

The Link

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Conference News

DCC - Have you signed up?

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. A focus on making disciples by helping persons, individually or in teams, develop disciple plans based on the 10 timeless values of the faith is the focus of the conference. According to Bishop King, the purpose of the Disciple Covenant Conference is to provide a spiritual and learning environment for people to develop their disciple-making plans. The two primary goals of the event are to focus on the teachings of Jesus Christ and the church's Wesleyan heritage as the foundation for making disciples and to encourage participants to either start covenant plans on site, improve the plans they have in existence, or affirm the plans they have already in place. The conference, which will be a time of teaching mixed with praise and worship, will commence at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 24 and will conclude at noon on Saturday. Today is the last day to register before the Early Bird prices expire. Get your team registered today! Click here for all the details and to register: www.disciplecovenantconference.org.

Confirmation Retreat brochure now available

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.

2012 Budget at a Glance

[Click here to view the 2012 South Georgia Conference Budget at a Glance prepared by the Administrative Services Office.](#)

Mark your calendar for the 2012 Clergy Spouses' Retreat

The 2012 Clergy Spouses' Retreat is set for March 16 – 18 at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. Meeting under the theme "I Don't Have Baggage – I Have Designer Luggage," this year's retreat will feature speaker Cathy Lee Phillips. Stay tuned for more details.

Advance Special Renewal Notice deadline is Jan. 31

Conference Advance Specials, including those in the PLUS Lane, must submit an annual renewal application to continue as an Advance Special. The deadline for new and renewal applications is January 31, 2012. If you have any questions or need a new application or renewal form, [click here](#) or contact Rev. Doreen Smalls, Conference Secretary of Global Ministries, at doreen@sgaumc.com or [888-266-7642](tel:888-266-7642). The Advance is an official program of The United Methodist Church for voluntary, designated, second-mile mission giving. Advance Specials are those approved mission projects and personnel which local churches, groups, classes and individuals are encouraged to support with their financial gifts. This entails giving beyond apportionments, World Service and/or Conference Benevolence.

Epworth's Winter Camp Meeting

Churches from all across Georgia are cordially invited to attend Winter Camp Meeting at Epworth By The Sea, St. Simons Island, January 29 through February 1. Outstanding preachers, Bible teachers and area choirs and musicians will examine the theme "The Greatest Story Ever Told" in new and creative ways. [More details>>](#)

Credit Union Offers Scholarships to Recent High School Graduates

The Georgia Florida United Methodist Federal Credit Union will award four \$1,000 college scholarships again this year. Four winning applicants will be chosen one from each of our four conferences Florida, North Georgia, South Georgia and Alabama-West Florida. To apply you must be between the ages of 17-24 and attend church in one of the conferences. [Click here to visit their website and download the application.](#)

Applications being accepted for Summer Camp Counselors

Are you a college student interested in a summer in ministry? Then a summer at Camp Connect on St. Simons Island might be just the place to serve! As a camp counselor, you will be able to minister to hundreds of youth and children throughout the summer, while making Christian friendships with other staff members that last a lifetime. As a paid position, staff members on the Leadership Team will commit to eight weeks of service which will include serving at mid-high and elementary camps. The summer will run from May 29- July 22, 2012. These summer camps are sponsored by the Connectional Ministries Office. [Click here for more details and an application.](#)

News from the South Georgia Advocate

January 6 Advocate

[View the January 6 online edition of the South Georgia Advocate.](#)

Open Door Community House helps spread Christmas cheer

Each of Lugenia Brown's five children believes in Santa Claus. Like every other child, they hoped that Santa would bring them gifts to open on Christmas morning. Kyree, 7, wanted a bike and toy cars while his brother, Evan, also 7, asked for a bike and a laptop. Kaylan, 12, enjoys dolls, and Nija, 14, wants to start wearing makeup. Christian, 3, likes toys. Thanks to Open Door Community House's Sharing Christmas ministry, this year each of Brown's children woke up to find a pile of presents under their tree. [More>>](#)

Bishop King's column: How to Have a Happy New Year

One of the common well wishes exchanged during December and January of each year includes the phrase "Happy New Year." It is a wonderful expression of goodwill. It conveys to the recipient an implied hope that the future will be good. A happy New Year is a terrific hope but how do you have one? What would be among your list of ways to have a happy New Year? Would your list include good health, a job, family wellbeing, more money, good friends, or a dream vacation? [Read Bishop King's column here](#)

Conference Events

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.

--**January 20 & 21** / Park Avenue UMC, Valdosta / Contact Jamie Bone at jamielynebone@yahoo.com or 229-242-3562.

--**February 10 & 11** / Gray UMC, Gray / Contact David Hinely at sdis90210@windstream.net or 478-986-5754.

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

Local Pastors' Licensing School – February 3-10

For more information about License to Preach School, contact Rev. Steve Meguiar at 912-657-8844 or smeguiar@comcast.net.

Clergy Sexual Ethics Workshop – Feb. 9

A Sexual Ethics Workshop is scheduled for February 9, 2012, at Epworth By The Sea from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. This workshop is required every three years for persons serving under appointment by the Bishop (clergy, local pastors, extension ministers, appointed lay speakers). To register, please e-mail cpcassistant@sgaumc.com. This event is sponsored by the Conference Commission on Pastoral Counseling. Please note that spouses and lay employees who are not appointed by the bishop are not eligible to attend the workshop.

Effingham County Campground BBQ & Bake Sale – February 11

On Saturday, February 11, 2012, the Effingham County Campground will host its 14th Annual BBQ & Bake Sale from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Effingham County Campground Dining Hall.

Boston Butt, green beans, and potato salad will be served. All proceed will go to the campground. For more information, including ticket prices, call (912) 754-1459, (912)754-3402 or (912) 754-9272.

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. Please register even if you will be staying with friends and only attending the Green Bough events.

Disciple Covenant Conference - Feb. 24-25

Bishop James King is pleased to announce that the 2012 Discipleship Covenant Conference (DCC) has been set for February 24-25, 2012, at the Macon Centreplex in Macon, Ga. 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/ or contact Pam Kanode at (478) 475-9286 or pkanode@sgaumc.com.

2012 Confirmation Retreat - March 16-18

Mark your calendar for the 2012 Confirmation Retreat at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons. This year's retreat is set for March 16-18. [More information here.](#)

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

Racism still stings, bishop tells King

(UMNS) Bishop Woodie W. White, the first chief executive of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race, writes a "birthday letter" each year to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in which the bishop reflects on the progress of racial equality in the United States. [Click here to read the letter.](#)

High expectations will surround Tampa gathering

(Interpreter) Every four years United Methodists develop high expectations that delegates to the top legislative body of the denomination will set policies and pass resolutions that address specific challenges in the church and society. Similar expectations surround the 988 delegates and 4,000 volunteers and observers who will attend the [2012 General Conference](#), meeting April 24-May 4 in Tampa, Fla. United Methodists around the world expect the assembly will take actions recognizing the [denomination is a global church](#), and not a U.S. church with overseas outposts. Others are confident that the 11-day event will result in a [new structure](#) that will increase the number of [vital congregations](#) and address the [four areas of focus](#) embraced by the [2008 General Conference](#). They are improving health globally, engaging in ministry with the poor, creating new places for new people and revitalizing existing congregations and developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world. Others anticipate a time when the denomination will address [injustices against indigenous people](#) and other social justice issues. [More>>](#)

2 big disputes ahead at General Conference

(UMNS) Two proposals hover near the top of the controversy list as The United Methodist Church approaches this spring's General Conference. The first would restructure the denomination, including [consolidating nine of the church's 13 general agencies under a 15-member board](#). The second would end job guarantees for ordained elders in good standing. [More>>](#)

Methodists cooperate in Haiti's recovery

(UMNS) For Methodists, the recovery process since the [Jan. 12, 2010, Haiti earthquake](#) can easily be measured by statistics: dollars raised, churches and schools repaired, volunteer teams sent. What is less measurable — but ultimately more important — are the new or renewed relationships forged among Haitian Methodists, Haitian communities, The United Methodist Church and other global partners, both large and small. [More>>](#)

Religious advocacy efforts profiled

(GBCS) Pew research finds mainline Protestant denominations make up just 8% of the religious advocacy organizations in the U.S. capital, with Catholics and Evangelical Protestant groups having much larger representation. But the new study by Pew also shows The United Methodist Church ranked among the top 20 such groups in advocacy spending for 2008-2009. [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.

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](tel:800-222-4930) to register. Dates for the event are March 15-18, 2012. Early registration deadline is February 15, 2012.

African-American Clergy Leadership Retreat

(SEJ) Lake Junaluska presents "Innovative Ideas for Planting and Accelerating Church Growth," the 2012 African-American Clergy Leadership Retreat, April 16-18. This 3-day retreat will introduce pastors to proven innovative ideas and best practices that Impact UMC (Impact) has used to create one of the fastest growing African-American churches in the UMC. Participants will receive key church development and redevelopment principles from members of Impact's lead team, based on Impact's book, Zero to 80: Innovative Ideas for Planting and Accelerating Church Growth. Visit www.lakejunaluska.com/african-american-clergy or call [800-222-4930](tel:800-222-4930) to register.

Resources

The Upper Room daily devotional app

(GBOD) Get the app and read The Upper Room daily devotional on your smartphone. Download the new free Upper Room Devotional Lite app for Android or Apple mobile devices and join 2.2 million people from around the globe who use the devotional daily. The app includes features that let you comment and share on Twitter and Facebook. Learn more and download at <http://bit.ly/wbVZnN>.

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 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 to review and download the series, order the bundle (\$25) and update your Find a Church profile. Questions? Contact rethinkchurch@umcom.org.

New Year Savings on Microsoft Office 2010 Professional Plus

(UMCom) Still haven't upgraded to Microsoft Office 2010 Professional Plus? Purchase a license from TechShop before Jan. 31 and get the installation disk for only the cost of shipping and handling. That's a \$30 value! More importantly, you get one of the most advanced suites of software available anywhere, featuring Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Access, Publisher, One Note and much more. So [order](#) by Jan. 31 and get your installation disk at no cost. Just use coupon code TSYE11 (all caps) when you check out online.

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.

January 31 at 6:30 PM CST: GOAL SETTING FOR VITAL CONGREGATIONS

A guide for setting realistic numerical goals for your congregation on the website umvitalcongregations.org

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

A website is the new front door to your church. Patrick Steil, Webmaster for the North Texas Conference and owner of ChurchBuzz.org, will walk you through 10 Commandments that transform your website into the BEST outreach and communications tool that has ever been possible.

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

SPRC has a key role for health of body, mind and soul for your pastor and leaders. GBPHB's Center for Health shares key factors for a healthy ministry environment.

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.

6 New Year's resolutions to equip new leaders

(UMCom) Do you want to get your church hopping in the New Year? Below are five motivating and inspiring ways to get your new leaders off to a positive start. [Continue>>](#)

New year a time for brain storming, goal setting

(UMCom) With the beginning of a new calendar year, it's New Year's resolution time. This is a perfect time for your church to take advantage of the universal goal-setting, fresh-start mindset. [Continue>>](#)

12 ways to care for military members and their families

(UMCom) How can congregations faithfully serve those in the armed forces? This includes not only those deployed but their families and the religious professionals who care for them. [Continue>>](#)