



In Connecticut, After God,
We Put People First

BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CONNECTICUT DISTRICT

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Welcome to Our District!

The Connecticut District hopes not only to inform you but also to empower you to be thriving, kingdom-advancing, impact-making disciples of Jesus Christ. Although we are at different locations, this newsletter intends to help you stay connected to your neighboring pastors, laity, and churches. Let us know via email or phone how the newsletter can be more helpful and resourceful to you and your ministries.



The Heart of the D.S.

This section known as “From the Heart of The D.S.” is a blog where we come to learn what is it that’s in the D.S.’s heart and mind.

Celebration of Life and Faith of Pastor John Blossom



BY REV. DR. ALPHER SYLVESTER
District Superintendent, Connecticut



Grace and peace from God our father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

These words are more special to us as we grieve the passing of our comrade in the Lord, the Reverend John Blossom. As announced, John passed away on Sunday September 15th. The scriptures assure us that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5: 8 - 10). John Loved Jesus and he is with our Lord. These are words of comfort that we present to June-Ann and Christopher as we mourn John's passing and pray for them.

Bishop and I both agreed that a more intimate announcements to our district should supplement the general announcement to the conference. As I prepared to write this missive to our district I struggle with the weight exerted on my office as the DS and especially in a moment like this. I am not sure I can say the right things or correctly respond to all the emotions that surrounds this death. The one thing that I could do is invite us to be authentic with our feelings. I had the privilege of spending time with John prior to his demise. The effects of it has made me cry so I invite you to cry if you feel the need to do so. His death has made me wrestled with the fragility of my humanity, ministry; I invite you to do the same if you feel the need to do so.

Some time past, I was asked to write an assessment of John's ministry. After assuring due diligence through observation, interview with him and his peers, I summarized his service to our district and conference in the attached missive (next pages). I read it again today and realized that it helped me to memorialize him and the great ministry that he has provided among us. I do hope that it will do the same for you; I share it with you within our intimate "district space."

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:7

At the heart of his life and ministry was his love for God and God’s church.

Rev. John Blossom, we bless your memory with great love for you,
for you have written your love upon our hearts.

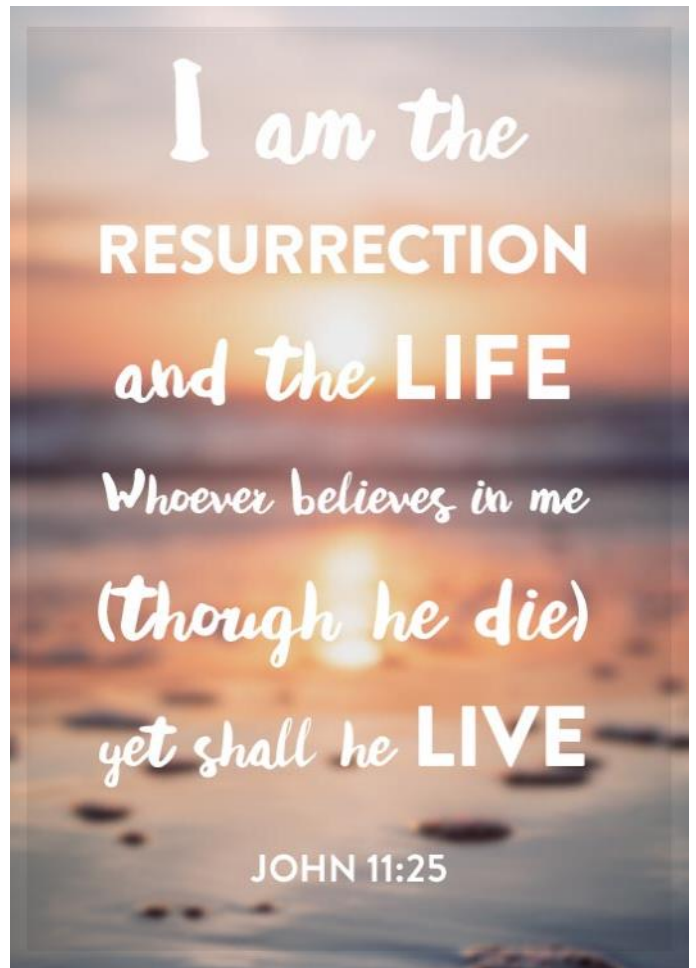
Go your way in peace and may your memory be a blessing to all who knew you.

Well done, good and faithful servant of God.

May you rest in peace eternally.

To learn more about Rev. John and his passion for God,
Here are links to Pastor John Blossom’s [church website](#) and [pastor blog](#)

The Heart of the D.S.



*"Here is my challenge to you: dare to grow in faith with us.
Dare to open yourself to God's possibilities that change our lives,
and the lives around us, when we follow God, persistently and insistently.
Dare to explore what an investment in faith can do to our investment in life itself.
Relationships can heal. New possibilities for life can be revealed.
Hope and joy can become a way of life.
And the ordinary, right in front of us, can become extraordinary."*

Rev. John Blossom

Please Join Us in

Celebrating the Life & Resurrection of The Reverend John Blossom



Calling Hours: Friday 27th September 5:00pm - 8:00pm
at Guilford Funeral Home (115 Church St. Guilford)

Service Celebrating John's Life & Resurrection:

Date: Saturday 28th September at 10:00am
First United Methodist Church, Meriden

Church: 159 East Main St. Meriden.

Church Parking: 35 Pleasant St. Meriden.

Preacher: Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton

Worship Leader: District Superintendent Alpher Sylvester

Clergy Attire: White Robes & Red Stoles
Clergy Arrival: 9:45am

Reception: Immediately Following Service
Sponsored by Greater Meriden Cooperative Parish &
United Methodist Women of 1st UMC, Meriden

Internment: Following Service – Alder Brook Cemetery
355 Boston St. Guilford. All are welcome.

Repast: Following Interment – Guilford Mooring Restaurant
505 Whitfield St. All are welcome

Confirm Your Attendance by emailing Rev. Richard Hanse at richard.hanse@nyac-umc.com

Remembering Pastor John Blossom

THE REVEREND JOHN BLOSSOM

Reverend John Blossom's call to ministry is affirmed through his commitment to excellence in ministry and his dedication to his charge. He focuses on developing a blended worship experience and using the best of a traditional worship style with an interpretation of its best elements into a mosaic that includes modern elements to make the message and the Spirit more accessible for modern congregants. He is resilient, responsive to criticism and committed to self improvement.

Pastor John attest to feeling "growing pains" as he struggles to balance school and work life while administering a church with four properties on a part-time basis. Under his leadership things are going well. He exercises a lot of listening to understand his congregants as they do ministry. He endeavors to nature their existing gifts, back to life, and to ensure their personal growth. He encourages regular meetings with committees/chairs, solicit regular feedback and incorporate their comments into his work with them. He has established "holy conversations" guidelines immediately to "detoxify" an atmosphere of fear and dominance that had taken hold of some committees prior to his appointment.

Pastor John teaches primarily from the pulpit and in counseling. He meets with a discipleship group on Sunday AM before worship focused on the discipline's series of lectionary devotionals. For Lent, he has rolled out "Faith formation groups" Sundays at 5PM and Wednesdays at 7PM, using Adam Hamilton's "The Way" devotional 40-day study of the life and Way of Jesus, with video. He hopes to continue after Lent, as a form of discipleship that combines member development and outreach. For children, he has created a system of "God Bags" stuffed with Sunday school materials from sermons4Kids.com, along with stickers, and other "cool stuff" that the kids can take home.

Pastor John Blossom is committed to active counseling and visitation ministries. On his first day of ministry at SMUMC, he hung out an **"open for prayer - guidance available"** sign in front of the church, and a regular stream of community residents, passers-by, and church members come by for prayer and consultation. He has regular "church on the go" visitation ministries, organized and led by the laity, to visit shut-ins and people recovering from illnesses and injuries, offering communion and a message when invited. Guidance to homeless people for shelter and services is a fairly regular component of his counseling,

Pastor John has been successful within his tenure to establish active outreach across the community to its leaders and its advocates for change. His focus is on trying to shift from an "us-to-them-and-done approach that is scattershot to an ongoing and needs to move towards being an integrated 'we-side-by-side' approach." He has met with the local police outreach liaison with one of his church leader. He has coordinated meetings of local neighborhood watch groups working to establish a stronger relationship with the watch group leader. He has had interfaith meeting with the leader of South Meriden's Ahmadiyya mosque. This has led to an invitation to an anti-racism rally on the steps of the Connecticut capitol District building with political and religious leaders, where he spoke as a pastor. An outgrowth of his attendance at the anti-racism rally was an emerging relationship with City Councilor Miguel Castro, who is trying to build a broad, neighborhood-based coalition for support of families exposed to arbitrary and summary DACA enforcement. Meriden has been "ground zero" for such arbitrary ICE enforcement efforts, and so he is working quietly and collaboratively with Councilor Castro to develop a multi-layered strategy for response that can enable the church to position itself as a shoulder-to-shoulder advocate for their neighbors, to fulfill the gospel. Pastor John participates actively in the Meriden Clergy Association.

Pastor John's most important aspect of self-care is prayer. He prays with his family every night at dinner. He has made it a point to visit all of the local Elder clergy to mentor him in his duties. This has enabled him to

Remembering Pastor John Blossom

establish deeper relationships with these people, which encourages him on his road of discipleship and service.

Pastor John's leadership has helped the church to make some modest progress forward in the financial stability of his charge. Increased membership attendance has enabled a relatively strong pledge commitment. In his words: *"Some of this has been my work, but a lot of it has been encouraging people to have faith in their work. When I first arrived, many people were spiritually exhausted, sometimes hostile and bitter. I cannot claim to have remedied this situation completely, but I am pleased with the progress to date."*

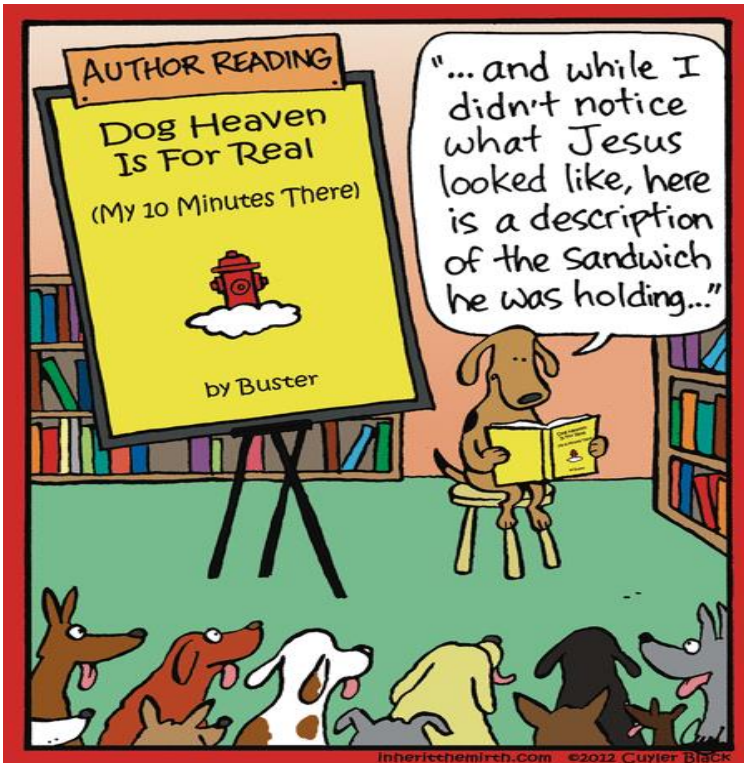
In pastor John's words: *"Worship has gone fairly well, as I try to balance the introduction of new elements and themes with getting people participating with the energies that inspire them the most. I am so self-aware of how important it is to use just the right words in an early-on situation with a new congregation, so I have stuck religiously to manuscript preaching. Figuring out the boundaries of a "half time" Pastor is a challenge. I think that I have managed the workload fine overall, but I try to provide extra investment in long-term goals apart from immediate goals, to prepare the way for the church to fulfill the church's apostolic mission. I would like to shore up our administrative capabilities in the months ahead, so that we will have strong methods in place that will allow us to focus more effectively on church growth. I think that I am starting to gain the trust of our members, and of the community. Trust requires a sense of long-term commitment, and of allowing them the freedom to make good choices for themselves. Some activities, like prayer walks and quarterly "holy conferencing," leave some folks unsure at times, but overall, as I stick to my guns and try to draw folks with honey and not vinegar, I think that there is an emerging sense of "we" in our ministries. That was not there when I started! New and recommitted leaders are emerging slowly, habits of leadership are being disciple, and bit by bit we are making progress towards a church that engages our neighbors truly as our neighbors."*

Pastor John believes God the Holy Spirit is always around and watching and helping him in ministry. To that end, he lives and gives love to his congregation. As a resilient pastor, he provides leadership to a growing congregation and continues to be a strong pastor within our United Methodist connection. I strongly **recommend Pastor John** as a leader and a viable candidate for ministry.



“Funny Things Are Everywhere!”

As the saying goes, "Laughter is the best medicine." We are dedicating this section in our hopes to put a smile on your face and brighten your day. And some jokes contain a grain of truth. Let us be the people who can use our sense of humor to find some joy in our ministries and gain secret insights into our lives.



Connecticut in Mission

Welcome to the Missions section of this newsletter. Our District has supported and continues to support many missionaries around the world. You will hear stories of missionaries and their ministries and see ways to be connected and support them.



MISSION Engagement

Welcome to the Mission section of this newsletter!

September is Emergency Preparedness month. The CT District is hosting one of three forums being held in the Conference this Fall. Saturday 9/28/19, 9a-3p at Prospect UMC, Bristol, CT. Unfortunately, there is always another disaster. Are **you** READY for a disaster in your community? Here is your opportunity to prepare!

The role of the church in disaster preparedness and response is critical to the well-being not only of its members but to the communities in which they serve. The New York Conference Missions office is offering a day of training and workshops around the theme, Are you a Ready Church?

Workshops will include:

Connecting Neighbors—BE a “Ready” Church

Is your church prepared to respond an emergency or localized disaster? Do you have a personal emergency plan for yourself or family? Does your church have a plan of preparedness for predicted natural disasters? Is there a procedure in place for addressing medical emergencies or disruptive behavior during worship or other church events? Have you identified both the vulnerable population of your congregation and the resources available to your community? These are some of the questions we consider as part of Connecting Neighbors – Ready Church.

Early Response Team (ERT) Basic and Recertification

ERTs are our first line of response as soon as an “all clear” is established in a disaster event. This UMCOR-based training provides the basic information and hands-on training required for badging and response teams. Classes will be offered for both Basic and Recertification.

Disaster Emotional and Spiritual Care

Offering a Christian presence in the immediate aftermath of a disaster is critical to both individual and community healing. This workshop provides both an overview of disaster emotional and spiritual care as well as practical “do’s and don’ts” in working with survivors.

Basic Tool Use and Safety

This is a hands-on workshop designed as both an introduction to tool identification, use, and safety, as well as practicing skills often used in early response and long-term recovery.

Team Leader Training

A critical first step in deploying disaster response teams is having an experienced and qualified Team Leader. This UMCOR-based workshop will equip and certify NYAC participants as Disaster Response Team Leaders.

For additional questions or information please contact

Tom Vencuss (tvencuss@nyac.com) at the NYAC Missions office.

[For online registration \(required\) click here](#)



Our 2019 District Mission Goal of Rebuilding Puerto Rico continues:

Team #3 (in 2019) from our District will depart on 10/17/19 for another week of rebuilding. This team has 4 people from New Life UMC, New Fairfield, 1 from Torrington UMC, 1 from Memorial UMC in Avon, 1 from Prospect UMC, Bristol and 2 are joining us from Mamaroneck UMC, Mamaroneck NY. We ask for your prayers for their travel, work and the families they will meet who were affected by Hurricane Maria. We will post photos onto our District Facebook page as we are able. Thank you team members, for your service in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ!

Visiting Missionaries:

We have good news... John Nday and his wife Florence Kaying who currently serve in South Mozambique have been granted their visas. Therefore we are picking up where we left off when their visa was denied for their visit planned in April. John is the agricultural coordinator at Cambine Mission and Florence is a Nurse Practitioner at Cambine hospital. Click [here](#) to read more about John or [here](#) to read more about Florence. They will be itinerating (visiting local churches) October 17-21. They are presenting at Mamaroneck UMC, Mamaroneck NY, sharing time on 10/19 at Naugatuck UMC, and worshipping at New Milford UMC on Sunday the 20th. Their time with us is only 4 days. This is a wonderful opportunity to hear about our United Methodist connections in Africa! All are invited to go and meet and hear them at any of these locations. Also, if you happen to speak French, it would be a welcome surprise for them!

Another Missionary visiting!

Meeting a missionary is inspirational and spiritual. If you would like to meet, hear and learn what a missionary does in Nicaragua, join us! Dr. Belinda Forbes, a Dentist in Nicaragua since 1999, will be in our District and speaking twice! Monday, 11/4/19, she will be at South Meriden Trinity UMC, at 7pm. United Methodist Women of the UMC of Hartford will be hosting her on Tuesday 11/5 at 7pm. Both events are open to everyone. If you wish to attend in Hartford,

please rsvp: dianne@umcofhartford.org by 11/4. To read more about Belinda and her work, [click here](#)! Additionally, if you would like to invite Belinda to your church, she may have some availability on 11/6 or 11/7, just let me know!

As always, contact me anytime if you want to learn more about mission teams, missionaries, youth mission opportunities or disaster response.

In Mission together!

Jill Wilson

CT District Mission Coordinator

jillmwilson@comcast.net

860-690-1853

Best Practices in Ministry

Each pastor has a passion for something they do that is unique, cutting edge, and successful in bringing people to Christ. This is the section of the newsletter where we share resources, experiences, stories, practices and ways of addressing recurring issues and problems. There is always something new to learn and bring into our pastoral ministry that is effective, life-changing and draws in new disciples.

Digital Design of Worship



BY REV. JACOB HANBIN EUN

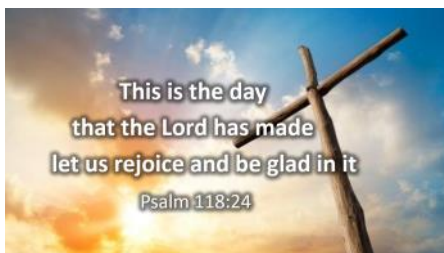
Pastor at First United Methodist Church of Wallingford in CT

If screens are used in graceful ways, they can tremendously be helpful both to pastors and congregations for they can enhance and enrich our worship experiences. We not too long ago installed two screens (not a projector mainly for two reasons: 1) we don't want the projector to fight against the backlight of our glass windowed sanctuary and 2) we didn't want to obstruct our beautiful sanctuary), and we learned that it's worth the effort and time to make our worship slides and screen content helpful, impactful, and graceful, not distracting to our worship experience.

Here are some tips that I can offer to help make your church's worship experience more engaging and enriching.

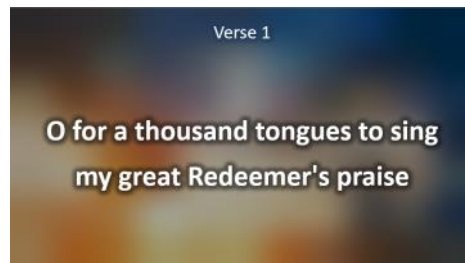
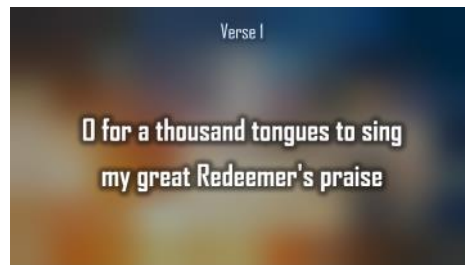
1. Choose Widescreen Slide Size (16:9) instead of 4:3

This dimension of the screen gives more horizontal spaces where you can keep your words in a readable size and don't have to break the sentence into two lines.



2. Use reader-friendly fonts, sizes, and styles

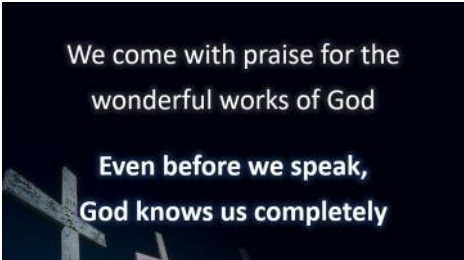
Keep it simple and large. If fonts are too "fancy" or small, they can be distracting. My preference is white colored, bolded, and shaded words with dark, thick glows behind the letters that contrast dark backgrounds. It is more instantly appealing to the readers. Don't sacrifice legibility in the name of creativity!



3. Choose the right backgrounds

The simpler background images are, the easier and more professional they appeal

Choose colors that provide a strong contrast from your font and try to avoid overlaying text on an image.



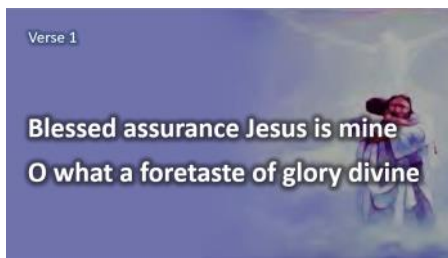
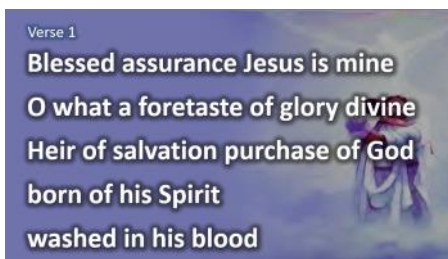
4. Use consistent formatting

I use one or two fonts for the whole service. If there is no particular image you want to preserve from the background, use center alignment.

For each song, Scripture reading, call to worship, etc., keep one same background. This can be a clear indicator of where you are in the order of service.

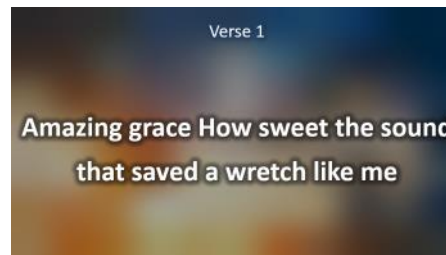
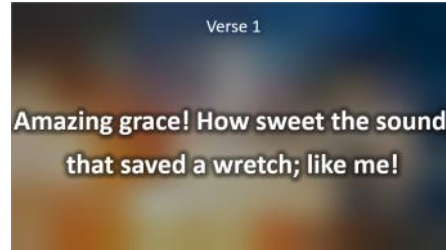
5. Don't pack too much on a slide

Too many words and too many lines on one slide are not aesthetically appealing and difficult to catch. I try to use 2-4 lines for songs. Don't cram words onto every slide and over-stuff words. Good text arrangement including adding appropriate line breaks can really help.



6. No punctuations

For musical lyrics, you don't need to have punctuations. If you are a grammar nerd, it can get under your skin but instead, rely on line breaks and text arrangements. The simpler it is, the easier to read.



7. Avoid animations

You will have many transition and animation options but the simpler, quicker, smoother, softer, and even unnoticeable they move to the next slide, the better for congregations to follow along.

8. Graceful timing

Bad timing can really cause a break to the flow of worship service and add awkward moments both for the pastor and congregation to stare at the screen while the service continues. To avoid lagging behind the actual singing of the lyrics, move onto the next slide right on the last two or three words of the current slide. There is no need to wait for all the words to be actually read or sung.

Please feel free to use our church's Powerpoint slides.

Make sure you download the file to view the fully edited version. [Click here to access the file.](#)

The Greek word, gnosis, refers to not any knowledge but a higher form of knowledge; knowledge from experience of divinity or that which is beyond the five senses. In this section of the newsletter, we want to provide you a great educational tool to a wide array of topics related to our lives and ministries. Topics may include revitalizing churches, self-care, the Way Forward, etc.

Disaffiliation? Yes No

Unity? Yes No

Here are two articles that help us see where we stand from a global perspective: one from the Africa Central Conferences and the other from the Philippines Central Conference.

[African Bishops Oppose Separation Plans](#)

By **Eveline Chikwanah**

Sept. 9, 2019 | MUTARE, Zimbabwe (UM News)



Bishops in Africa have resolved not to support any proposed legislations or plans that may result in a split or dissolution of The United Methodist Church.

[In a statement](#) at the close of the Africa College of Bishops retreat Sept 2-6, the bishops said the church would continue in Africa after the 2020 General Conference.

“We do not support any legislation that calls for the dissolution of The United Methodist Church. We uphold our values as a connectional and worldwide church committed to ‘making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world’,” the bishops’ statement said.

President of the Africa College of Bishops, John K. Yambasu of Sierra Leone, said the bishops would not allow others to set the agenda for the church in Africa.

“We African bishops and the galaxy of informed clergy across

this continent must set the agenda for the church in Africa rather than allow others to draft it on our behalf for us to rubber stamp and seal it,” Yambasu said.

The bishops said they were concerned that conversations on the future of The United Methodist Church are taking place in the United States without African representatives.

“We cannot allow a split in the global church to split up the church in Africa again. We cannot allow a split to further reduce us to second-class citizens in a church that only needs us when they want our votes,” the statement read. “As Africans, we have the right of self-determination and we have the right to speak for ourselves and determine who we want to be.”

During his keynote address, Yambasu said the future of the church is not about winning and losing.

“Christ came and died for all of us, and so the church belongs to all of us. We can agree that the debate on human sexuality is not about who wins or loses; it is about all of us winning. Nor is it about kicking others out so that we can stay in. More importantly, it is not about one group of people making decisions for and on behalf of every other group,” he said.

At the meeting, the African bishops reiterated their stance on homosexuality, noting in the statement that they agree, “as an African Church, we do not accept nor support the practice of homosexuality because it is incompatible with the teachings of Scripture.”

At the 2019 special General Conference, held this past

February in St. Louis, delegates [by a 438-384 margin approved the Traditional Plan](#), which reinforces the church's restrictions on ordination and same-sex marriage.

Since then, several groups have developed alternate plans for the future of church, including the [Indianapolis Plan](#), the [UMCNext Proposal](#) and the [Bard-Jones Plan](#).

The African bishops' statement called on the entire denomination to exercise restraint at General Conference 2020, "and work towards an approach to the human sexuality debate in ways that are humane and respectful."

In an interview with UM News, Yambasu said this year's College of Bishops retreat at Africa University aimed to sensitize African bishops regarding the impact of decisions on the future of the church in Africa.

"There is a kind of development of preparedness strategy for economic sustainability, functional structure and continuity of programs and ministry already on the continent," he said.

Yambasu also spoke about [the creation of five new episcopal areas in Africa in 2020](#).

"The placement of five new bishops was a General Conference decision and we therefore expect that General Conference through the General Council on Finance and Administration will provide the needed support for those bishops. However, in the event that funding may not be readily available, part of our strategy as a college is to develop alternative means of support or alternative ways of addressing the issue," he said.

Ten African bishops attended the retreat, which was themed "Rethinking the African Church: A Call to Reclaim Our African Identity in Light of Changing Realities in The Global United Methodist Denomination."

The agenda for the meeting also allowed time for the bishops to consult with whom they identified as traditional U.S. bishops.

Four U.S. episcopal leaders — Bishops L. Jonathan Holston of the South Carolina Conference; Scott Jones of the Texas Conference; Gary Mueller of the Arkansas Conference and James Swanson Sr. of the Mississippi Conference — attended

the retreat.

Representatives of the Africa Initiative and Renewal Coalition also attended.

"We invited only those groups who requested to be invited. We remain open for other groups who may want to be in conversation with us," Yambasu said.



Mueller said interacting with the African bishops had been "enlightening, broadening, humbling and, at times, convicting."

"Those of us in the West by nature so quickly try to solve problems that we don't spend time praying and listening to God, allowing the Holy Spirit to help us discern, nor do we necessarily have the conversation we really need to have with each other," he said.

"This time here broadened that tremendously. I think we have reached the point where there is too much harm being done to each other that it is inevitable that there has to be some sort of untangling of the mess."

"I came away with a pretty much clearer understanding about what's important for Africa," Mueller said.

Swanson said he attended the retreat in order to listen to his African colleagues.

"I didn't really bring a message. What I really wanted to do was to listen and in so doing I heard some things that I felt like I needed to hear, not just with the head but also with the heart," he said.

“One of those messages that was very loud and very clear was that I don’t think we in the U.S. understand how precious and how dear the name of The United Methodist Church is, not only to the African bishops, but to the African United Methodist people.

“It’s not just a name, but it’s a really valuable asset, the doors that name opens up, the respect it engenders in people who are not United Methodists, even the political figures, economic institutions, education institutions,” he said.

“That name carries a lot of weight in Africa and I don’t think people understand that with their hearts as well as their heads. They don’t understand what they may be losing if the African United Methodist Church loses that name.”

Chikwanah is a communicator of the Zimbabwe East Conference.

[Filipino Bishops Back Church Unity](#)

By Gladys P. Mangiduyos

Sept. 11, 2019 | UM News



The Philippines Central Conference College of Bishops has signed a resolution “intensely” opposing dissolution of The United Methodist Church.

The bishops’ resolution recommended restructuring that would allow for regional autonomy to deal with divisive issues like homosexuality.

“From the beginning of the church in the New Testament, division and schism in the church are to be avoided and unity

must be achieved and maintained,” [the resolution reads](#).

Meeting Aug. 31 at United Methodist headquarters in Manila, the bishops agreed to submit the petition to General Conference.

Bishop Rodolfo Alfonso “Rudy” Juan, president of the Filipino College of Bishops, said the Philippines Central Conference is totally against dissolution of The United Methodist Church.

“We servant-bishops encourage our Filipino constituency to continually promote unity in our denomination,” he said.

The petition was signed by Juan, Bishop Ciriaco Q. Francisco (who participated via conference call) and retired Bishops Emerito P. Nacpil, Daniel C. Arichea, Solito K. Toquero and Jose C. Gamboa Jr.

Bishop Pedro M. Torio Jr., secretary of the College of Bishops, and retired bishops Leo A. Soriano and Benjamin A. Justo did not attend the meeting.

The resolution’s recommendation for restructuring The United Methodist Church into regional conferences is similar to a plan laid out by The Connectional Table in regards to a [new U.S. structure](#).

“With our proposal for restructuring into regional conferences, we can exercise some form of autonomy to meet contextual realities in our specific regions. We then will have a regional Book of Discipline,” Juan said.

The resolution states that The United Methodist Church “will remain as one global church in which regional, central, annual and local conferences are organic parts, but have the authority to decide their witness, mission and ministry, thus, preserving locality and connectionality.”

Regional autonomy will allow United Methodists from central conferences — the seven church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines — to deal with the divisive issue of homosexuality, Juan said.

“It is our prayer that with some form of regional autonomy, we can find a workable solution and remain a united global denomination,” he said.

The resolution also called for the Council of Bishops to be retained for general and local oversight of The United Methodist Church.

Bishops in Africa also recently [resolved not to support any proposed legislation or plans that may result in a split or](#)

[dissolution](#) of the church.

Retired Bishop Soriano, who had a prior commitment and could not attend the Filipino Council of Bishops meeting, talked to UM News by phone about the resolution. He said that being disciples of Christ is having one mission.

"Whether one is for or against homosexuality, the mission remains the same: that is making disciples of Jesus Christ for

the transformation of the world.

"I believe the church would be more effective if it is united in doing the mission. However, if it becomes unavoidable, I will accept it. History tells us that while schism is inevitable, the splinters continue to do the mission."

Our next issue will feature:

Immigrants and the Borders

Leviticus 19:33-34

*"When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them.
The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born.
Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.*

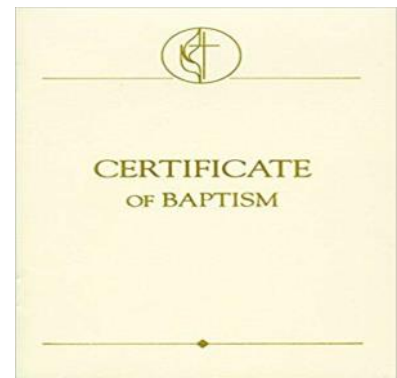
Leviticus 23:22

*When you reap the harvest of your land,
do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest.
Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the Lord your God.*



**Proof of citizenship
of earthly kingdom**

**Which one
informs our
action?**



**Proof of citizenship
of heavenly kingdom**



A Pastor Speaks

Pastors need to be pastored and inspired. The spiritual health of a pastor really ought to be a priority for his or her congregation. We want to share inspiring and insightful sermons from pastors within our district with the aims to minister and empower one another. It is our prayer that we keep each other accountable as we are building God's kingdom together in the Connecticut District.

The Insanity of “Self-Care”

BY THE REV. MARSHALL SEGAL

The self-care movement strives to address the stresses of everyday life with simple, practical habits.

Clinically, “self-care” has to do with anything someone might do for the sake of their own physical or mental health, including, for instance, eating well, exercising, or sleeping eight hours a night. Functionally today, the articles seem to focus more on stress management, and often target women in the workplace (often with major responsibilities at home and at work). Self-care strategies attempt to apply structure and discipline to “me-time,” re-centering our world around ourselves (wouldn't Ptolemy be proud?), and looking for hope, healing, and stability from some hidden place deep within ourselves.

The list of strategies will vary from website to website, but they will often be some combination of the following steps (in this case, developed by the faculty at the University at Buffalo):

- Start eating healthier
- Work out regularly
- Reduce stress
- Prioritize and schedule your time better
- Relax
- Practice “mindfulness”
- Be good to yourself

Okay, but how do you “reduce stress” — for instance, stress about a struggling marriage, or about consistent interpersonal conflict at work, or about years of chronic pain or disease, or about habitual, demoralizing personal sin or weaknesses? Here are a few suggestions from one PhD in philosophy:

- Blow bubbles
- Plant a flower

- Hum a tune
- Feed birds and squirrels
- Walk a labyrinth
- Listen to a cat purring
- If you think that a tune, a labyrinth, or a squirrel are going to heal the things that haunt you, you are more helpless than you even realize—Tweet Share on Facebook



It's all diversion. Every item on the list of 75+ activities is simply meant to get your mind off of the stressor. It's the licensed healthcare equivalent of turning up Taylor Swift so loud you couldn't possibly think about anything else. Just shake it off. It's medication by distraction, not redemption. Practicing forgetfulness, rather than pursuing forgiveness.

These tactics do not even pretend to address your needs or to offer a cure. If you think that a tune, a labyrinth, or a squirrel are going to heal the things that haunt you, you are more helpless than you even realize. A tune covers the silence you fear, but it will never cover the sin you carry. A

squirrel might find a nut, but he never finds freedom from guilt and shame. A lonely walk in a corn maze never leads to reconciliation between estranged friends or family members.

The Maddening Idea of Mindfulness

And what is “mindfulness”? Dr. Cindy Sanderson says, “awareness without judgment of what is, via direct and immediate experience.” What does that mean?

“You eat dessert and notice every flavor you are tasting... You’re not thinking about ‘is it good or bad to have dessert?’ You’re just really having dessert.”

“Dance to music and experience every note, instead of wondering if you look graceful or foolish.”

“You walk through a park; you actually walk through the park. What does that mean? It means you let yourself ‘show up’ in the park. You walk through the park aware of your feelings about the park, or your thoughts about the park, or how the park looks, or the sensation of each foot striking the pavement.”



Mindfulness sounds an awful lot like mindlessness. Do whatever you want, but whatever you do, don’t think about your problems. Want to deal with stress? Fixate yourself on chocolate or Netflix or the park near your house. Pretty soon, you’ll realize you haven’t been thinking at all about your looming financial debt, or your failures as a father, or your mom’s cancer. For a whole five minutes, you’ve been thinking about Reese’s, The Office, and golden retrievers.

Isn’t that the freedom you’ve been dying for?

The Self-Care Search for Big

“The sensations we feel gazing at bigness begin to uncover the God-sized cavity beneath our guilt, stress, and anxiety.” Tweet
Share on Facebook

The closest the self-care movement can get to truly good news is to tell you to stare at something big:

- Watch a sunrise
- Hike in the woods
- Go to the beach
- Take a country drive
- Watch a sunset

Each of these is an effort to put you in front of something bigger than yourself long enough that you forget yourself. These strategies hint at the Christian gospel because the sensations we feel gazing at bigness begin to uncover the God-sized cavity beneath our guilt, stress, and anxiety.

The Care You Really Need

The care you really need is not buried somewhere deep inside of you, waiting to be unlocked by some dessert or diversion. No, you need the healing, forgiving, restoring, and transforming grace of a God who loves you. Only Someone stronger than your greatest weaknesses, bigger than your worst failures, and brighter than your deepest darkness could address the things you fear or regret.

If you’re drawing on the ocean of God’s grace to you through Jesus Christ, then your habits might make all the difference. Our habits of grace — our daily and weekly rhythms of seeking God, of surrendering our dreams and anxieties to him, of spreading his fame in all we do — are the means by which we experience real, genuine happiness, and they are the highway along which we will begin to experience freedom from sin and all its awful consequences in our lives.

David Mathis writes,

Grace is too strong to leave us passive, too potent to let us wallow in the mire of our sins and weaknesses. “My grace is sufficient for you,” Jesus says, “for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). It is the grace of God that gives us his “means of grace” for our ongoing perseverance and growth and joy this side of the coming new creation. And the grace of God inspires and empowers the various habits and practices by which we avail ourselves of God’s means. (Habits of Grace, 23–24)

A Pastor Speaks

Where does the weary soul find rest and relief from its stress?
Jesus says,

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28–30)



Where does the anxious soul find peace for all its fears?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6–7)

Where do we find the strength to keep battling our sins, overcoming our weaknesses, and running hard through this difficult life into eternity?

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12–13)

The Massive God in Your Small Habits

“Any habit or activity can be a means of joy, peace, and healing, but only if it brings you to God — our only Lord, Savior, and greatest Treasure. ” Tweet Share on Facebook

Practice a different kind of mindfulness. Go ahead and listen to music, or watch a sunset, or play with your pet, but go Godward — be mindful of God and his great love for you. It really can be helpful to practice gratitude, or to enjoy a particular moment or activity, or to focus on something bigger

than yourself, but not if it ends there, and certainly not if it only ends with you. Any habit or activity can be a means of joy, peace, and healing, but only if it brings you to God — our only Lord, Savior, and greatest Treasure.

*“Blow bubbles,”
and remember that your sins have been forgiven.
(1 John 1:9)*

*“Plant a flower,”
and pray for God to satisfy you, again.
(Psalm 90:14)*

“Hum a tune,” and memorize another stunning promise in the Bible. (Isaiah 41:10)

*“Feed birds and squirrels,” and know how much your heavenly Father cares and provides for you.
(Matthew 6:25–34)*

The power of effective habits is not in the seclusion, or the silence, or the journal, but in whom you find in the habit. If you only find yourself, then your weaknesses, failures, and stresses can only be amplified and perpetuated. But if you find more of God, you have found resources far beyond yourself to address your deepest, most desperate needs.



Connecticut Youth in Action

Ministry to youth is an essential part of the missional focus of the church, and teaching young people in the church to grow in their relationship with God prepares them to serve Christ in all they do in their adulthood. We invite you to send us articles and pictures on great things that youths are doing at your church. Let's celebrate the future of our church!

Maryland Mission Team

Naugatuck United Methodist Church

Maryland Mission Team

On Saturday and Sunday, July 27 and 28, the Naugatuck UMC hosted the Youth Mission Team from Liberty Grove UMC, Burtonsville, Maryland. The Team led by Youth Director, Don Hauprich (in his 22nd year), had participated in a Group Workcamp performing home repair in and around Dexter, Maine, the week of July 20th. The mission team totalled 35 (28 high school youth and 7 adults). On Saturday evening on their way back to Maryland, they stopped at our Church to rest. On Sunday we treated them to breakfast and lunch. The Team participated in Sunday Service -- telling us a little about their mission and offering up a few praise songs to our pleasure - accompanied by Don on guitar. It was a Blessing to meet and greet these wonderful young people and adults so dedicated to doing what is pleasing to God.

Ethel Grant

Mission & Outreach

NUMC - Pastor Peola Hicks

More to come!



Let Us Celebrate the Youths Together

If you have a youth ministry that you want to share with the district,

[please click here to submit your articles and pictures.](#)

Prayer Requests

We pray because we believe in the power of prayer. Prayer keeps us connected with God and with one another. You can submit prayer requests to the link below, and the district will keep you in prayers.

"The greatest tragedy in life is the prayers that go UNANSWERED because they go UNASKED." M.B.

Please take the time out to let us know what prayer request you have for us. Let us share what's in your heart and mind with your brothers and sisters in Christ. When we pray for one another, miracles being to take place. You can [click here to submit your prayer requests](#) or type in on your browser: <https://ny-reg.brtapp.com/PrayerRequest>

"The Circle of Prayer"

Chris Yount

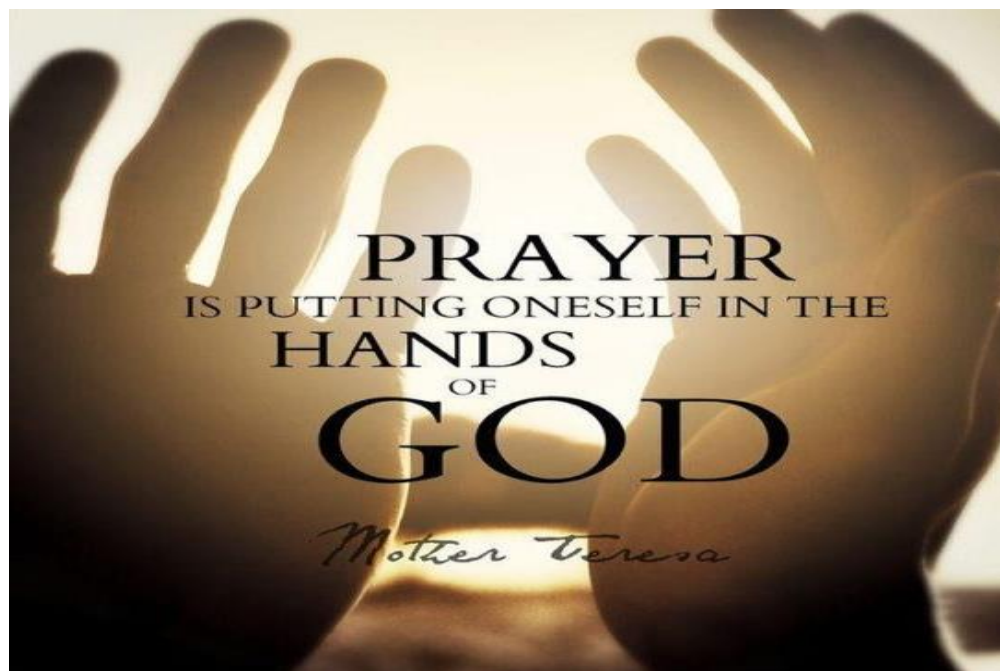
Rev. Alpher asked me if I was willing to bring the district an encouraging message in regard to prayer on a regular basis through this newsletter. When asked, I didn't hesitate to say yes, because I have seen over and over again the power of the faithful prayers of the people of God.

Let me pose a few questions to you (and me). How much time do you set aside for prayer and time with God each day? When is that time? Do you feel as if you are as close to God as you'd like?

The great women and men of God have all been people of prayer. I challenge you to start today and set aside 30 minutes every day to spend just talking to and listening to God. If you're having trouble hearing from Him, take out your bible and spend some time listening (reading)!

More to come!

Here is a link to an article that can help and enrich our prayer life
[7 Prayers for Work from Job Searching to Climbing the Career Ladder and More!](#)





Bishop Bickerton and Cooperative Parish Meeting

Friday, November 15

Morning Greater Bridgeport Parish Coordinator: David Piscatelli and Tisha Branch
Afternoon Elm City Bible Moths Parish Coordinator: Young Choi
Evening Lay Leadership from the two Cooperative Parishes
Location Westville UMC 34 Harrison Street, New Haven, CT 06515

Friday, November 22

Morning Northwest and Northeast Simsbury Parish Coordinator: Ed Horne
with Matt, Doris, and David
Afternoon Northwest and Northeast Parish with Bishop Coordinator: Karen Cook
Evening Lay Leadership from the two Cooperative Parishes
Location Torrington UMC 21 Fern Street, Torrington, CT 06070

Monday, December 9

Morning Western Frontier Parish Coordinator: Lori Miller
and The Valley Parish Coordinator: InKoo Chung
with Matt, Doris, and David
Afternoon Western Frontier & The Valley Parish with Bishop
Evening Lay Leadership from the two Cooperative Parishes
Location Derby UMC 17 Fifth Street, Derby, CT 06418

Friday, January 10

Morning Greater Hartford Parish Coordinator: Robert Knebel
Afternoon Meriden Parish Coordinator: Richard Hanse
Evening Lay Leadership from the two Cooperative Parishes
Location First UMC—Meriden 159 East Main Street, Meriden, CT 06450

Upcoming Events and Church Conferences



Disaster Preparedness Forum
Saturday, September 28, 2019
Prospect UMC in Bristol, CT
[Click here for more information](#)



Cross-Racial, Cross-Cultural Clergy Meeting
with Rev. Doris Dolton
Monday, October 21, 2019
NYAC Conference Center
More information: TBA



Emerging Clergy Meeting
Tuesday, October 22, 2019
Middlefield Federated Church
in Middlefield, CT

Cooperative Parish and Parish Convener	Date of Mini Clergy Conference	Date and Location of Church Conference
Greater Meriden Rev. Ric Hanse	First Meriden UMC Parish Convener to assign date	Sunday, October 20 at 2:00pm First Meriden UMC
Northwest Frontier Rev. Ed Horne	Torrington UMC Parish Convener to assign date	Sunday, November 3 at 2:00pm Torrington UMC
Western Frontier Rev. Lori Miller	Bethel UMC Parish Convener to assign date	Sunday, November 10 at 2:00pm New Fairfield UMC
Simsbury Rev. Karen Cook	Simsbury UMC Parish Convener to assign date	Sunday, November 17 at 2:00pm Simsbury UMC
Greater Hartford Rev. Robert Knebel	West Hartford UMC Parish Convener to assign date	Sunday, November 24 at 2:00pm Plainville UMC
Elm City Bible Moths Rev. Young Choi	Hamden Plain UMC Parish Convener to assign date	Sunday, December 1 at 2:00pm Faith UMC
Greater Bridgeport Rev. David Piscatelli	Long Hill UMC Parish Convener to assign date	Sunday, December 8 at 2:00pm Long Hill UMC
Valley Rev. InKoo Chung	Naugatuck UMC Parish Convener to assign date	Sunday, December 15 at 2:00pm Huntington UMC