

# The Link

## February 9, 2012

### Conference News

#### **DCC - Just weeks away!**

The second annual Disciple Covenant Conference is set for Friday, Feb. 24 and Saturday, Feb. 25, 2012 at the Macon Centreplex (Macon Coliseum) in Macon. The DCC is an experience where clergy, staff and laity come together to develop and improve personal and congregational covenants based on the timeless values of our faith. Speakers for the two day event include [Tim Stevens](#), Granger Community Church, [Sister Kathleen Flood](#), Program Development Executive for Stillpoint, a school for spiritual direction and contemplative prayer, [Jim and Jennifer Cowart](#), Harvest Church UMC in Warner Robins, and [Jay Hanson](#), The Chapel UMC in Brunswick. [Robert McMichael](#) and [Jarvis Wilson](#), both from Atlanta, will lead the music for the event. For more details visit [disciplecovenantconference.org/](http://disciplecovenantconference.org/) or contact Pam Kanode at (478) 475-9286 or [panode@sgaumc.com](mailto:panode@sgaumc.com).

#### **Nominate someone you know for a conference evangelism award**

Know a pastor or lay person in the South Georgia Annual Conference who has distinguished him or herself in the area of evangelism? If so, submit his or her name to be nominated for the Denman Evangelism Awards or the Carl and Ruth Looney Evangelism Award. The Denman Evangelism Award recognizes both a pastor and a lay person who are effective in developing true disciples of Jesus Christ in keeping with United Methodist history and tradition. The Carl and Ruth Looney Evangelism Award recognizes a clergy person who has completed their educational requirements, are serving in a full time ministry position, and have the gifts, graces and passion for evangelism and outreach. This award includes a scholarship for continuing their education in evangelism. Visit [www.sgaumc.org/witness](http://www.sgaumc.org/witness) to download the Carl and Ruth Looney Evangelism Award or the Harry Denman Evangelism Award nomination forms. For questions, contact Rev. Mark Addington, Witness Team Chair, at 478-781-0332. The deadline for nominations is April 15, 2012.

#### **United Methodist Women's annual retreat set for March 23-25**

The United Methodist Women of the South Georgia Conference will host their annual Spiritual Growth Retreat March 23-25 at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. Coming together under the theme of "My Joy Cometh in the Morning," from Psalm 30:5, retreat participants will hear speaker Cindy Ricker challenge and urge participants to examine their relationship with Christ. They will also have opportunities on Saturday to participate in two interest groups. [More information>>](#)

#### **Spouses' Retreat features Christian humorist Cathy Lee Phillips**

The 2012 South Georgia Ministers' Spouses' Retreat, "I don't have baggage – I have designer luggage," is set for March 16 - 18, 2012, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. Featuring Christian author, speaker and humorist Cathy Lee Phillips, the retreat is designed to be a time of spiritual renewal, relaxation and fellowship for all clergy spouses. [More>>](#)

#### **Older Adults to gather for "Saints Alive" retreat**

Older adults in the South Georgia Conference have an exciting opportunity for spiritual renewal, worship and education at the 2012 Older Adult Retreat. Set for April 16-18 at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island, the annual retreat has been a gathering place of older adults for many years. Worship and spiritual growth are the main focus of this retreat, and participants are able to totally immerse themselves in the atmosphere and become spiritually renewed. With a theme of "Saints Alive," the retreat will offer senior adults an opportunity to discover, develop, and fulfill their God-given purpose. Highlights of the retreat include guest preacher Dr. Hal Brady, Bible study leader Rev. V.L. Daughtery, Jr., and song leaders Frank Lowery and Carl Tott. Bruce Goddard will provide special entertainment for the event. [More>>](#)

#### **Mark the date for the 2012 UMM Retreat**

The South Georgia Conference United Methodist Men will gather at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island for their annual retreat April 13-15, 2012. John Riley and Dickson Lester will be the featured speakers for the event. See your local or district UMM president for more information.

## **Epworth By The Sea's Intergenerational Camp**

Epworth By The Sea is sponsoring an intergenerational camp for grandparents & their elementary age grandchildren June 22-25, 2012. This year's theme is "Exploring the World of Boy Jesus and His Family." Lodging will be on the grounds of Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. Activities for the event will include Sunday School by the Ocean; butterfly release at evening vespers; shrimp boat cruise, sand sculpturing, net seining, beach walks, games, and other various activities. For more details or to register visit [www.epworthbythesea.org](http://www.epworthbythesea.org) or call 912-638-868.

## **News from the South Georgia Advocate**

### **February 4 Advocate**

[View the February 4 online edition of the South Georgia Advocate.](#)

### **Amateur artisans create glass masterpieces**

Every Sunday for nearly 10 years, Louis Keene sat in his seat in the back corner of Woodbine United Methodist Church's sanctuary and stared at the church's four unfinished windows. Five beautifully crafted stained glass windows graced the sanctuary's south side. Plain, uncolored glass filled the four windows on the worship center's north side. After the sanctuary was built in the mid-1990s, church member Chris Fisette volunteered to make 10 stained glass windows. Congregants donated money and materials, and he got to work designing, building, cutting and soldering. Fisette made and installed four windows before he fell ill. Unable to complete the job, the colorful glass sat idle in his workshop. As he looked at the windows week after week, Keene thought they should – and could – be finished. [More>>](#)

### **From Bishop King: Headed in the right direction**

Have you ever been lost? While traveling this summer during my renewal leave I was following the directions of the little voice inside my GPS. When the voice said, "you have reached your destination" I was sitting beside a corn field with a dead end sign staring me in the face. When I asked a man and woman working in the field for directions they said that I was on the wrong mountain, and then gave me excellent directions. Once I started out again with the right directions, headed in the right direction, my frustration with being in the wrong place diminished. When it comes to the South Georgia Annual Conference, I believe the following are a few indicators that we are headed in the right direction. [More>>](#)

### **South Georgia United Methodists shed pounds, focus on health**

In early 2010, Rev. Ashley Randall was at his heaviest. What had once been an easy activity – taking a quick walk around the block with his wife – had become a struggle. His wife, Laine, had her own health issues, and began to look at their diet for possible solutions. About the same time, they learned of the Virgin HealthMiles physical activity program sponsored by the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits. Rev. Randall, eager to have something to help motivate and hold him accountable, enrolled. [More>>](#)

### **Trinity UMC takes an advent journey**

Just as Mary and Joseph took a journey more than 2,000 years ago, last month members of Trinity United Methodist Church in Warner Robins took their own Advent journey. While Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was fraught with discomforts and dangers, Trinity UMC's modern-day journey was one of faith. From Nov. 27 through Christmas Eve, more than 100 members of Trinity UMC embarked on their own "Journey to Bethlehem." While walking 2.5 miles a day – which added up to the 70-mile trek Mary and Joseph made – participants prayed for their neighbors, community, schools and local businesses. [More>>](#)

### **Young adult follows God's call on her life**

Thea Ramirez has been an advocate for as long as she can remember. As an 11-year-old camper, Ramirez learned of a friend's horrific abuse and helped campaign for her safety. Serving as a summer intern at an orphanage in Juarez, Mexico, the 17-year-old rising high school senior fought for abused orphans and was instrumental in stopping their physical and sexual abuse. As an adult, Ramirez has advocated for neglected, developmentally disabled adults, which resulted in personal attacks on her character. [More>>](#)

# Conference Events

## Special Sundays in February

**Andrew College Sunday - February 12:** Learn more about Andrew College, a United Methodist College in Cuthbert, Ga., at [www.andrewcollege.edu](http://www.andrewcollege.edu). [Download a bulletin insert to use in church this Sunday.](#)

**Volunteers in Mission Awareness Sunday - February 19:** United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) exists to promote, encourage, and enable Christians to exemplify "Christian Love In Action" through short-term mission service in the United States and abroad. UMVIM provides opportunities for service by developing and nurturing relationships with domestic and international leaders. They continually nurture their contacts with these leaders to respond to the needs of local communities and to provide comprehensive project information. You can help support the work of UMVIM in the South Georgia Conference by giving an offering to support this vital ministry on this special Sunday.

**Kingdom Builder's Sunday - February 26:** Kingdom Builders was established to offer people across the South Georgia Conference a way to support new church development. New and Revitalized Congregational Development has grown out of that club. The Office of New and Revitalized Congregational Development of the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church seeks to bring gifted leaders, called by God to churches and communities in need, to provide financial support to birth new congregations and to revitalize declining congregations. These congregations include new congregations, revitalized congregations and Hispanic congregations. For those of you who have not yet begun to support this important ministry, February 26th is Kingdom Builders Sunday, and you are invited to partner with us as we seek to offer exciting worship opportunities to people across South Georgia!

## Early Response Team Trainings

Early Response Team Trainings help equip individuals and teams to respond in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. At the trainings, participants will receive an ERT Training Manual and, upon completing the course, will receive an UMCOR ID Badge and a T-shirt. Background checks are required before receiving badges. Please provide proof of background check. Safe Sanctuaries background checks are applicable. See dates and contact information to register below or for more information. Jamie Gibson will conduct all of the trainings.

--**February 10 & 11** / Gray UMC, Gray / Contact David Hinely at [sdis90210@windstream.net](mailto:sdis90210@windstream.net) or 478-986-5754.

--**March 30 & 31** / St. Simons UMC, St. Simons / Contact Rev. Marcia Cochran at [mjcochran@earthlink.com](mailto:mjcochran@earthlink.com) or 912-638-3317.

## Eagles trip to Green Bough House of Prayer – February 21-22

The South Georgia Eagles, a group of retired United Methodist ministers and their spouses, are invited to experience Ash Wednesday at the Green Bough House of Prayer in Scott, Ga. The group will gather on Tuesday, February 21 at 6 p.m. at Green Bough for a supper and orientation session with Fay Key and Steve Bullington, founders of the House of Prayer. On Ash Wednesday, February 22, the group will again gather at Green Bough at 9:30 a.m. to experience Ash Wednesday worship and lunch in preparation for the season of Lent. The first eight people to register will be able to stay on the Green Bough campus. Additional registrants can stay in Dublin at the Jamison Inn at a special rate. To register, call Rev. Dave or Kay Hanson at 912-634-6384 or via email at [jdavehanson@bellsosuth.net](mailto:jdavehanson@bellsosuth.net). Please register even if you will be staying with friends and only attending the Green Bough events.

## 2012 Confirmation Retreat - March 16-18

Connectional Ministries, in partnership with Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island, will again offer youth from around the Conference the opportunity to learn, worship and fellowship at their annual Confirmation Retreat. With only one Confirmation Retreat this year, set for March 16-18, 2012, registration will be on a first-come, first-serve basis. While the retreat itself has space for 600 participants, the maximum space for on-site housing at Epworth By The Sea is 500. Designed for students in the sixth grade and above, the "Join the Journey" Confirmation Retreat will provide churches of all sizes an opportunity to connect with others through worship, study, and fellowship. The event will also include large group gatherings around the church seasons

and breakout sessions with topics of grace, United Methodist History and United Methodist lingo. More details>> [Click here to download the brochure.](#)

### **Open Door Community House's Walk Classic – March 24**

Open Door Community House's 25th Annual Walk Classic will be held Saturday, March 24 from 9:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the CSU Intramural Field and Pavilion in Columbus. For more information, call 706-323-5518.

## **Connection News**

### **What will the UMC look like in 80 years?**

(GBOD) What will The United Methodist Church look like in 80 years? Will it survive? If so, how will we transform our congregations to ensure that they will arrive at 2092? All of us want to be a part of a church that is vital and vibrant. We dream of a church that touches our soul and sends us out into the world to "Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." It's in that spirit that the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD) has produced a five-part film series that celebrates and explores the issues we all hold dear. Use these films as discussion starters in your General Conference delegations and local church small groups. [The first in the series is available NOW.](#) The next four films will be coming soon.

### **General Conference Petitions Online**

(Newscope) The Advance Edition of the Daily Christian Advocate, the official journal of General Conference, is now online and available for download at [gc2012.umc.org/ADCA](http://gc2012.umc.org/ADCA). The advance contains all the legislation submitted for consideration by the delegates. The edition is available in English, French and Portuguese.

### **Briefing previews General Conference issues**

(UMNS) Diverse issues presented at a recent three-day briefing signaled the workload ahead for the lawmaking body of The United Methodist Church, which meets this spring. More than 300 delegates, communicators and others who will be part of the [2012 General Conference](#) met Jan. 19-21 at the Tampa Convention Center, site of the legislative assembly, for a preview of some of the issues they will face April 24-May 4. United Methodist Communications sponsored the event, with involvement and support from other agencies and ministries of the church. [Click here for a brief look at the issues explored.](#)

### **Preview to church restructuring debate**

(UMNS) Months before the 2012 General Conference, delegates to The United Methodist Church's top lawmaking body got a hint of the debate to come regarding restructuring the denomination. The main piece of legislation — the result of the multiyear Call to Action process — would consolidate nine of the church's 13 general agencies into a new United Methodist Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry under a 15-member board. The board would be appointed by and accountable to a 45-member advisory board called the General Council for Strategy and Oversight, which would replace the Connectional Table that presently coordinates the denomination's mission, ministry and resources. [More>>](#)

### **One Great Hour of Sharing is March 18**

(UMCGiving) [One Great Hour of Sharing](#) is just weeks away. Be sure to order your [free offering resources](#) for this offering that supports the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) so that it may respond immediately and effectively to emergencies around the world. Your gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing, channeled through UMCOR, are a tangible expression of God's love for people who suffer. They enable the church to answer Jesus' command to love our neighbors as ourselves. When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you help to build the strong foundation on which all other UMCOR ministries are built. Because One Great Hour of Sharing covers UMCOR's administrative costs, 100 percent of gifts designated for specific projects is used for those programs.

### **Supreme Court Shields Church from Bias Laws**

(UMCom) A landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision Jan. 11 establishes that The UMC and other religious groups are free to set their own rules for choosing and dismissing leaders without government interference. The high court on Jan. 11 for the first time recognized a "ministerial exception" to U.S. employment anti-discrimination laws, a rare unanimous decision many legal analysts are calling the most significant in many years regarding religious liberty. One likely result is that church leaders will face fewer lawsuits related to

employment. However, the ruling also puts more responsibility on The UMC to prevent discrimination and do justice in its hiring practices, say denominational leaders. The ruling "affirms the historic separation of church and state by allowing the church autonomy of its religious practices," said Bishop Grant Hagiya of the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference. "I believe it will help annual conferences avoid frivolous lawsuits out of greed or self-interest," he said. "But, this means that the onus is on our UM polity to be fair and allow for due process at all costs." [More>>](#)

### **North Alabama Storm Recovery**

North Alabama continues to work towards recovery after an outbreak of tornadoes ripped through the conference April 27, 2011. Since that day, the affected communities have worked steadily towards rebuilding and redefining their new normal with UMCOR's help and support. Alabama was struck once again by tornadoes January 22, 2012. Conference personnel are asking for prayers as damage assessments are made and the full impact of this storm is becoming clear. UMCOR has issued a \$1 million grant to the North Alabama Conference as they enter into long-term recovery, which will last until at least December 2013. The funds will support volunteer coordination for reconstruction; case management to help families gain access to assistance; reconstruction; and other activities that are critical to recovery. You can help UMCOR provide assistance when disaster strikes by giving to US Disaster Response, UMCOR Advance #901670.

### **Haiti Progress Report: Two Years Later**

(GBGM) Two years after the tragic earthquake that set Haiti reeling, UMCOR projects continue to provide shelters, rebuild schools, increase access to community-based healthcare, improve household income, and rebuild small businesses. Learn about the myriad ways UMCOR is partnering with and making progress on immediate and long-term relief and recovery two years later. Access the informative and detailed [Haiti Progress Report: Two Years Later](#) (PDF, 16 pp.).

### **Caring for Creation early registration deadline February 15**

(SEJ) Lake Junaluska presents Caring for Creation 2012, featuring Dr. Bill McKibben of Middlebury College, author of a dozen books on the environment, founder of [350.org](#), lecturer, and United Methodist Sunday School. Along with over 30 other environmental leaders, McKibben will explore ways individuals and churches can become more environmentally conscious and active. Visit [www.lakejunaluska.com/caring-for-creation](#) or call [800-222-4930](#) to register. Dates for the event are March 15-18, 2012. Early registration deadline is February 15, 2012.

### **Florida Fellowship 2012 Church Music Workshop**

The Florida Chapter of the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts is pleased to announce that their 56th Annual Church Music Workshop will be held from Sunday afternoon, July 15th through Friday noontime, July 20th, 2012, at Florida Southern College in Lakeland. Anyone involved in church music or worship planning, both traditional and contemporary, adults or youth, are invited to join us. This year's theme, "Celebrating Our Journey: The Seasons of Faith," is based on Ecclesiastes 3:1-11. For more information and for registration information, please visit their website at [www.floridafellowship.org](#) or contact Joan FitzGerald, Workshop Chairperson, at [joan.fitzgerald@verizon.net](mailto:joan.fitzgerald@verizon.net) or Registrar Dan Shorb at [info@floridafellowship.org](mailto:info@floridafellowship.org).

### **Cleaning Buckets Needed**

(UMCOR) Help UMCOR prepare for spring storms by assembling and sending cleaning buckets. These kits provide the basic items families need to clean their home after a flood or other disaster. Each year UMCOR sends thousands of cleaning buckets to communities in need. [Learn how to assemble and send these helpful kits](#). No time to assemble kits? You can also send a gift to Material Resource Ministry, UMCOR Advance #901440. Supplies for each bucket costs approximately \$55

## **Resources**

### **General Conference Petitions Online**

(UMNS) The Advance Edition of the Daily Christian Advocate, the official journal of General Conference, is now online and available for download at [gc2012.umc.org/ADCA](#). The advance contains all the legislation submitted for consideration by the delegates. The edition is available in English, French and Portuguese.

### **Fair Trade: Eco-Palms**

(UMCOR) Joel Cabrera Rodas is one of the many farmers who are helped through the Eco-Palms program, which provides fairly traded palms to US churches for Palm Sunday. He cut palm illegally when he was a teen and sold them cheaply to vendors. At the time he didn't know anything about caring for the environment, he just sought to make a living. Now he is working with a group of farmers to legally and responsibly harvest palm. "With the Eco-Palm Program we feel that there are people who recognize the efforts we are doing to preserve the mountain and make a better living for our families," wrote Rodas. "Last year it also gave us the opportunity to buy school supplies for childcare and primary school in the community, with the rebate we received." UMCOR partners with the University of Minnesota to build support in the US for the Eco-Palm Project, which helps to sustain forestry, protect local jobs and helps preserve the livelihoods of small-scale farmers by ensuring fair wages. Support farmers like Joel Cabrera Rodas and [order your Eco-Palms today!](#) You can also support small-scale farmers by giving to Sustainable Agriculture and Development, UMCOR Advance #982188.

### **Free Lenten Devotions Program**

The Society of St. Andrew invites your congregation to participate in its 2012 Lenten devotion and giving program, "Living Proof." In keeping with the traditions of Lent, the Society of St. Andrew invites your congregation to participate in a program of spiritual reflection, prayer, and giving. SoSA's Lenten devotion program challenges the reader to take seriously the scriptural injunctions to care for the poor, while also providing an opportunity to feed hungry neighbors. The Society of St. Andrew salvages fresh produce that cannot be sold and delivers it to agencies that feed hungry people in the United States. For questions, or to order SoSA's free Lenten devotion materials and Good Friday Fast, go to [www.endhunger.org/lent.htm](http://www.endhunger.org/lent.htm) or you can also contact The Rev. Jennifer Vestal Moore at [church@endhunger.org](mailto:church@endhunger.org) or 800.333.4597.

### **Rethink Church Lenten series**

(UMCom) United Methodist Communications is ready to help you with a free Lenten sermon series, online advertising and a multimedia bundle to help you include the broader community. The Journey to Hope series begins with Christ's journey to the cross and connects with matters like relationships, money, work and suffering to share the hope that exists beyond life's most difficult issues. The sermon series was developed in 2010, and has been supplemented this year by small group, children and youth resources. A new multimedia resource bundle will assist in bringing messages to life (in the sanctuary or classroom) as well as extending an invitation through newspaper, door hangers and more. An online study component to Journey to Hope will be featured on [rethinkchurch.org](http://rethinkchurch.org) during Lent, offering your congregation another chance to connect with weekly themes and with those who may not have a church home. Digital advertising will connect newcomers to the site and provide an opportunity for them to learn about The United Methodist Church and local congregations. Be sure to review your Find a Church profile to make sure that it provides a welcoming online presence. Go to [www.umcom.org/journeytohope](http://www.umcom.org/journeytohope) to review and download the series, order the bundle (\$25) and update your Find a Church profile. Questions? Contact [rethinkchurch@umcom.org](mailto:rethinkchurch@umcom.org).

### **GBOD offers free webinars for church leaders**

The General Board of Discipleship is offering free webinars for church leaders. Register for any of the following workshops at [www.gbod.org/committee\\_resources](http://www.gbod.org/committee_resources).

**February 9** at 6:30 PM CST: 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR CHURCH WEBSITES

**February 23** at 6:30 PM CST: HEALTHY CHURCH LEADERS – KEY FACTORS

### **Church Leader Training**

(GBOD) Training for church leaders taking on a new role is available from the General Board of Discipleship. One-hour recorded modules are available for the Church Council, Trustees, Nominating Committees, Finance leaders, and S/PPRC. Individuals can watch at home or church groups can view the modules when they meet. Encourage those in your congregations to learn their jobs with these modules posted at [www.gbod.org/committee\\_resources](http://www.gbod.org/committee_resources).