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Instant Connection

California-Nevada Annual Conference



January 7, 2010

Churches - Observe Human Relations Day on January 17

United Methodist churches are asked to observe **Human Relations Day** with a special offering on **January 17**.

This Special Sunday offering strengthens outreach to communities in the United States and Puerto Rico and encourages social justice and work with at-risk youth. It funds community developers, United Methodist voluntary service, and youth offender rehabilitation programs.

A community developer who directs a program funded by this offering says its primary focus is "to help kids see Jesus and to help them grow developmentally and spiritually."

And a recipient says the program definitely impacts her students and has a positive effect on their self-worth.

Human Relations Day is celebrated on the Sunday before the observance of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday. It is followed by the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Jan. 18-25 this year).

Call 888.346.3862 today to order envelopes and other resources to enable your congregation to participate in this churchwide offering. **The materials will be sent at no cost to your church!**

The *Book of Discipline 2008* of The United Methodist Church (§262) records that the Special Sundays "are placed on the calendar to make clear the calling of the church as the people of God and to give persons the opportunity to contribute offerings to special programs."

Find out more at www.umcgiving.org/specialsundays.



Reflections on December Gaza Interfaith Memorial Service

By Dorothy Wonder*

Several hundred people gathered at Union Square in San Francisco on December 27, 2009 to mark the one year anniversary of the start of Israel's intensive 22-day attack on, and invasion of, Gaza. By candlelight, Christians, Muslims, Jews, and others remembered the 1,400 children, women, and

men who were killed in the attack. The Israel-Palestine Task Force of the California-Nevada Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church was one of many sponsors for this event.

Singing and drumming by two Native Americans set the tone of remembrance and mourning, as we recognized that we stand on land that was taken from their ancestors, vast numbers of whom were killed, by the settlers from Europe.

Mariam El Shafei, a 15-year-old Palestinian girl, spoke passionately of her experience during the bombing of Gaza, in which she lost one of her eyes. The Palestine Children's Relief Fund brought her to the U.S. for medical treatment in San Jose, where she received an artificial eye.

Among the speakers were two UMC pastors, the Rev. Michael Yoshii of Buena Vista UMC and the Rev. Phil Lawson, representing the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI). Other faith leaders included Dr. Mohamad Rajabally, Islamic Society of the East Bay; Father Bernard Poggi, representing Father Labib, Orthodox Palestinian; Rabbi David Cooper, Kehilla Synagogue; and Sydney Levy, a member of Jewish Voice for Peace, who advocated the use of BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) to pressure for change of policies that severely oppress Palestinians.

Across the street, waving Israeli flags, stood some who vocally opposed us. The Mourning Mothers - bigger than life-size puppets, garbed in black, with faces depicting agony - lined the sidewalk facing them.

The siege of Gaza continues. There are still attacks; the borders are closed. Cement and other materials are needed to rebuild from the massive damage, but have not been allowed through the checkpoints. Though the suffering in Gaza was the specific focus of our memorial, Palestinians suffer in all of occupied Palestine. Imagine if Christ were born into our time in Bethlehem - with the imprisoning wall, the checkpoints . . .

We sang, "O Little Town of Bethlehem" with words that reflect the reality of today: "Oh holy Child of Bethlehem, be with us as we pray . . . empower us to end the siege, be born in us today."

Do we remember the covenant service in our hymnal which asks, "Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?"

At a Sabeel conference, I heard a Jewish man emphasize that one people's narrative is not more sacred than another's. I believe most of us know, and honor, the narrative of suffering of the Jewish people, but I wonder if very many of us have even heard the full narrative of the suffering of the Palestinian people.

**Dorothy Wonder is a member of the Israel-Palestine Task Force of the California-Nevada Annual Conference, and a member of Trinity UMC in Berkeley, California.*

Bishop Says Time Is Critical for Peace in Middle East

A UMNS Report

By Kathy L. Gilbert*

NASHVILLE - Time may be running out to reach a peaceful settlement between Israel and Palestinians, said a United Methodist leader who was part of a delegation of Christians, Jews, and Muslims visiting the Middle East.

"People of faith must always look for paths that lead to peace, even when they are overgrown from disuse or blocked by security checkpoints," said United Methodist Bishop Elaine Stanovsky, Denver Area, who joined a delegation of 15 U.S. religious leaders in the Holy Land, Dec. 17-23. "We heard again and again that the window of hope for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is closing."

Stanovsky said continued Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory fragment the Palestinian homeland and threaten to render it ungovernable.

"But I also experienced fatigue and impatience, and frustration that both the current Israeli and Palestinian leadership seem to be waiting for the other to take the first step," she said.

The National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East organized the trip that included Christian leaders of The United Methodist Church, Roman Catholic Church, Greek Orthodox Church, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), National Baptist Convention, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Episcopal Church. Jewish leaders from Reform Judaism, the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, along with Muslim leaders of the Islamic Society of North America and Clergy Beyond Borders, also were represented.

Holy Spirit at work

The delegation flew into Amman, Jordan, drove through Jericho to Jerusalem, visited Ramallah and Bethlehem, and flew out of Tel Aviv, Stanovsky said. The week was spent praying together and talking with Jordanians, Israelis, and Palestinians.

"This was my first trip to the Middle East," she said. "What made the land holy for me was God's Holy Spirit at work through people of all three faith traditions who pray and yearn and work for peace in this land, despite their own group's 'exclusive' claims. God is still at work; people still seek and follow God's leading; hope is alive."

The delegation agreed to call on the United States to be a catalyst in achieving a ceasefire. The delegation also called for allowing the flow of humanitarian and economic assistance to the people of Gaza, for continuing efforts to improve the capacity of the Palestinian Authority to increase security and economic development, and for reducing the number of checkpoints and freezing all settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Rabbi Paul Menitoff, representing the Central Conference of American Rabbis, said, "Even on the most emotional issues of refugees and Jerusalem, we believe most Palestinians understand that they will have to accept a negotiated solution regarding refugees that does not jeopardize the Jewish majority in Israel; and most Israelis understand that they will have to accept a negotiated solution regarding sharing Jerusalem that includes provision for both Israel and Palestine to have their capitals in Jerusalem."

Longing for peace

Members of the delegation also committed to working within their constituencies to promote peace.

"Unfortunately, religious belief and zeal can be an obstacle to peace," Stanovsky said. "People who believe God is on their side, and has given them a right to certain land, are not necessarily the best negotiators."

She said representatives of each faith tradition in the delegation committed to offering leadership within their spheres of influence.

"For me, that means preparing a thorough report to the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns and to the Council of Bishops, and finding ways to educate United Methodists on the complexity of the issues involved," Stanovsky said.

The United Methodist Church opposes Israeli settlements on Palestinian land and continued military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

Stanovsky has been involved in interfaith relations as president-director of the Church Council of Greater Seattle, 1990-95, and as a member of the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. She helped draft the United Methodist resolutions on Jewish-Christian relations.

She longs for peace in our lifetime.

"Wouldn't it be a blessing if in our lifetimes we could re-hallow the Holy Land so that it was a safe, secure and sacred homeland for Jews, Christians, and Muslims?"

*Gilbert is a news writer for United Methodist News Service in Nashville, Tennessee.



Tractor, Truck Are to Depart for Angola This Month

The 2009 Annual Conference Offering was designated for purchase of much-needed equipment for the Agricultural Training Farm near Porto Quipiri, north of Luanda, in West Angola. Thanks to your generosity, at long last the John Deere tractor (with accessories) and 2004 Ford F250 pick-up truck are due to depart the port of Savannah, Georgia on January 21, according to Phil Bandy, Interim Director of California-Nevada Volunteers in Mission, who is overseeing the project.

"The items in this shipment represent the love within the congregations in our Conference, and in the hands of fellow Christians at the Agricultural Training Farm, will fuel the ministries of the church in Angola," he says.

The items have been stored by the dealerships in Georgia from which they were purchased, while all the appropriate paperwork was being drawn up and processed.

Bandy reports, "Local Methodists in Georgia are now supporting this project to help in the final preparations. We hope to have video of the loading process and will keep you posted as your gifts to the people of Angola traverse the Atlantic."

Cal-Nev's Karen Foster Is Subject of Profile in Davis *Enterprise*

Karen Foster, Accounting Manager for the California-Nevada Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, is the subject of a profile piece published January 6, 2010 in *The Davis Enterprise* newspaper.

Titled "Fostering Success," the article by *Enterprise* staff writer Bruce Gallaudet centers on Foster's involvement with youth basketball teams in Davis.

Coach of the Davis High School freshman women's team, the Blue Devils, as well as the Davis Hoops eighth-grade girls' team, Foster tells Gallaudet: "I have coached sports since I graduated from high school (1984) and enjoy working with children, helping them achieve things they didn't think they could do, making a difference."

All this after a 20-year career in the Air Force that included deployments to Iraq and Kuwait while she raised two daughters - both of whom are straight-A students, star athletes, and, their mom says, "upstanding citizens in the community."

Link here to read [Karen Foster's inspiring story](#) (in PDF format), courtesy *The Davis Enterprise*.

Nevada-Sierra District Invites Everyone to Training Event With Bishop Schnase

All churches in the California-Nevada Annual Conference are invited to participate in the Nevada-Sierra District's Leadership Training Day, featuring Bishop Robert Schnase, on **Saturday, March 6** at South Reno United Methodist Church.

Bishop Schnase is author of the *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, among other books. At the district's 15th annual training event, he will provide an overview of the Five Practices, explaining why the concepts are powerful, how they help us fulfill our mission, how churches can embed them into congregational culture, and how they should *not* be used.

The event qualifies attendees for .5 clergy CEU credits in Spiritual Formation, Disciple Making, or Professional Competency Development, or one Lay Speaker Refresher Course credit.

Guarantee your place and take advantage of early bird registration by signing up this month. Complete registration form and mail, along with \$20 fee, to NS District, P.O. Box 2915, Reno, NV 89505. Registration fee jumps to \$25 after January 31.

Download [flyer with registration form](#) here. Call 775.786.2332 for more information.

South Reno UMC is located at 200 De Spain Lane, Reno, NV 89511.

PSR Announces January Earl Lecture Workshops

A full set of workshops is scheduled for the 109th annual Earl Lectures and Leadership Conference, January 26-28 at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. The sessions will address a wide variety of topics and issues, all relating to the theme "Spiritual but not Religious: Chasing the Divine," led by theologians, ministers, artists, and educators.

Speaker **Matthew Fox** will lead a workshop conversation discussing his work in reawakening the West to its own mystical tradition. The founder and president emeritus of Oakland's Wis-

dom University will speak in a more intimate setting than his plenary address, and elaborate on the opportunities to embrace mystical practices in contemporary life.

Paul Fromberg, the rector of St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco, will lead the workshop "Liturgy in a Post-Religious Culture." He will address how people of all spiritual identities can create meaningful rituals to mark life's milestones, and how leaders can create liturgy that joins people's contexts to the experience of God.

In a hands-on workshop, traditional Jewish storyteller and interfaith service leader **Sara Nes-son** presents "Standing in the Shadow of God: The Sacred Path of the Artist." Participants will explore how creativity in dance, music, and storytelling can illuminate one's spiritual or religious path.

Roland Stringfellow, coordinator of the Coalition of Welcoming Congregations at the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry (CLGS), will bring together those who work passionately in activism and congregational outreach during the workshop "Faith Organizing and Spiritual Activism." The session will explore varied approaches to instigating change and will provide a venue for networking with like-minded colleagues.

How can a bastion of conservative Christianity become a progressive home for people of all faiths or no faith? **Ian Lawton**, executive minister of Christ Community Church in Spring Lake, Michigan, explains how his house of worship adheres to values of spirituality rather than to rigid dogma. He will present examples of non-denominational community development work to spark conversation of practical application in a variety of settings.

People from all spiritual, religious, and educational backgrounds are welcome to attend both the annual [Earl Lectures](#) series - which is **free** - and the workshops. The series will explore the differences and similarities between "religious" and "spiritual" for those who chase the divine.

Continuing education units (CEUs) are available.

Registration for the workshops is \$99 through January 11 and \$125 thereafter.

Click here to access complete [workshop information](#) and to register on line.

If you wish to attend the lectures only - no workshops, meals, or other events - there is no need to register.

PSR is located at 1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709. Visit <http://www.psr.edu> for more information.

UMC Brunch to Conclude Earl Lectures This Month

United Methodists in the California-Nevada Annual Conference are invited to join colleagues from across the Bay Area and beyond at the UMC brunch, being held at the conclusion of the Earl Lectures at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. It is not necessary to attend the Earl Lectures in order to attend the brunch - scheduled for Thursday, January 28, at 11 a.m.

Tickets \$20. Register in advance on line, at <http://www.psr.edu/earl-lectures-2010>, or pay in cash at the door.

Registration Underway for Spring Youth Workers' Retreat

It's often said of youth work that "it's the hardest work you'll ever love!" and it's essential to build in time to recharge one's "batteries."

That time is now! Take a break: refresh, refuel, re-connect, and get some great ideas at the third annual California-Nevada United Methodist **Youth Workers' Retreat**, April 30-May 1 at Valley of the Moon Camp in Glen Ellen, California.

What's the cost? **It's FREE!** It doesn't get any better than that!

Register now at www.calnevumc.org/youthministries.

Or if you need more info, contact Kelly Newell at 916.374.1515 or kellyn@calnevumc.org.

Want to Help a Neighbor in Time of Need?

Not sure how? Sign up for disaster training classes in 2010!

The Cal-Nev Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church is sponsoring Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Response Training in California and Nevada this year!

"The recent quakes in the Pacific have made me aware of an urgent need within our Annual Conference to prepare ourselves," says Phil Bandy, who heads the Conference United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) office.

"Volunteers are well-equipped and experienced with rebuilding in the Long-term Recovery phase of a disaster," he adds. "California-Nevada United Methodist churches have sent more than 150 teams to the Gulf Coast since the hurricanes of 2005. But at home, we are not prepared to receive teams into our own conference! We are not prepared to offer aid and comfort to our own neighbors.

"The United Methodist churches in the Gulf Coast have been extensively trained by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and have developed a refined capacity to host UMVIM teams, but we are totally unprepared here in California and Nevada. We just don't have enough trained volunteers to respond with agility and effectiveness to a disaster in our own back yard. We must prepare to be hosts to visiting UMVIM teams of up to 5,000 people at a time! This will necessitate having dozens of UMVIM host teams here to house, feed, transport, and coordinate those visiting volunteers."

To address this need, Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Response Training has been scheduled for March 24-27 at Camp Lodestar. Classes will be taught by UMCOR staff and consultants.

The following courses are scheduled: **Disaster Preparedness, Early Response Teams, Caring for Children in Trauma, Case Management, Spiritual and Emotional Care, and Volunteer Management.**

Download [course descriptions](#) (PDF) for a complete breakdown of what each course entails.

Contact Phil Bandy at philb@calnevumc.org or 916.374.1582/1584, or visit www.cnumcvim.org, for more information about the March 24-27 Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Response Train-

ing, or to sign up to attend.

Camp Lodestar is located in Wilseyville, California. It is 90 minutes from Sacramento and 40 minutes from Jackson.

Deadline Approaches for Major Scholarships From Claremont School of Theology

CLAREMONT, Calif. - The application deadline is quickly approaching for major M.Div. and M.A. scholarships - including the prestigious University Scholars Award Program - at Claremont School of Theology. Applications for admission must be completed by January 15, 2010.

The **University Scholars Award Program** at Claremont School of Theology attracts applications from top students from across the nation. The Award provides for 100 percent of tuition and fees, housing, books, and a monthly stipend, carrying an approximate value of \$40,000 per year.

In addition, the inaugural **Paul and Hisako Terasaki Scholarship** will be offered to an entering Japanese American M.Div. student with interests in UMC Parish Ministry. This award provides 100 percent of tuition and fees, housing, books, and a monthly stipend, for three years.

Other competitive scholarships are available, including full tuition awards based on merit and/or need, for applicants who submit their materials by February 1.

For more information, visit www.cst.edu or contact the Claremont office of admission at 909.447.2506 or admission@cst.edu.

A graduate theological school of The United Methodist Church, Claremont School of Theology is an ecumenical and inter-religious institution situated in Southern California among the prestigious Claremont Colleges.

UMC Prayer Leader Keynotes February Conference in Fresno

UMC prayer leader Dr. Terry Teykl will be keynote presenter at the Church Prayer Leaders' Network (CPLN) Regional Prayer Conference at Mountainview Community Church in Fresno, February 19-20.

The conference, "Developing Divine Strongholds in Your Church," also features Jonathan Graf, president of CPLN and the founding editor of *Pray!* magazine.

Teykl is a popular speaker and author on the subject of prayer. After pastoring for many years, God called him into full time prayer ministry, and in the last 15 years he has worked tirelessly to encourage more to pray in local churches. His ministry to develop prayer rooms and to pray for revival has reaped huge rewards for the Kingdom.

Teykl has authored numerous books, including *Divine Strongholds* (the theme of the February event in Fresno), *The Presence Based Church*, *Praying Grace*, *Preyed On or Prayed For*, and *Making Room to Pray*.

Graf also is a popular speaker on prayer, who ministers through weekend prayer seminars in 35-40 churches each year. He, too, has authored a number of books, including *Praying Like Paul* and *The Power of Personal Prayer*.

Registration fee for the conference is \$45, or \$36 for CPLN members - with an "early bird" **discounted rate through January 31** of \$36, or \$28 for CPLN members.

The fee for pastors and for their spouses is \$22.50/person. Group rates: 20 percent off when five or more register from the same church; 30 percent off when 15 or more register from the same church (must register together).

The conference begins at 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 19 and ends at 4 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 20.

Workshops, to be led by Graf, Ginny Kisling, and Esther Leonard, are to be announced.

Visit www.prayershop.org for more information and/or to sign up to attend the conference (click on CPLN Conference in the grey navigation column on the left side of the page to register on line).

Mountainview Community Church is located at 3600 N. Fowler Avenue, Fresno, CA 93727.

Interdenominational Organization Hosts 30th Annual Women's Retreat, Open to All

California Women's Retreat, an interdenominational retreat for women, marks its 30th year at the Marriott Hotel in San Ramon, California, February 26-28.

Keynote speakers will be Dr. RoseAnne Coleman, whose 2009 book, *The Stories I Keep*, shares heartwarming memories of events that shaped her childhood and pointed her to the beauty, purpose, and hope that God has been growing in her life ever since; and Margaret Feinberg, whose *Twentysomething* and *What the Heck Am I Going to Do With My Life?* established her as an expert on reaching the next generation. The author of more than a dozen books, Feinberg recently was named by *Charisma* magazine as one of the "30 Emerging Voices" who will help lead the church in the next decade.

Worship and singing will be led by concert artist and speaker Frances Drost.

CWR invites United Methodist churches in the California-Nevada Annual Conference to consider using this resource as their church women's retreat, as an increasing number of churches have done in recent years as the economy has worsened. To find out more and to register on line, visit www.cawr.org.

Epiphany Celebrated With 'Smoking Bishops'

Today, January 6, is Epiphany, or Three Kings Day. Dean McIntyre, Director of Music Resources for the General Board of Discipleship, reminds us that this "twelfth day of Christmas" is "customarily a time of joyous celebration ... celebrated by many Christians with gift giving."

It also is tradition, he reports, "to prepare and drink hot wassail punch, also called 'Smoking Bishop' ... [a] hot, fruity drink ... popular in old England."

In this country, colonists took down the wreath on their front door on this day, and any nuts, fruits, or other edibles that were a part of the wreath would be eaten, along with other festive foods, as part of the Epiphany celebration, McIntyre says. Thus today is the traditional day for taking down the Christmas tree and other remaining decorations.

Free 2010 planning calendar

GBOD is offering a free worship, music, preaching, and planning calendar for 2010. It contains the Revised Common Lectionary citations for every Sunday and major day of the church year, as well as United Methodist observances and special days and holidays from the secular and civil calendars. These may be printed for the use of pastors, worship leaders and planners, musicians, choir directors and members, Sunday School teachers, and committee members.

Visit the GBOD Worship website to [download the planning calendar](#) (in PDF format).

Order Fair Trade Palms for Palm Sunday

Fair Trade palms, harvested from the forests of Mexico and Guatemala, are available for use in Palm Sunday (March 28) services. The North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (NACEC) and the University of Minnesota Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management (CINRAM) are working together with the Rainforest Alliance TREES program, Smartwood, and TransFair to certify palms harvested from the forests of Mexico and Guatemala for sale to Christian congregations in the United States and Europe.

Fair Trade palms are available to order now. Visit the General Board of Discipleship's Worship website to find out more and to [order online](#).

**The Instant Connection is published each week by Jane Horstman on behalf of
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