vision of the Conference United Methodist Women who birthed us, continued to support us, encouraged others to help with this special ministry and have been a guiding , caring group through 90 years.

Praise God for Service to God's people through the Ruth M. Smith Center!

Kimberly Adams, Executive Director

Donald E. Bloomster, President, Board of Directors

#### UNITED METHODIST ADVOCACY IN PENNSYLVANIA

But the LORD says, “Because the poor are oppressed, because of the groans of the needy, I’m now standing up. I will provide the help they are gasping for.” Psalm 5:12

More than ever, 2012 was a year where voices of faith were needed in the halls of Pennsylvania’s Capitol in Harrisburg.

In a year of daunting economic and social challenges, United Methodist Advocacy in Pennsylvania worked to offer a strong voice for the poor, the sick, children, and the marginalized.

United Methodists from the three annual conferences – Western Pennsylvania, Susquehanna, and Eastern Pennsylvania – responded time after time with prayer, emails, letters, phone calls and petitions to Pennsylvania’s elected leaders. United Methodists spoke out for justice in the pulpit, on street corners, and during legislative hearings across Pennsylvania.

Here are some of UMAAdvocacyPA’s 2012 highlights:

**Digital Advocacy Ministry:** A \$4,000 grant from the Peace With Justice Fund in 2012 enabled UMAAdvocacyPA to begin a new Digital Advocacy Ministry using Voter Voice. United Methodists are now able to directly contact legislators, the governor and other state officials to speak out on important issues. This new tool has generated thousands of emails and calls to key policymakers.

Voter Voice is easy to use. Constituents can send emails, letters, and make phone calls directly to their legislators and other leaders.

**Protecting Funding for PA’s Vulnerable:** When the governor proposed major cuts in funding for vital services to the poor, physically and intellectually disabled persons, mental health services, and medical assistance, UMAAdvocacyPA had an important role in restoring nearly \$85 million in funding for Pennsylvania’s 67 counties.

In addition to urging United Methodists to speak out to protect the Commonwealth’s safety net, UMAAdvocacyPA’s worked with a number of coalitions to create hundreds of thousands of contacts to legislators working on the 2012-2013 budget. This non-partisan effort reminded legislators and the governor of Pennsylvania’s moral obligation to its most vulnerable citizens.

**Predatory Payday Loan Legislation Blocked:** Hundreds of United Methodists joined a statewide effort that successfully blocked a multi-million dollar effort to bring predatory payday lending to Pennsylvania. After narrowly passing the House, the legislation to legalize usury was blocked in the state Senate.

Payday loan companies target economically vulnerable persons. They try to draw them into a cycle of debt with loans charging annual interest rates of more than 300 percent, more than 13 times the current interest rate limit.

In addition to helping United Methodists contact legislators, UMAAdvocacyPA conducted a statewide radio campaign against this usurious practice.

**Anti--Poverty Summit:** Advocacy is Biblical Participants' evaluations say Anti-Poverty Summit III was the best ever. The focus was on biblical calls to advocacy on behalf of those living in poverty. Mike Slaughter, pastor of Ginghamburg UMC near Dayton, Ohio, one of United Methodism's dynamic leaders and preachers, focused on why advocacy is biblical and not political. Lorenza Andrade Smith, a United Methodist pastor who lives on the streets among the homeless, shared her experiences. Faith Fowler, pastor and director of Cass Community Services in Detroit, showed how a church changed an economically and socially disadvantaged community. Nearly 100 persons attended the event at Camp Hill UMC in Camp Hill, PA.

**Death Penalty Cases:** UMAAdvocacyPA joined in calling for a commutation of Terrence Williams' death sentence to life in prison without parole. Williams was convicted of killing a man he contends had sexually abused him for years. Days before his scheduled execution, a judge ordered that the sentencing portion of the case be re-opened. Testimony showed numerous important facts – including the contention Williams had been abused by the man he killed – were never placed before the jury.

The United Methodist Church opposes capital punishment under all circumstances. "When governments implement the death penalty the life of the convicted person is "devalued and all possibility of change in that person's life ends," the Social Principles state.

Stephen Drachler, UMAAdvocacyPA's executive director, was selected to chair Better Choices for PA, a statewide coalition of three dozen faith, social service and community--focused organizations that promote adequate state funding for programs to help Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens. It also advocates tax policies that are fair to all Pennsylvanians.

UMAAdvocacyPA works with a number of coalitions such as the Pennsylvania Interfaith Justice Coalition (including the PA Council of Churches, PA Catholic Conference, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania, and PA Jewish Federation), the Coalition for Low-Income Pennsylvanians, and the Stop Payday Loans in Pennsylvania Coalition.

Stephen Drachler, Executive Director

#### JUSTICE REFORM

In 1997 Bishop Bashore called on us, as the institution of prophecy, to communicate with our legislators and participate in the legislative process. Since that charge, this Conference has led the campaign for victim compensation, DNA rights, restructuring jury databases, expunging misdemeanors, the care of geriatric and seriously ill inmates, removing both juveniles and persons with retardation from Death Row. We

have also conducted a study of the death penalty, *Death in Pennsylvania: James V. Bennett Revisited* (2005), and joined in the campaign for a moratorium on death warrants. Eleven of the 23 recommendations recited in our 2008 Final Report, and adopted as RS 102 of 2008, have been undertaken in Pennsylvania. Please read the “Justice Report” on page 220 of the 2012 Western PA Conference *Official Journal* for a more extensive background on these campaigns for justice reform.

The 2012 Annual Conference called for action on the Racial Justice Act. This Bill, introduced by Rep. Rob Matzie (D-Ambridge) and Rep. Ron Waters (D-Philadelphia), is designed to plug a hole in the US Supreme Court decision of *McCleskey v Kemp* (1986). The decision allows the accused to provide evidence and testimony of racial profiling, but it does not say how. The RJA delineates what evidence and how it may be presented. This Conference adopted RS 101 in support of the RJA, and Bishop Bickerton wrote a personal letter supporting it. The resolution, the Bishop’s letter, and 313 endorsing letters from across the Conference were presented to the Chairman of the Pennsylvania House Judiciary Committee and the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus on January 25, 2012. Thirty legislators, including every member of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, co-sponsored the RJA, and it was set for hearing on August 14, 2012. The Bill was re-introduced on January 13, 2013 for the current legislative session. Resolutions endorsing the RJA have been submitted to all three Pennsylvania UMC Conferences in 2013.

The 2012 Annual Conference also called for action on the Juvenile Justice Act. This Bill, introduced by Rep. Rob Matzie (D-Ambridge) and Rep. Joe Preston, Jr. (D-Pittsburgh), addresses the 10th Century common law “Felony Homicide Rule”. Under this Rule, if someone is convicted of committing a homicide in the course of another felony, usually a robbery, any person who associated with the triggerman is subject to second degree murder. It is collective culpability. Pennsylvania currently has 509 juveniles serving juvenile life without parole. Our Senate found that “59% of these juveniles never held a weapon, never confronted a victim, and did not even know a crime had taken place.” The JJA would allow the sentencing court to review these cases to determine the individual culpability. Twenty-eight legislators, including the entire Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, co-sponsored the bill, and a hearing was held on August 15, 2012. The fortunes of the JJA were greatly accelerated when the US Supreme Court ruled, in *Miller v Alabama* (2012) that juveniles could no longer be automatically sentenced to life without parole. Pennsylvania Act 204 of 2012 still leaves life without parole as a sentencing option, and still provides for collective sentencing. The JJA was re-introduced on January 13, 2013 for the current session.

- The SB 6 committee has been convened. It will devote two years to study the efficacy of capital punishment.
- The “Biological Evidence Retention Act” has been re-introduced to provide law enforcement with positive guidance regarding the preservation of biological evidence from crime scenes.
- The “Care-Givers Exemption Option” allows primary care givers the opportunity to decline jury duty for that term.
- The “Juror Compensation Act” provides an alternative to the \$9.00 per diem presently provided for jury service.

- The “Eyewitness Identification Act” provides the police with precise guidelines for eyewitness identification. 82% of the felonies reversed on appeal are from defective eyewitness identification. Under this Bill, the eyewitness is given a written list of rights. The idea of a verbatim list of rights reflects the concept encompassed in the Miranda Rights. The Bill also provides precise guidelines for the independent investigator to follow in conducting either live or photo lineups. It further provides for the videotaping of these lineups.
- The “Snitch Testimony Disclosure Act” would require that judges be told precisely what deals were made with inmates who decide to testify against other defendants.
- The “Uniform Collateral Consequences of Conviction Act” would inform defendants of the incidental consequences of confessing to a felony. This includes the impact of the “Felony Homicide Rule” on the Defendant’s friends and relatives.
- The “Solitary Confinement Reform Act” would limit the amount of time an inmate could be held in a 6x6x8 cell. The cost of solitary confinement is twice that of general population, and some Pennsylvania inmates have been in solitary confinement for 60 years.

Bishop Bashore’s challenge is being met, the Governor’s assignment is being met, and the 2008 Conference Resolution is being satisfied. We are continuously striving toward the teshuvah in Ezekiel, the Covenant Code in Exodus, and the Great Commission in Matthew. One step at a time.

Roger Thomas

#### PRISON OUTREACH MINISTRY

As the Chair of the Prison Outreach Ministry Board, I wanted to give our supporters a little idea of the scope of our ministry. This article represents some of the work on behalf of the men incarcerated in correctional institutions throughout Western Pennsylvania. There are many institutions where we are not presently represented, but here are a number that were reported at our Prison Outreach Ministry Board Meeting.

State Correctional Institution Forest: Tim McConville and Bill Cadigan are teaching Disciple III with between 29 and 37 in attendance.

State Correctional Institution Greene: David Stains has just started as a volunteer at the State Correctional Institution Greene, a Supermax facility. He reports that this facility located in Waynesburg, PA contains a death row. The Spanish worship he provides maybe the last opportunity men have to participate in Christian worship.

State Correctional Institution Laurel Highlands: Randy Datsko, our Prison Outreach Ministry Missionary works with five volunteers and teaches Disciple II with 30 to 35 participants. As this facility is a hospital as well as a geriatric facility, Randy and his volunteers also minister to men at the end of life through Hospice.

Federal Correctional Institution Loretto: Kevin Stock, is teaching a class on the New Testament and has 40 on the rolls. It has been going slow at Loretto recently as the Chaplain’s office is currently understaffed. There are 3 volunteers who help in this work.

Federal Prison Camp Loretto: Randy Datsko is teaching Disciple II with 14 in attendance. He has two volunteers who help lead this work.

Federal Correctional Institution McKean: We are part of what God is doing inside prison walls. Over 80 men are involved in four studies we provide. We are happy to welcome two new volunteers to the ministry, Gary Sheesley and Fred Pysker. Gary has

always wanted to do prison ministry and is glad for the opportunity to join in the work at FCI McKean. Fred is a retired Spanish teacher and is stepping into the work that Dorie Heckman and David Stains began.

Federal Prison Camp McKean: In a Bible study that I lead at the FPC at McKean, one of the men told me this year that he is finishing the drug rehab program they offer. It is a 9 month, 5 days a week 8 hours a day program. He tells me that he has been through drug rehab before, but this time there is something different. He said instead of being angry at whoever put him in prison, he is thankful because this time he has given his heart to Jesus and instead of being filled with anger he is thankful that he has had one more chance. He said he is not just there for reformation but he is looking to the Lord for transformation. I am praying that by God's grace he will be successful.

Volunteer of the Year Award: This past year two of our volunteers received the "Volunteer of the Year Award" at the institution where they serve. Kevin Stock received the award at FCI Loretto and David Stains received the award at FCI McKean.

Opportunities for Prison Ministry: We encourage churches to contact the administration or religious services at prisons near them to see what their church or cluster or district can do to help minister to those incarcerated at their facilities. Some churches supply personal care items, others supply Bibles and daily devotional materials, others hold worship services and Bible studies. There also may be needs for a visitation ministry to those without families to care about them.

Jesus said, "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'" (Matthew 25:34-36 NIV)

David Bunnell, Chair

#### EASTERN GERMAN PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

The partnership between the conferences of Western Pennsylvania and Eastern Germany was initiated at the beginning of Bishop Bashore's tenure in the fall 1988. A committee was formed at that time to seek an appropriate partnership in then communist eastern Europe; and it was determined that the greatest facility lay with eastern Germany, as Bishop Bashore and then Bishop Ruediger Minor, a native of that conference, were well-acquainted and both able to correspond in both languages. The first direct correspondences between members of the two conferences occurred about the beginning 1989. Since those early days when our conference viewed ourselves in ministry to the German churches then under communism, to multiple cultural and mission exchanges between us in the 1990's, we have cultivated a true peer partnership in the 21st century.

Throughout the 1990's, several friendship and cultural exchanges fostered a sense of deep appreciation and friendship among us. The early and mid-'90's saw large groups of visiting youth (in both directions) highlighting our connection. The first visit by a primarily adult group from PA in November 1995 opened the way for a series of friendship/mission visits to aid the economically recovering German churches. By the late '90's, friendship/mission groups, mostly youth, came among us to return the favor in



some of the mission sites of our conference. In the summer of 1996 Ms. Uta Drutkowski (now an Eastern German pastor) broke ground by serving on staff at Jumonville.

Highlights of cultural exchange include visits by the German conference children's choir in 1995 and 2003; and the German brass band in the late '90's and in 2008. Our conference ministers' chorus toured the German churches in 2000 and 2006; Mrs. Joy Conti visited the Eastern German conference in May 2004, offering a vocational mission presentation. The most groundbreaking mission endeavor occurred when a team of 21 from our conference joined 15 Germans in a VIM mission project to Camp Voronezh, Russia. In March 2005, a second international team embarked on a reforestation mission to Nicaragua, and in summer 2008 a joint team returned for further work at Camp Voronezh.

Many local church-to-church partnerships continue their work as well, and we count their numerous contributions as priceless. Among the oldest and most fruitful has been the bond between Mt. Lebanon and Zwickau-Planitz, a partnership that involves near-annual exchanges of visiting teams for enrichment and mission. Within the last year, an exchange visit strengthened ties between Homestead Park UMC and the church of German partnership chair Werner Philipp of Dresden; and a began between the churches at Rodewisch, Germany, and Homer City UMC.

In 2009 we celebrated 20 years since the initial contacts between our conferences with special observances at Grove City in June.—and in October-November, the fall of the Berlin Wall, where Mary Garber represented our conference partnership at the Berlin celebration.

Our committee manages three annual projects—the inter-conference prayer day in early January, with a list of prayer foci or printed liturgical prayer provided in the *Interlink* in December; a display table at Annual conference; and the Advent daily devotion booklet, distributed through the monthly mailings to all pastors in November. Anecdotal feedback indicates that these prayer and meditation tools are used by a growing number of churches across our conference each year. The Advent devotional is now made available online, on our conference website.

In 2012 the partnership sent its second delegation of young people and chaperones to our sister conference's English Camp for youth, a week-long event in August which allows teens to know the call of Jesus Christ while honing their English language skills. Participants from West PA included participants Eric Buzard and Kelly Maxwell, accompanied by chaperones Rich and Mary Schall.

Late in the year, the committee laid groundwork for participation in the 2013 English Camp, to be held Aug. 4-12 near Zeitz, Germany, and for this year's joint VIM trip to work among the Roma of Europe Oct. 7-18, near Sofia, Bulgaria.

The German contingent of our joint committee is proposing future visitor-delegate exchanges between our respective annual conferences, as well as leadership/Episcopal exchange visits as well.

For information on these projects, or other ways you may be more involved in our partnership's work, inquire of chair Joe Stains.

The partnership has progressed with a very modest budget, and very generous contributions from pastors and laity throughout the conference in the context of special events and tours.

Joseph R. Stains, Chair

## RUSSIA INITIATIVE

1991 saw the inception of WPA work with the Russia Initiative with tons of food collected and shipped by our local churches during the famine.

In 1995 WPA Conference formally partnered with the Russia Initiative, and was assigned to work with the Russian Peace Foundation of the Komi Republic, whose principal office is in the capital city of Komi, Syktyvkar.

In partnership with the Peace Foundation we visited the cities of Syktyvkar, Uchta, Pechorra, and Inta, and countless villages accomplishing significant work, primarily in medicine, education, social work, foster homes and orphanages. Delegations of Komi Russians visited our Conference, and we annually sent teams of WPA to Komi.

In 2003 we learned that a house church with a few dozen members had applied and been received into the Russian United Methodist Church. Originally called the Samaritan Woman UMC, it since changed its name to the Embassy of Love UMC. WPA Conference applied and was assigned partnership status with this church, and simultaneously received permission and encouragement to continue work with the Peace Foundation.

When the Russian Parliament passed laws restricting permission for foreign churches to work within Russia, The United Methodist Church was one of the only faiths given permission to continue work, in part due to the excellent nature of our work and cooperation, but primarily because the Methodist Church was a recognized Russian church prior to the Russian Revolution, having started in Russia in the 1800's and having a number of active congregations with Russian pastors. This has allowed us to continue our shared ministry and partnership.

In 2009 the Embassy of Love burned to the ground due to a child's fire-work embedding in the roof and igniting during the night. WPA Conference local churches responded in 2010 with an offering of \$60,000, along with an offering from Russian local churches, to substantially rebuild.

During summer of 2012 Embassy of Love asked for financial help to finish construction, so that what was already done would not be lost to weather. In October Waynesburg First UMC contributed \$25,000, The Russia Initiative fund \$1,945, and the Conference missions board gave a grant of \$8,055 for a total of \$35,905 to finish the exterior and the interior of the church. The work has commenced and it is hoped it will be finished by early May 2013.

We continue to remit annual sponsorship money for the support of the pastor and the congregation, totaling near \$9,000 more. The Russian UMC is encouraging the congregations to work towards self-sufficiency.

John Flower and Gary Grau anticipate attending the Russia Initiative Consultation in April 2013, and to later travel to Syktyvkar to spend time with the congregation. Persons interested in the Russian ministry should contact any member of the Russia Initiative Board.

John E. Flower, Jr., Chair