



Connection

California-Nevada Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

World Day of Prayer reveals anguish in the Philippines



Revs. Pam Fine, Alexis Cambe, Michael Yoshii and Horace de Ocera join clergy holding photos of Filipino victims of extra-judicial killings, at Sacramento observance of World Day of Prayer. Photo by Jeneane Jones

By Jeneane Jones

Director of Communications

It was an early morning phone call from the Philippines that woke Bishop Eliezer Pascua on the day he would address a World Day of Prayer service in Sacramento. The General Secretary of the United Church of Christ, Philippines listened as the caller told of the latest killing just hours earlier – another UCCP member gunned down in the streets. The murder of Renato Torrecampo Pacaide, 53, who was secretary general of a peasants' movement in Mindanao, brought to 835 the number of extra-judicial killings in the Philippines in five years. Of that number, more than two dozen church people and clergy have been killed, including a United Methodist pastor. The UCCP has

been the hardest hit of the denominations.

Bishop Pascua, standing behind photos of some of the victims, spoke to the audience at Westminster Presbyterian Church and in a voice vexed and sorrow-filled, quoted from the Psalms: "How long O Lord will you forget us...but we have trusted in you. We believe God is present."

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Walking in the Spirit

Bishop Beverly J.
Shamana

Bishop's Itinerary

Conf. Committee
on the Episcopacy
April 4

Ministry Staff &
Cabinet
April 10-13

Cabinet
April 16-18

Confirmation
Retreat, Lodestar
April 20-22

Gen. Bd. of Church
& Society,
Washington, DC
April 26-29

Council of Bishops,
Myrtle Beach, SC
April 29-May 4

Bishop urges action on behalf of Philippines

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST:

Sitting next to Justice Renato Puna, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in the Philippines, I saw the deep hurt and pain in his eyes as we talked about the continuing killings in his country. Our 17-member delegation spent one hour with him telling the stories of horror and trauma we'd heard in Mindanao, Visayas, Luzon, and Manila. When we left he promised to investigate the murders and use his office to bring the guilty to justice.

The same pledge was made by Mr. Joey Salceda, Chief of Staff to President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, and Senator Satur Ocampo, as each leader met with our delegation.

More than 800 men and women have been murdered and abducted since 2001 and no one has been brought to justice. Yet these victims are clergy, human rights workers, farmers, organizers, and religious workers. Bishop Alberto Ramento was found murdered in his rectory in October, 2006. He was the former chair of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP).

Our group was divided into three teams and dispersed to three islands. The accounts of fear, intimidation and loss were told over and over again as we shared our findings upon our return to Manila.

Each of us has pledged to tell their stories as we return home. I ask four things of you as a people of compassion in the California-Nevada Conference.

1. **Become educated** about this situation in the Philippines. Here are Websites:

Stop the killings: <http://www.stopthekillings.org>

Hong Kong Mission for Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines:

<http://www.pinoyhr.net/reports/missionreport.pdf>

U.S. State Department Report on Human Rights in the Philippines:

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61624.htm>

Report on the Attacks Against Filipino Lawyers and Judges from the Dutch Lawyers for Lawyers Foundation: <http://www.advocatenvooradvocaten.nl/projects/html>

Amnesty International report 8/15/06: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGASA350062006>

Asian Human Rights Commission: <http://www.ahrchk.net>

2. **Talk** with Filipino pastors and laity, who have extensive information to share.

3. **Write** your members of Congress and ask for their support in the investigations. Write your local newspaper and ask for articles that expose these killings, which appear to be beyond the capacity of the Philippine authorities to stop. Question our United States' funding of their military and anti-terrorism campaign with 4.6 billion dollars.

4. **Pray** for families of victims, that they not give up hope while the government and judicial systems work to address the problem.

In addition to the fact-finding mission, my husband, Walter, and I were members of the Medical/Dental mission to the poorest of the poor in Solano, Tarlac, Banaue and Biginge, led by Rev. Paul Cabotaje. Our mission visit concluded with a brief time in Tokyo, where we visited our UMC missionaries and the churches and other ecumenical sites of their ministries.

We were blessed to serve in Christ's name.

As I write this article, I have learned of another brutal killing – of the daughter-in-law of the family we visited in Salay. Our visit was to offer pastoral care and participate in the memorial service for the father of that family. We must persevere to bring God's justice to bear in this environment of killing.

YOUR SISTER IN CHRIST,

Beverly J. Shamana

Editor's Note: Half of the Annual Conference Session Offering this year has been designated to aid our ministry of solidarity for victims of these killings.

Anguish in the Philippines

continued from page 1

This year's commemoration of World Day of Prayer on March 2 was a chance for the ecumenical community to spotlight an underreported story being played out on streets and in villages across the Philippines. Stories like that of Noli Capulong, a youth leader in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, shot and killed last May as he headed to Bible study.

The Rev. Dennis Duhaylungsod of Filipino American United Church of Christ in Fremont, who worked with Capulong, told of the 20-year-old, killed on the day his mother sponsored a resolution to stop the killings in the Philippines. Holding up a black and white photo of Noli, Duhaylungsod said of the young man's apparent crime, "He attended a community meeting to help organize the village [to start] their own drug store."

For Deborah Lee of the PANA Institute, which studies leadership development in Pacific Asian and North American Religion, the day of prayer was all about faith, justice and human rights in the Philippines. "It is time to focus on human rights abuses [and] the killings of unarmed civilians who because of their political positions to stand for the poor, are being assassinated by their own military."

Lee's comments echoed those by United Methodists from the California-Nevada Conference just back from a 10-day Fact-Finding mission to the Philippines. Laddie Perez-Galang from South Hayward UMC traveled with 16 others to three different regions of the country. Each group heard unique stories, but with brutal similarities. Stories of peasant laborers killed in rice fields, of torture and mass killings.

Perez-Galang said the team heard reports of church workers being identified with the New People's Army, the armed extension of the Communist Party of the Philippines, because they were helping secure the civil rights of farm workers. Reportedly, that connection was providing the military with its license to kill. "The military government is taking advantage of uneducated people who do not know their rights," said Perez-Galang. "If they speak up they are arrested and killed. And if educated people inform them of their rights they are marked or labeled as either NPAs or communists."

The government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has conducted investigations into the killings, but according to the group Human Rights Watch, a climate of fear and a lack of cooperation by military authorities have made the probe ineffective at best. Victims and their families are afraid to come forward for fear of police reprisals.

Rev. Michael Yoshii, a co-coordinator of the Cal-Nevada UMC team, said for some, neither fear nor distance could silence them. "Some people walked six hours to come and be interviewed by our group. They were under watch and their safety was not insured in many cases."

Bishop Beverly J. Shamana was also on the fact-finding mission. She said what lies ahead for the group is the task of education and advocacy. "There is a lack of information, and international classicism is at work," said the Bishop. She noted that because the killings happened in the underdeveloped country of the Philippines, and not in some place in Europe, the stories of human rights atrocities were not receiving the attention they deserved.

"Our representatives and many communities who care simply don't know yet. And so it is up to us to get the word out and get people educated, get them moving."

The decision to host the World day of Prayer at Westminster Presbyterian was a strategic one. The Spanish-Mediterranean style church in downtown Sacramento sits in the shadow of the California State Capitol.

Rev. Larry Emery, one of the event's coordinators, challenged the audience to make a difference. "We must hold our representatives in Washington accountable for the aid sent to our overseas allies in the

name of American people, and to insure that aid is not used to oppose legitimate opposition to government, no matter their political public view, no matter their religious affiliation." Emery called for letter writing campaigns to Senator Barbara Boxer, who chairs the Senate Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. "Write and call your senators. Urge them to conduct a thorough and complete hearing into the human rights violations to determine whether the military is being used to threaten the civil rights and the very lives of the citizens of that nation."

Following the service Emery invited worshippers to carry flowers to the state Capitol and leave them, along with the photos of those killed in the Philippines, on the steps of the Capitol.

Rev. Yoshii summed up the purpose of the day and the mission to the Philippines. "We are working out our mutual, collective salvation; understanding that our salvation is bound up in our support and solidarity of each other. None of us is free until we are all free."

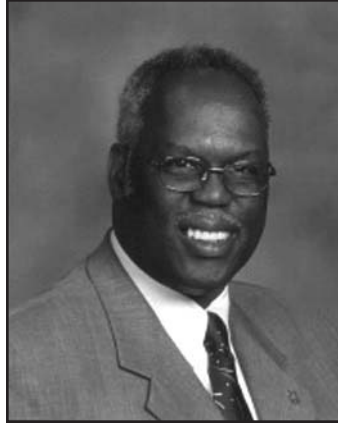
Next month: An account by Rev. Pam Fine of the March 14 hearing in Washington, D.C., convened by Senator Barbara Boxer; Chair of the Sub-Committee on East Asian Affairs for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to listen to concerns on the extra-judicial killings. Fine and others who participated in these trips are willing to speak at UM churches. Contact her at (530) 477-8166, or mamafine@hotmail.com.



Bishop Brown to return to California for ACS 2007

Bishop Warner Brown, Episcopal leader of the Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone Conferences, will return to California to preach at the ACS ordination service at 8 p.m. on Saturday, June 23.

Bishop Brown was born and raised an only child in Baltimore, Maryland, the son of Ida and Warner Brown. At the age of 13, while reading the New Testament, he felt a call to serve. At first he did not see himself serving as a pastor in a church; but he began preaching as a youth, and was encouraged to continue doing so. He graduated from the University of Maryland with a B.A. in



Bishop Warner Brown

Sociology in 1969. Then, at the urging of his pastor, he attended Wesley Seminary, graduating in 1974. It was at Wesley, while he was serving as a student intern, that the ordained ministry finally called with clarity.

In 1973 Warner was ordained a Deacon in Baltimore, and also served in the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference. In 1979, he answered a national search for an associate conference staff position in our Conference, and transferred here: he admits that upon leaving Pennsylvania, he "joyfully threw the snow shovel in the trash." Once in California, it was only six months later that internal staff changes opened the door to his stepping up to serve as Conference Council Director.

From this role of program and administrative oversight for the Conference, Bishop Brown was appointed just four years later as Golden Gate District Superintendent. After only four more years, he was given the charge of Taylor Memorial UMC in Oakland. As the congregation was experiencing a significant turn-around, the Loma Prieta earthquake and subsequent fires assaulted the Oakland community. Warner led the community's ecumenical disaster response, serving as chairperson of the Oakland Inter-religious Network.

Following a successful 11-year pastorate in Oakland, Warner was given a new challenge as senior pastor of the predominantly white First UMC in Bakersfield. Only two years into this pastorate, he was nominated and endorsed by his conference for the episcopacy. He was elected on the 19th ballot at the Western Jurisdictional Conference in Casper, Wyoming in July 2000.

Throughout these years, Bishop Brown has been active in the social justice ministries and programs of those communities and church connections where he has been appointed. He has been chair of our Board of Missions as well as numerous other conference boards and agencies, twice been a delegate to General Conference, and has been the host for the Black Methodists for Church Renewal. He is married to Minnie Jones Brown; their family includes Catina Marie Harvin, Warner III and Calvin Brown.

ACS Notes & Updates

Go to www.cnumc.org to register to attend the session held June 19-24, 2007 at the Sacramento Convention Center. Deadline for online registration is June 1, 2007. (Mail in registration must be postmarked by June 11, 2007.)

The pre-conference Clergy Session will begin at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 19 at the Sheraton Hotel.

The laity session will begin and district meetings will take place on Wednesday, June 20 beginning at 10:00 a.m. in the Convention Center halls.

The opening worship will be at 4:15 p.m. Wednesday, June 20. The opening plenary will be at 7:30 p.m. We will adjourn following worship on Sunday, June 24.

The Conference Mission Faire and Picnic, to be held at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday evening, June 21, will replace the events formerly known as "District Dinners." Everyone will enjoy a picnic in Capitol Park, while observing the many displays which communicate the multi-faceted work of our Conference. There will be on line registration for dinner.

Each year Annual Conference attendees are invited to bring offerings designated to support the varied ministries and missions of the California-Nevada United Methodist connection. This year our Conference Offering will be used to support our Angola Partnership and the mission of solidarity aiding the Philippines' victims of extra-judicial killings (see stories, pages 1 and 2). Our Conference Offering is one of the many ways in which we put our faith into action.

A Conference Offering bulletin insert is available on line at cnumc.org. Churches may download this insert and reproduce it for their use.

The insert also has been sent to all 2007 Annual Conference Session delegates.

Earth Day feature: Santa Cruz church goes green

By Jeneane Jones

Director of Communications

Like a seed planted in fertile ground, plans for a new United Methodist Church of Santa Cruz will soon be coming up green! The church is being touted as the only one in the country to be designed from the ground up as an environmentally friendly facility.

The new UMC of Santa Cruz will feature solar panels, windows designed to draw in more light and several other green-friendly attributes. Rev. Michael Love expects construction to begin July 1. "It's been a long road, but the delays in work approvals have been a blessing." Love says while designs, permits and plans were being completed, Santa Cruz has been growing its membership. The church is the result of three congregations merging in 2003 – Live Oak, Grace and Santa Cruz.

Love says church leadership decided at the start that they needed to build more than just an edifice on 17th Avenue near Capitola. "We wanted the church to be an expression of our core United Methodist values, values rooted in the Wesley tradition and in our Christian faith. We take seriously that 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof' and so building a facility that reflected stewardship of the earth was important."

Love says the church will not be a zero impact building – "We won't be totally off the grid in terms of electricity," but the Santa Cruz-based William Bagnall

Architects says the new two-story structure will have a number of features that will be eco-friendly. "From flooring and wall coverings to the heating and cooling systems, we are looking at a number of ways the new church facility will minimize reliance on electricity," says project architect William Bagnall. The multi-functional church will fea-



Artist's rendering of the new Santa Cruz First UMC. The Mediterranean style building will feature solar panel roof tiles.

ture a flat roof and solar panel tiles made to look like concrete. The church sanctuary will also be oriented to take advantage of natural sunlight through windows and skylights. Even the parking lot will reflect the green concept. "We are looking at using paving materials that allow water to soak back into the ground, recharging ground water aquifers, instead of running into storm drains."

"In general it's a little bit more expensive to do some of the things we are doing," says Love, but he's quick to add it is more than a nice idea. "People think that incorporating environmentally responsible design into their buildings is icing on the cake, it's the last thing they do. In fact, eco-friendly architecture is a huge movement within the construction industry and many architects are knowledgeable about how to help you and your church cut heating costs." Love says the best advice he has for churches planning to build is to start thinking early about how to incorporate environmental designs into church plans, in order to cut costs such as electricity and heating.

Churches can find more information and resources on building green or renovation ideas at <http://www.usgbc.org/>.

When completed the new church will house several ministries, including a community center designed especially to service the community's children. "The facility itself will be kind of educational," says Bagnall. "Small plaques will be featured throughout the buildings to explain what renewable resources were used, and why."

The church has completed its application for the design and is awaiting zoning board decisions and an environmental review. Architects tell Love the project could be completed by July 2008.



Rev. Michael Love (in vestments) looks on as Bishop Shamana takes part in the church's 2004 groundbreaking ceremony.

Death and taxes: your church can avoid them

By Susan Griffin, Esq., M.Div.

There's an old Steve Martin joke: "How do you make a million dollars and not pay taxes? First, you get a million dollars. Then, when the IRS asks, "Where's the taxes on the million dollars?" you say: "Iiiiiiii foorgot." (It's a better joke with the Steve Martin delivery!) Anyway, I'm noticing that a lot of churches are saying "Iiiiiiii foorgot" when it comes to property taxes.

As a gift to us from the founders of the country derived from the Constitutional free exercise clause, churches are "tax exempt." Sections 4(b) and 5 of Article XIII of the California State Constitution, and Sections 214, 254.5 and 259.5 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, grant to churches property tax exemptions. However, the burden is upon the church to prove its exempt status clearly and convincingly.

To the extent that church property is held exclusively or primarily for religious purposes the church will not have to pay property tax thereon. This includes the sanctuary and out-buildings, parking lots, the parsonage, the school building, that empty lot that the church plans to build on someday – really any property owned by the church. A myriad of questions dependent upon different fact scenarios flows from these ostensibly simple rules, however. Does it make a difference if the church is renting out a portion of the church property to a commercial, versus a non-profit enterprise? Does the proportionate hourly share of use equate to a portion of the property taxes becoming non-exempt? What if you rented the parsonage for just a year and then another pastor moved in? What if the parsonage simply stood empty for a period of time?

One of the biggest problems I see with regard to property tax exemptions, however, is not one of denial of exemptions, but one of neglect to apply for the exemption each year. "Iiiiiiii foorgot" to fill out the forms. Every year in approximately November or December (just before or during Advent when pastors have nothing better to do) the county in which the church is located will send a form to renew the property tax exemption. The form will be entitled "Claim for Welfare Exemption" and is BOE-267. DO NOT IGNORE THIS FORM. Fill it out using last year's form as a guide, a copy of which I am sure you have kept in a clearly labeled and organized folder, right? Send the form back to the county assessor's office by February 15 of the following year. *Calendar this now.* I'll wait while you do. (Pastors could even calendar this to go out at the same time as they need to complete their re-appointment forms, thus pleasing both the tax authorities and their DSEs at the same time – not that I'm drawing any comparisons –

and what could be better than that?)

Isn't it a joy to be a pastor at a new church? Well, of course it is. The excitement of making new friends, moving into the parsonage, engaging in the mission and vision of the new congregation, receiving a notice of a property tax assessment in the thousands of dollars and a notice from the county that the parsonage will be sold because of failure to pay property taxes in the past five years, working with the worship committee and music director, . . . wait . . . one of those doesn't fit! Whaddaya mean, *tax assessment*? Whaddaya mean, *the parsonage is being put up for sale by the city*? Aren't churches tax exempt? As they say, this could happen to you!

One of the first things a new pastor should do is rummage through all those boring tax forms that might, or might not, be in the church office. Is there a copy of a Claim for Welfare Exemption for each of the last seven to ten years? Find them and put them together, with the oldest documents at the bottom and the newest love-letters from the assessor's office on top. The love letters will say things like "NOTICE OF TAX COLLECTOR'S IMPENDING POWER TO SELL". If there is not a completed and signed form for each year, your church may be liable for back property taxes (plus penalties and interest). Moreover, you may not be notified of this for a number of years, or you may not notice that you've been notified.

If a pastor assesses this problem from the outset there may be ways to get out from under a very hefty property tax assessment. First, call the county assessor's office. It is actually possible to speak with a live, and fairly helpful, real human being. They will research their records as to each property parcel number (an important thing to have in hand when you call) and tell you exactly what's owed and for what years. Once you regain consciousness, you can start to deal with the problem.

The assessor's office will tell you exactly what is needed. They will probably tell you that first you need to apply to the Board of Equalization for an Organizational Clearance Certificate – Welfare Exemption, form BOE-277. This is a pain in the neck, but the pastor, board of trustees' chair, or someone with special tax knowledge – don't you wish every church had one? – will have to bite the bullet. Get yourself a nice cup of tea and start filling out the form (which the assessor's office will give you, along with instructions on how to fill it out). You will need certain documents to fill this out: the corporation identification number, Articles of Incorporations if any, the church's operating statements and balance sheets for all years involved, something indicating what activities the church is involved in (I use a church

Death and taxes

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Sunday bulletin), a copy of the letters from the GCFA indicating that the church is exempt from Federal Income Tax (you can get this from GCFA in Illinois and you should also see if you can find the verification of that from the IRS that was sent to the church upon their application for Federal Income Tax exemption), and the birth certificate of your first-born child. (OK, I made that last one up, but it seems like that level of irrelevance.)

The Board of Equalization will either issue you an Organization Clearance Certificate (OCC), or, more likely, send you a letter saying it is incomplete in some Byzantine way: like there's no "irrevocable dedication for the property," or "no provision for dissolution clause" in your Articles of Incorporation. At this point, you have to call the Board of Equalization and find someone who will discuss the situation with you. After much bureaucratic aggravation and tedious waiting, you should eventually get the OCC. Have another cup of tea.

Now you can fill out and file the Claim for Welfare Exemption from Property Tax, as I described above in situ-

ations where your property exemption claim forms had been filed every year and there are records of that. Remember you must fill out a separate form for each separate parcel number each year.

One last tip: do not be afraid to call the governmental agencies you are dealing with and ask for help. I've discovered that some phone systems allow you to turn off the music they will play while on hold. Find out if your phone system has this before you start, and before you call assemble these important things: the above-mentioned cup of tea, a picture of your family, dog or cat so you will be reminded that someone loves you, and your Bible. Take deep, cleansing breaths: although it's my opinion that this doesn't reduce the pain, it does make life easier for those around you, because while you are doing this you won't be able to shout angrily at your colleagues or family.

Oh – and about the "death" mentioned in the title – if you faithfully follow the filing of these forms your church can *escape* death and live forever free from property tax annoyance.

Three bishops urge new U.S. budget priorities



Bishop Janice Huie

(UMNS) Bishop Shamana and two other United Methodist bishops are asking President Bush and the U.S. Congress to place the needs of children and the poor at the heart of the budget debate.

"The debate among elected leaders over the federal budget is at its core a debate over how the nation's abundance is shared," the bishops said in a Feb. 15 letter to the president and members of Congress.

"We are alarmed by recent trends in the federal budget that have squeezed investments in education, child care, food nutrition programs and other anti-poverty measures to accommodate dramatic tax cuts for the wealthiest citizens in the United States and to fuel military conflicts abroad. These policies turn the teachings of Christ on their head."

The letter was signed by Bishops Janice Riggle Huie, president of the Council of Bishops; Gregory Vaughn Palmer, the council's president-designate; and our Bishop Beverly Shamana, who is president of the UM Board of Church and Society (our social advocacy agency).

The Council of Bishops has focused for years on lifting up the wellbeing of children and combating poverty, the letter noted. "We will not remain silent as the most vulnerable populations in the United States and around the world are sacrificed at the altars of greed and war."

Saying the United States is enjoying "unparalleled abundance," the bishops said the budget "is as much a moral as a financial document." They called for a "reordering of our nation's budget priorities" and urged development of "a budget that reflects our shared commitment to justice and compassion for all God's children."

Bush, who is a United Methodist, sent his \$2.9 trillion spending plan to Congress on Feb. 5. In his written message to Congress, the president said his blueprint "reflects the priorities of our country at this moment in its history," including keeping the economy strong, protecting the homeland and combating terrorism. Bush said his plan would reduce the U.S. deficit annually and balance the government's books by 2012.

The Coalition on Human Needs, a coalition partner with the Board of Church and Society, said the Bush budget cuts vital services for the poor, near-poor and middle class and increases funding for the military.

The budget will put \$739 billion in tax cuts into the hands of millionaires alone between 2008 and 2017, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, an organization that researches and analyzes how proposed budget and tax policies impact budget choices for low-income Americans.

Sacramento organist fills the darkness with sound

By Bob Sylva

Reprinted from the Sacramento Bee

Most mornings, Tom Orr rises at 2:30 a.m. He piles into his small SUV, his hands warmed in black cotton gloves bristling with dog hair. With him, for security, is Cecilia, a German shepherd, who, as God is our witness, is afraid of her own shadow. The two drive a few blocks to First United Methodist Church, a solemn brick edifice at the corner of 21st and J streets.

The city is silent, the streets forsaken. The signal lights recite green, yellow, red in rote piety.

Tom Orr enters the church through a rear door. Cecilia pads across the tile floor. In the darkened sanctuary he switches on a muted light, leashes Cecilia to a bench leg. He unlocks the organ's console, which is located in front of the altar. The instrument's great lung in the basement whooshes to life. And, alone, at peace, even joyous, Orr proceeds to play – this lush, swelling, majestic sound that fills the empty church.

But he's not completely alone. First Methodist, built in 1925, is a venerable church. There are creaks, groans, rumbles. Often Cecilia's ears perk up at a strange sound. An intruder? A phantom? Plus, there is a choir of bats that, roused from their pews in the belfry, leak inside, then dive and swoop about in the sanctuary like so many darting quarter notes. It all makes for a haunting nocturne of devotion.

Now, one afternoon, Tom Orr is sitting at a long dining room table. With him is his wife, Socorro, who goes by the pet name "Soki." Their house is a handsome 1910 Craftsman located in the Sacramento neighborhood called Poverty Ridge. It is filled with antiques, several grand pianos, a pipe organ, a marimba, the pealing echoes of children. In one corner, there stands a rattling skeleton.

"Every family has a skeleton," quips Soki. Indeed. This one just happens to be out of the closet.

Tom Orr is 69 years old. He's a nimble little guy, full of delight and mischief, with silver hair, tender hands, a twinkle in his eye. Attired in blue denims and an Old Navy sweatshirt, he has the bouncy gait of a sailor on shore leave. The couple, she patient, he mercurial, appear well-matched.

Both are natives. Tom grew up in West Sacramento and was among the first graduating class from old Marshall High School. He sang in the choir, played bassoon, even composed the school song, "Hail, Marshall High." Alas, Marshall High is long defunct, the words to his song more eulogy than triumphant anthem.

Soki grew up in a Victorian on F Street, right across



Organist Tom Orr. Photo by Kevin German, Sacramento Bee

from St. Joseph's School. She could wait for the school bell to ring, prance across the street and never be late for class. Today, her home is a lawyer's office, St. Joseph's a jury parking lot. She and Tom, then a divorced father with four small kids in tow, met in church, married, and had another child.

And raised them in this rambling house on T Street that Tom purchased in 1970. The house looked out at the derelict Short Mansion property, which, before a ghastly tilt up office building was erected, was nothing but trees and tall weeds. For the Orr children and their playmates, the lot was an urban woods.

Tom retired in 1990. He taught school for 30 years at Westmore Oaks in West Sacramento. He always had a grand piano in his classroom. Soki taught Spanish and English as a second language at Hiram Johnson High School. As a kid, Tom taught himself to play the church organ. For 20 years, he played at St. Mary's Catholic Church on 58th Street. Since 1986, he has been the organist at First United Methodist.

He likes to practice in the early morning. No one bothers him that way. He can make all the mistakes he wants and receive divine forgiveness. "I want the music on Sunday to be as good as I can make it," says Orr. "I think the music enhances the liturgy."

Tom Orr, the afternoon light draining, is back in the church sanctuary now. It's a wondrous space, with thick columns, massive wood trusses, huge chandeliers. The stained glass windows emit a milky glow.

Orr takes off his athletic shoes. He slips on a pair of black leather loafers. He graces the keyboards. And begins to play. Finished, he stands up and looks out at the reverberating space in amazement. "I feel a real reverence here," he says, quite unnecessarily.

Conference News Briefs

Kerr-Carpenter to leave Camping and Youth post

As Conference Youth and Camping Director, The Rev. Colin Kerr-Carpenter has been advocating for the full participation of young people in the life of the church for 10 years. He says he is ready to make some changes. Rev. Kerr-Carpenter has announced he will be leaving his position, to “follow some new directions in my career.” He shared with the cabinet that he had been considering his decision for some months. He will be leaving his position by mid-summer. Director of Connectional Ministries Linda Wiberg says the process to find Kerr-Carpenter’s successor is underway.

UMW resurrection retreat

The United Methodist Women of the California-Nevada Conference will be holding a Conference-wide retreat, called “Resurrection Women, A Women’s Retreat Event” April 20-22. It is for women of all ages and will be held in Santa Nella, at the Ramada Inn. Contact Kay Walker with any questions: kwalker@callatg.com.

A weekend of worship, singing, individual meditation, guided group reflection times, and praying will provide those attending with spiritual renewal and an enriched sense of purpose. There will be crafts, fellowship, sharing, laughter, and the opportunity to “take a dip!”

Sacred memoir writing

Telling Our Stories is the subject of a May conference being conducted in the Santa Cruz Mountains by Boulder Creek UMC lay minister Cathy Warner. The day long Holy Ink Writing Workshop on Saturday, May 12 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) will focus on “Wisdom of Memoir,” and will explore writing your life’s sacred texts in a safe and supportive environment. Advanced Lay Speaking credit is available on request. A \$25 registration fee includes Continental breakfast, beverages, snacks and materials. Registration Deadline: May 7, 2006.

To pre-register or for more info, email: cathy_warner@bcumc.com. Address and directions will be sent upon registration.

Shook offers workshop on the “Big Island”

Cal-Nevada clergywoman Judy Shook is now based in Hawaii. This summer, she and fellow International Interplay leader Masankho Banda will offer a “Sacred Summer Retreat” September 4-9 at the Kalani Oceanside Retreat Center and in Kona, on the “Big Island.” She promises an enchanting, transformational and restful time on the “Healing Island.”

The \$999 fee includes food, accommodation and InterPlay workshop. Save \$200 if paid by May 30, or \$100 if paid by June 15. Shook is a graduate of Matthew Fox’s Institute of Creation Spirituality. Find out more about her ministry at <http://www.interplayhawaii.org>. For more information about the workshop call Judy Shook at (808) 328-2260.

Week of the Young Child is April 22-28

Week of the Young Child (WOYC) is a great opportunity to recognize the teachers and programs that teach and care for young children, and to focus public attention on the needs of young children in your community. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has resources available to help you promote your WOYC events and the theme, “Building Better Futures for All Children.” Visit NAEYC’s website at <http://www.naeyc.org/about/woyc> for a list of suggested activities and other information to plan and publicize your WOYC events.

In May: “Call Sunday” Opportunity

We are God’s! We are called! The Lord God proclaimed, “I have called you by name, you are mine!” (Isaiah 43:1)

May every congregation in the California-Nevada Conference dedicate one Sunday during the month of May to focus on God’s calling to each and every person. God’s “call” may be to serve on the stewardship committee. It may be to be a Sunday School teacher. It may be to sing in the choir or to volunteer to serve lunch to the homeless. God’s call may be to become a lay or ordained minister.

Perhaps in your congregation “Call Sunday” might include: your pastor sharing his or her personal story of “call”; lay persons sharing their stories of “call”; your congregation praying that God’s call be made known to all.

Seven young adults from the California-Nevada Conference are responding to God’s call. They attended the United Methodist Exploration in November 2006 in Jacksonville, Florida.

These young adults, led by Rev. Carolyn Talmadge, along with about 600 other young adults from across the denomination joined together in Exploration to learn more about ministry and were given support in discerning God’s call on their lives.

(FYI – Information about God’s Call for youth, young adults and others involved in the ministry discernment process is centralized in this UMC website: www.explorecalling.org)

Global Days for Darfur, April 22-29

As a part of *Genocide No More – Save Darfur of Redding*, Redding: First UMC is planning a series of events to mark Global Days for Darfur.

An Earth Day / Save Darfur Family Day will be held Sunday, April 22 at noon. There will be informational booths, intergenerational games, a free lunch, and a “No Talent, Talent Show.”

Cakes honoring the adoption of Camp Kounoungo, a refugee camp near the town of Gereda in Eastern Chad, will also be provided.

On Friday, April 27, an Interfaith Prayer Vigil, led by pastor Marty Murdock, will be held at 7 p.m. on the Sundial Bridge in Turtle Bay Park.

At 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 28, a Darfur Film Festival will be held in the sanctuary, with readings by high school and college students and music by member Greg Lawson and other groups from the church.

On Sunday, April 29 a chartered bus heads to San Francisco for a 4 p.m. rally and concert at Civic Center Plaza.

See SaveDarfur.org or contact Marv Steinberg at (530) 229-3661 for more info.

A Missionary's Notebook

Rev. Linda Kelly

Linda Kelly directs the Side-by-Side Spiritual Companions program as Conference Missionary to Loaves & Fishes. Her work is supported in part through Conference Board of Missions and donations (Advance Special #811). Phone: (916) 443-4362; revlinda@sbcglobal.net.

A resurrection story

"These have been the best ten months of my life." Shaun made this statement one morning in our prayer circle.

Ten months earlier he was released from Sacramento County Jail with nothing but a felony possession record and the clothes he wore. Heroin addiction had taken him to terrifying places:

homelessness, selling drugs, hiding from police, watching in a panic when his fellow users overdosed; almost dying himself, while his three-year-old watched. His addiction, cunning and baffling, turned him into another person. Once a sheriff's chaplain and ordained minister, he lost his morals, his integrity, his God, and put himself and his family at risk. His wife and children would have nothing to do with him.

Later I asked Shaun exactly what he meant about the past ten months being the best. He replied, "I have the freedom of choice. Once I put in (*meaning drugs into the body/needle in the arm*), I lose. It's a reminder that all I have today is contingent on maintaining a fit spiritual condition. It's the gift of today."

Since 1999, Shaun has been in and out of jail due to drug-related offenses, including felonies. He's been in and out of recovery programs. When he first came to Loaves & Fishes a few years ago and heard about the

Side-By-Side morning prayer circle, he began to make it a daily affair. He said, "I drew a lot of my strength there in early recovery. Prayer . . . knowing there was a place I could come and talk and they would listen to

me. A place that was safe. I felt safe there; I could be myself. It wasn't me comparing myself to others; it was just me and God."

"The ten months has not all been trouble-free. It's been a spiritual journey. I was able to find myself and how I fit in and how I relate to God. The prayer group was a place I could give and receive."



Shaun grew up with a father who belittled him, called him a "moron," a "jerk," and beat him frequently, once breaking Shaun's nose. Yet his father could also be very tender and loving, inviting his children into his lap for goodnight kisses. They loved their dad, and were afraid of him.

Shaun started drinking 30 years ago at age 14. He stole his father's wine and beer. At 16, Shaun's parents divorced. He was filled with rage. The split was very traumatic. Shaun's dad took the youngest child and left, with very little contact since. Shaun felt abandoned. He took his anger out on his mother and brothers. His violent behavior led to his committal in the state mental hospital at age 16. When he was released at 17 his mother told him he could not live at home. He joined the Army, which gave him "a license to drink." He progressed to hard liquor. Shaun says that he drank to try to fill a void within, a hole, **continued on page 12**

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It's time for Charles Wesley to come out of the closet



Photo courtesy of Sacramento Bee and Kevin German

**Editor's
Desk**
Chuck Myer

No, not that closet.

My closet. Where the Charles Wesley costume has been gathering a bit of dust.

A few years back, I was asked to play Charles Wesley in a little drama for a stewardship program at Centennial UMC in Sacramento. That production was facilitated by now-retired pastor Allen Bryan. I performed in a "trio" with Tom Manning as John Wesley and Mary Castro as Susannah Wesley. (Tom may have

become the first actor to have his ex-wife be cast as his character's mother. But I digress.)

We created the script by sewing together various snippets of Wesleyan lore with famous Wesley quotes and anecdotes from various sources. Having already done some research and memorization, I modified my part into a little one-person portrayal of this great composer who shares my "Christian name." It was just long enough to be used as a sermon substitute, and I did it for my church and for several other churches in the area.

There is a lot of demand for actors who play John Wesley, and a few good actors who do it convincingly. The best I ever saw was an actor named Roger Nelson, who made a living doing John Wesley portrayals.

But United Methodists have a whole lot of preconcep-

tions about John Wesley. That makes it quite challenging for an actor. So I have resisted portraying J.W. for many of the same reasons as I have, over the years, resisted playing Santa Claus and Jesus Christ. (Luckily, I'm now too old to play the latter, while looking increasingly like the former.)

Oops, I digressed again. The point is, Charles Wesley is often overlooked in the history of Methodism, overshadowed by his big brother. But I have always maintained that Charles' prolific musical output puts him in the Hall of Fame not only as a composer but also as a theologian in his own right. And Charles' big faith conversion actually happened on May 21, 1738 – three days *before* his big brother's heart was "strangely warmed."

This year marks the 300th anniversary of Charles Wesley's birth. So I wasn't too surprised when I was asked to reprise the role. The request came from the Western Jurisdiction Archives and History Commission, which is holding its annual meeting at our Conference Center in West Sacramento April 26-29.

So I have promised to dust off the costume and bring Charles to the conference kickoff (7:30 p.m. on April 26), to try to once more illuminate the triumphant music and Christian spirit that Charles Wesley brought to this world three centuries ago.

For more info on the Archives and History conference and events, contact registrar and oral history workshop leader Joanne Iritani at (916) 488-8821.

Hymnfest, exhibit honor Charles Wesley By Josh Boatwright, Gannett

Three hundred years after the birth of Methodist co-founder and hymn writer Charles Wesley, his words endure. "Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?"

A group of more than 80 people from among Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist denominations gathered in February at Lake Junaluska to sing in honor of one of the church's most prolific songwriters.

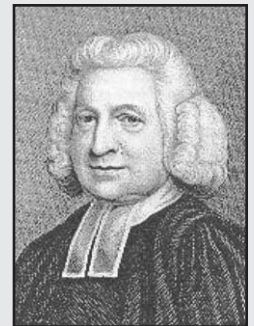
The Charles Wesley hymnfest inaugurated a yearlong celebration of the writer's 300th birthday in the Methodist denomination, which will include the opening of an exhibit with original 18th century hymnals and other artifacts.

"How does one thank God for the greatest poet of the Christian faith in writing over 8,000 hymns related to every experience of human life? Is it not done by singing his hymns to one another from the depths of our hearts?" said Rev. Ken Lile, a retired Methodist minister and educator, reading a statement at the beginning of the vespers service.

Born Dec. 18, 1707, in England, Charles Wesley was the 18th of 19 children, Lile said. With his brother, John Wesley, he was part of a spiritual awakening in England and later the United States that led to the founding of the Methodist denomination.

While John Wesley explained Christian theology through written volumes, Charles captured the essence of faith and human life in song, Lile said. His hymns remain popular today and include, "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing," "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

To offer people a closer look at the history surrounding Charles Wesley, the World Methodist Museum at Junaluska Assembly has opened an exhibit that will remain on display throughout the year. Original hymnals penned by Wesley will be featured in the exhibit. This collection of artifacts is unparalleled in the United States, according to museum curator Lavere Webster, a former Methodist minister.



Charles Wesley

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Books, Books, Books

We have recently cataloged a number of interesting books acquired through our denominational sources or through donations from friends. In this news update some of these books will be briefly featured. After the video/DVD preview on March 22nd, we will be featuring newly purchased videos and DVDs.

For Older Elementary Children

Abraham and Ibrahim (RBT-23) is a curriculum for older elementary children which presents stories from the Bible and Qur'an side-by-side to invite dialogue and discussion into the faiths of Christianity and Islam. The book is divided into eight units with a study guide for each unit.

For Adults

In **Walking the Bible: A Journey by Land Through the Five Books of Moses (ABB-5)** Bruce Feiler describes his epic odyssey – by foot, jeep, rowboat, and camel – through the lands of some of the greatest stories ever told. The **San Francisco Chronicle** described his profound accomplishment as “an intellectual and spiritual crusade to find common bond with the lands of his forebears.”

For Youth and Adults

In his book, **Practicing Discernment with Youth, (ABT-8)**, David F. White calls for congregations to engage their own young people in practices of discernment that involve the gifts and problems of their unique context, bringing their lives more fully into partnership with God's work in their particular place.

Choosing Peace Through Daily Practices (ABW-36) is a compilation of essays written by teachers from The Claremont School of Theology, edited by Elaine Ott Marshall. The teachers argue that we live out this calling by practicing peace in and through our daily devotions, work, and interactions with others.

A Missionary's Notebook

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an emptiness that liquor relieved temporarily.

After leaving the military Shaun married and had two children. The marriage ended in divorce. Shaun married again and has three children in the Sacramento area.

A car accident and surgeries brought narcotics into Shaun's life. He abused prescription drugs and turned to heroin in 2001.

Finally, in 2003, Shaun was diagnosed with mental health issues. He is bi-

polar, has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Shaun said, “It was a relief to get a diagnosis. For years I have known there was something wrong with me. Now I can do something about it.” It has not been easy.

Shaun is a gentle man of deep faith, thoughtful prayers, and great compassion. He is a caring and concerned father, and a gifted, natural leader. He ably facilitates the Side-By-Side prayer group every Friday and assists on other days. Every

day he works very hard on his recovery and relationship with God. He now lives in a small unfurnished apartment and has regained the trust of his wife. He is reconciled with his children, who stay with him regularly. Shaun finds new truths about God through a congregation he cherishes.

On April 8, Easter Sunday, Shaun will be clean and sober for one whole year. A true Easter miracle.

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