



# NEWSCOPE

THE WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR UNITED METHODIST LEADERS

## Council of Bishops Expands Hopeandaction.org Website

The Council of Bishops announced the launch of a fully featured website dedicated to “God’s Renewed Creation: Call to Hope & Action.” The website, [www.hopeandaction.org](http://www.hopeandaction.org), offers resources and social networking capabilities to enable UMs to engage with the council in addressing issues of pandemic poverty and disease, environmental degradation and the proliferation of weapons and violence.

The website offers social networking with the basic documents—Pastoral Letter, Pastoral Letter for Liturgical Settings and the Foundation Document—in six languages. It also offers news, resources, study guides with session resources, video and other visual tools for presentations or group settings. There are Facebook and Twitter social networking links. The group study would be particularly appropriate during the weeks Apr. 18–May 23 around the 40th anniversary of Earth Day (Apr. 22).

Bishop Jane Middleton, in announcing the expanded website, said: “We understand that we must be participants. Rather than telling the church what we should do, the bishops, with God’s help, will be showing by our example.”

God’s Renewed Creation is a response to General Conference’s request that the Council of Bishops update for this time the 1986 landmark Pastoral Letter “In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis & a Just Peace.” For more information about “God’s Renewed Creation,” visit [hopeandaction.org](http://hopeandaction.org) or contact Pat Callbeck Harper ([pharper@umc-gbcs.org](mailto:pharper@umc-gbcs.org) or 202-488-5631). —*Council of Bishops*

## Groups Tackle Guaranteed Appointments

A UM commission charged with developing ways to improve clergy effectiveness is considering recommending the elimination of guaranteed appointments. In a joint meeting with the Committee on Faith and Order Mar. 16, members of the Ministry Study Commission raised concerns about the practice of promising some clergy lifetime jobs.

The joint meeting was to share and get “push back” on some of the issues both groups are grappling with, said Bishop Alfred Gwinn, chair of the ministry study group. The Committee on Faith and Order was given leadership in reflecting on matters of faith, doctrinal teaching, order and discipline in the church. The ministry commission is focusing on recruitment, discernment and formation for professional ministry; ordination and sacramental authority; and clergy appointments. “We want to concentrate on the big rocks in the jar and not get overloaded with the sand and small rocks,” Gwinn said.

The Rev. Jay Williams of the New York Annual Conference said the church’s fear of not having enough young clergy and the assumption of guaranteed appointments also has resulted in a cumbersome and often lengthy process to entering ministry. “The 2004 and 2008 General Conferences have done strong work in streamlining the process so we are already under way,” he said, “[but] we need to deploy those who are called into ordination quickly.”

“This has been a productive conversation,” said Bishop David Yemba, chair of the Faith and Order Committee. Gwinn agreed the task was large. “God is up to something with The UMC. If the church is to catch a new vision, it will take broad ownership.” —*Kathy L. Gilbert, UMNS*

## UMs Urged to Model Civil Discourse

An attack on U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver—who was spat upon and called a racial slur by protesters outside the Capitol—offers an opportunity to model civil discourse and point to a different path, UM leaders say. “It saddens

me, the acrimonious debate both in Congress and in the public at large,” said Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, president of the Council of Bishops and leader of the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference. “My hope is that the church would do such an effective job at managing its own difficult conversations that we might be a model for how the world can manage difficult disagreements,” he said.

Cleaver, a UM pastor and Democrat from Missouri, was spat upon by people protesting health reform legislation. Both he and U.S. Rep. John Lewis, a Democrat and civil rights icon from Georgia, were also the target of racial epithets. In addition, protesters shouted slurs at U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., about his sexual orientation.

The man who spat on Cleaver was arrested, but the clergyman refused to press charges. Cleaver said this was “certainly not the worst assault” he has endured in his years fighting for equal rights for all Americans. “Let us not delude ourselves into believing this is an isolated incident,” Cleaver said. “A calculated campaign fomenting hate led up to this incident. In the strongest terms possible, I denounce efforts to incite people to acts of racism.” The treatment of these members of Congress “must be denounced by all people,” said Jim Winkler, top executive of the General Board of Church and Society.

Erin Hawkins, top executive of the General Commission on Religion and Race, said, “The question for people of faith is, ‘Will we remain silent, content to let these ingredients reflect to the world an ugliness that can do even greater harm, or will we be the transforming power, with the love, grace and peace of Jesus Christ?’ . . . We must ask ourselves, ‘What can I do to make this type of conduct unacceptable?’”

“I think the role of the church is to establish that there is a standard on the way we disagree with each other and the way in which we engage in discourse with each other,” said Lois M. Dauway, interim top executive for mission and evangelism, General Board of Global Ministries. “The church needs to help people do their homework, research, think about the issues, talk to each other and make considered decisions.” —*Kathy L. Gilbert, UMNS*

### **Good News Statement on the Health Care Reform Bill**

*Good News* believes faithful UMs are people passionately committed to scriptural holiness. UMs care deeply about the health and welfare of people throughout this country, and in deeds large and small, find many ways to demonstrate that care. Certainly all UMs look forward to a time when all Americans possess adequate health care.

However, some have confused support of the specific plan recently passed by Congress as evidence of an individual’s true commitment to health care for all. While some UMs consider the health care reform bill passed by the House of Representatives and signed into law by President Barack Obama as a political triumph, others find the legislation disconcerting and disappointing.

First, *Good News* was disappointed that a number of pro-life Democrats abandoned their commitment to language they themselves insisted upon in the House bill approved this past November. Second, *Good News* regrets that a bipartisan approach to health care reform was not adopted. Third, we find it very difficult to support legislation that does not deal forthrightly about the costs involved.

Finally, *Good News* would like to register its deep disappointment with the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS). A more thoughtful board would have simply promoted the goal of health care for all, but would not have sided with one particular party’s plan. By so publicly making common cause with a partisan plan, many church members will view GBCS more as an agent of a particular political party and less as an agent of the kingdom of God. Indeed, GBCS actually failed to convince most UM congressional representatives to support the bill. Forty-four UMs currently serve in the House of Representatives: 26 voted in opposition to the bill; 18 voted for it. —*Rob Renfroe, president and publisher of Good News and Walter Fenton, chief operating officer of Good News*

### **UM Response Continues in Haiti**

More than two months after the Jan. 12 earthquake that devastated Haiti, The UM Committee on Relief (UMCOR) continues to receive gifts from churches, individuals and organizations to support the people in Haiti. As of Mar. 18, \$15 million had been received for UMCOR Haiti Relief. UMCOR is implementing a five-year work plan in three phases: emergency, recovery and rehabilitation. In one week alone, 23,520 health kits were transported via free shipping to Catholic partners in Haiti. UMCOR is in the final stages of hire for a head of mission for the office in Haiti and has hired or posted several other positions. Anthony Jones, Emergency Consultant for UMCOR Haiti, continues to attend UN cluster meetings to strategically map out UMCOR’s work in partnership with other organizations. Azim Akhtar, operations coordinator for UMCOR Haiti, has been coordinating related operational logistics and will soon go to Haiti to provide overall operational leadership for UMCOR Haiti.

UMCOR Health met with a dozen longtime partners in the field of health in Haiti to begin to address the need for a long-term health strategy in post-earthquake Haiti. The priorities they identified include the development

of a comprehensive, integrated health strategy in which the represented agencies, US-based Methodist hospitals, UM volunteers and UMCOR would participate. UMCOR Jurisdictional Coordinators met with UMCOR following a successful reconnaissance trip to Haiti. They proposed an ambitious three-year proposal to facilitate the work of volunteer teams for projects identified as priority by the Methodist Church in Haiti.

Layette kits and birthing kits, equipped for mothers and infants, are in great demand as Haitians begin to rebuild their lives. Please consider assembling layette kits and birthing kits to address the basic needs of babies born in displaced-persons camps in Haiti. Contact your conference or district office to find out if a designated drop-off point has been established for a cost-effective way to transport your supplies to either of the two UMCOR depots. —*Melissa Hinnen, UMCOR*

### UMCOR Releases Final Funds for Katrina and Rita Relief

After nearly five years of relief and recovery work in Gulf Coast states affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the UMCOR has released its final disbursement of funds for the recovery effort. “Our work in Louisiana and Mississippi, like our work in Haiti, is based on our methodology of being there for the long haul,” said the Rev. Tom Hazelwood, UMCOR executive.

Since the summer of 2005, when Hurricane Katrina slammed the Gulf Coast on Aug. 23 and Hurricane Rita struck it again one month later, UMCOR has been working with annual conferences and grassroots organizations in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas and Florida. UMCOR also has supported survivors who fled to other states. More than 1.3 million people left hurricane-soaked hometowns where some 300,000 homes had been wiped out, scattering to all 50 states.

UMs and people of goodwill across the country donated more than \$64.5 million to UMCOR’s recovery effort on the Gulf Coast. Funds went to cleanup, reconstruction, family-by-family problem solving and direct assistance to support the survivors. The remaining funds will continue to support recovery work in Louisiana, where UMCOR has helped the annual conference repair or rebuild more than 9,100 homes so far, and in Mississippi, where it has supported the repair of some 12,320 homes, more than 100 of them from scratch. In Texas, where Hurricane Rita was strongest, UMCOR helped the conference repair or rebuild 721 homes. More than 8,300 volunteers carried out this work, donating some 268,108 hours, valued at nearly \$5.5 million.

“Because of our connectional system, UMs are uniquely positioned throughout the country and the world to meet the needs of survivors, including how we rally volunteers,” said Catherine Earl, UMCOR executive secretary for U.S. disaster response. UMCOR became a conduit for overseas donations when it was tapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to administer another \$66 million in contributions from foreign governments in a project called Katrina Aid Today. The project’s objective was to prepare and support the management of individual cases of hurricane survivors. Over 24 months, Katrina Aid Today followed 72,770 cases, representing 193,568 individual survivors who were either living in their homes or relocated.

Although the final disbursement of funds has been made to the Gulf Coast, UMCOR’s work is not done. “We’ll continue to be involved for up to two more years,” Hazelwood said. “It’s an opportune moment,” he added, “when we’re in the beginning stages of relief and recovery in Haiti, to mark this final disbursement of funds for our Katrina/Rita effort five years after the hurricanes. It really reflects how UMCOR’s ministry unfolds among the people over a period of years.” —*Linda Unger, UMCOR*

### UMCOR Officials to Visit Chile

The Rev. Tom Hazelwood of UMCOR and Dakin Cook, a staff member with the General Board of Global Ministries, will spend Mar. 29–Apr. 3 visiting the areas of Chile hardest hit by the Feb. 27 earthquake. According to Hazelwood, the aims of the trip are to express and encourage solidarity with the Methodist Church of Chile and all Chileans, evaluate the effectiveness of last fall’s UMCOR disaster response training in Chile and discern next steps for relief and recovery efforts. Bishop Mario Martínez Tapia and Juan Salazar Fernández of the Methodist Church of Chile will lead the team. Donations for earthquake relief can be made [here](#). —*UMNS*

### GBHEM Developing Collaborative Leadership Model

Elected board members and staff of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) spent much of their spring meeting (Mar. 18–20 in Nashville) brainstorming and crafting plans for closer collaboration in the work of developing principled Christian leaders. The meeting began with presentations by Bishop Grant Hagiya and church historian Russell Richey about the need for change if the church is to remain vital and relevant in the modern world, and ended with board members proposing specific ways that board and staff can better work together.

There is a growing sense of discontent with the centralization of The UMC and a push for more regional deployment, as well as cynicism that local apportioned dollars would be better served supporting local resourcing rather

than at the national level, said Bishop Hagiya. But he warned that a shift to total decentralization could mean the loss of transformation at the worldwide level, citing Africa University as one example and The UMC's ability to work on global health issues as another. He suggested one response might be a shift away from a centralized structure to a "deployed regional hybrid model." "Our general agency's expert staff could provide a training-of-the-trainer model, deploying members of the board regionally to help execute the model," Hagiya said.

Dr. Richey, the William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Church History at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, spoke about Methodist connectionalism in the past and the challenges for the present day. "If there were some way of dispelling . . . mistrust, I think that would be key," he said. Richey also expressed concern about the growth of annual conferences in the name of efficiency. "The early conferences were revivalist affairs, but they were small," Richey said. He believes some consideration should be given to keeping conferences small so they can be "more nimble."

Proposals for specific action included assessing board members' skills and interests to determine their passions and expertise; modeling future board meetings on the spring 2010 meeting, which included board members in the planning process; expanding the role of the board to create a think-tank; establishing a quad-to-quad mentoring program; developing work teams on specific projects that include both staff and board members.

Dr. Jerome King Del Pino, elected general secretary of GBHEM in 2001, is now coming to the conclusion of his third and final term. In anticipation of a new quadrennium, the elected members of the board approved beginning immediately a search process for a new general secretary. The Rev. Ramon Evangelista, chair of the board's Personnel and Policies Committee, said the board will contract with a search company to guide the process, with the Personnel and Policies Committee serving as the search committee. — *Vicki Brown, GBHEM*

### Forthcoming Events

Beginning the week of Apr. 5, the Analysis and Research Department of the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) will distribute 4,000 surveys to local churches. The leadership survey, to be completed by pastors or lay leaders, was last distributed in 2008. The survey is designed to get responses to questions about worship styles, programs and activities offered in local churches of all sizes. The 4,000 churches will be chosen at random. Selected churches will receive the surveys by mail with an option to mail in the reply or respond online. Results will be used only for research purposes and composite information only shared in ways that will help shape ministry of UM churches. Additional information regarding the survey can be obtained from Laura Chambers, Senior Researcher, at [lchambers@gcfa.org](mailto:lchambers@gcfa.org).

### Personalia

The Rev. **Gary Daniel** has been appointed as the District Superintendent of the Marianna–Panama City District of the Alabama–West Florida (AWF) Conference, effective July 1. . . . . Also effective July 1, the Rev. **Max Clayton** has been named district superintendent for the Hays District of the Kansas West Annual Conference. . . . . The Rev. **Jane Voelkel**, Indiana Annual Conference, was named treasurer and director of administrative services for the Kansas West Annual Conference effective Mar. 15. . . . . Professor **Linda Mercadante** of Methodist Theological School in Ohio has been named a Henry Luce III Fellow in Theology. The Luce Fellows program is administered by the Association of Theological Schools, the accrediting agency for more than 250 graduate theological institutions in the U.S. and Canada. . . . . **Thomas Kemper**, 53, newly elected top staff executive of the General Board of Global Ministries, has moved from his home in Germany to assume his responsibilities with the New York City-based mission agency. . . . . Gammon Theological Seminary's trustees, meeting Mar. 9, chose not to elect the Rev. **Walter H. McKelvey** for another one-year term as president-dean of the Atlanta school. Effective Mar. 15, retired Bishop **Alfred L. Norris**, a former president-dean of Gammon, assumed the position as interim top executive.

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