



# Connection

California-Nevada Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

## Help or hindrance? Our new Apportionment formula

By Betsy Schwarzentraub

Since voting in the new Apportionment formula at Annual Conference Session (ACS) last June, 36 churches have a smaller Apportionment for 2007 than they did in 2005, but many more—most of them smaller churches—saw a big jump in their Apportionment goal.

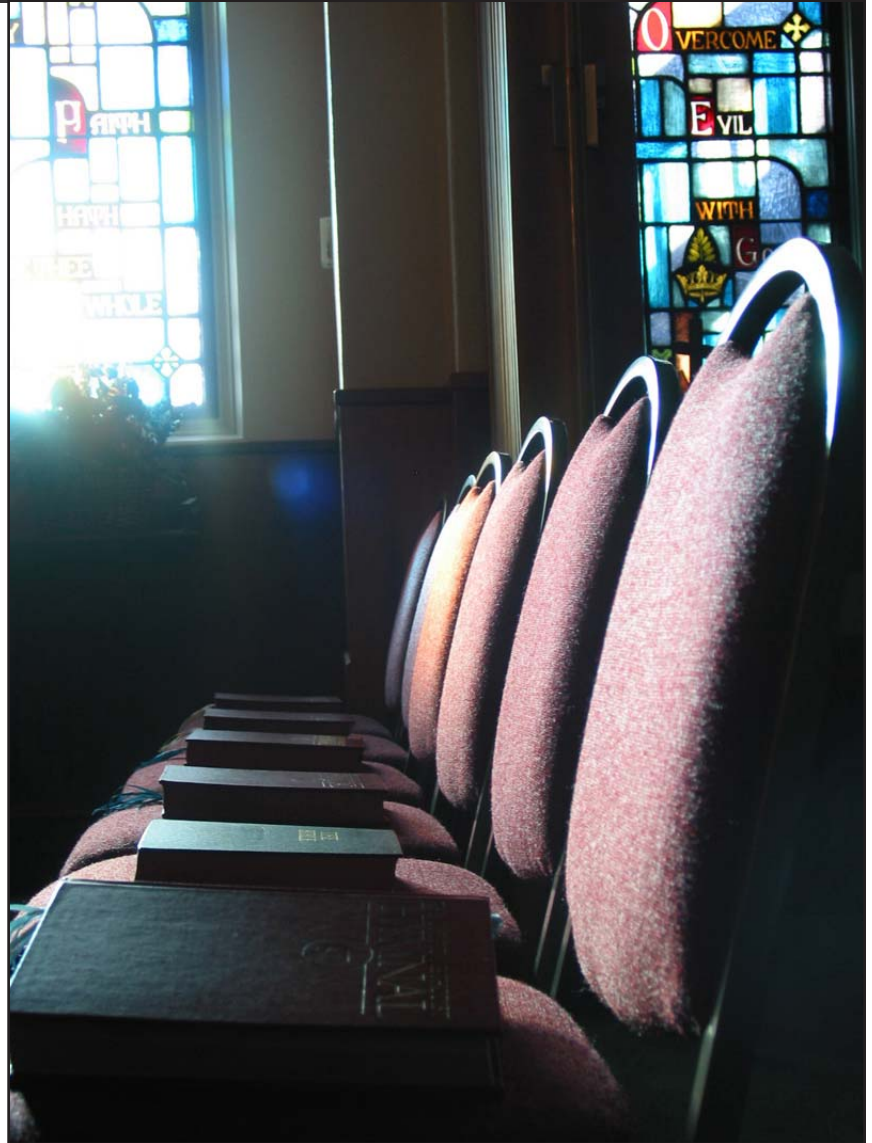
So what is the new formula for determining a local church's Apportionment? It is A divided by B, times C. A is your specific congregation's Net Total Paid from the last full year for which we have numbers (i.e., 2005 to set the 2007 budget). B is the combined Net Total Paid for all our Conference churches. And C is the total Conference budget we vote each year at ACS.

Why change the formula? Last March, members of the Board of Ordained Ministry, Board of Pensions, Commission on Finance and Administration and Ministry Staff discussed a new formula. The group wanted to:

- Provide a formula that is simpler than the old one and easy to understand;
- Encourage an attitude shift toward paying full Apportionments; and
- Help members of ACS to see the connection between their votes on the Conference budget and their local church Apportionments.

Under the old formula, "there was a perception out there that the system was too complex and not balanced enough," says Russ Walker, a member of the CFA Income Committee, which proposed this new formula. "Some churches were probably getting hit a little too hard, unfairly in the process," says Russ. "But I think more to the point of the whole process, it was concern about a large number (of churches) not

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Churches with dwindling memberships face uphill battle to pay increased Apportionments. Photo by Jeneane Jones.

### Also Inside

- Bishop Shamana meets Nelson Mandela
- Church court rulings
- Outward Bound in the Bay View District
- A potluck every day
- Christmas colors: red, green – and blue

# Nzamuranza

## DEAR SISTERS AND BROTHERS IN CHRIST:

Hope was in the air as we visited churches, clinics, worshipped, and traveled together in Mozambique, Africa, at the Council of Bishops meeting November 1-6. Bishop João Somane Machado greeted us warmly when we arrived at our headquarters in Maputo by telling us, “*When you are in Mozambique, you are an African. Welcome to Africa. Welcome home.*” In this, the first meeting of our global body outside United States territory, our hearts were warmed by the gracious hospitality of the African churches.



**Bishop Beverly J. Shamana with former South African President Nelson Mandela and his wife, Gracia Machel, in Mozambique.**

the US can learn about evangelism and vitality that comes from the ministry of the African church.

Mozambique President Armando Emilio Guebuza met twice with us in a small delegation and addressed us at the opening worship at a government center where he praised the church and asked us to start a new university in his country.

AME Bishop Sarah Davis, assigned to southern Africa, was also welcomed to our meeting. I encourage our conference to continue the support of our partnership with the West Angola Annual Conference as we share mutual learning together. Perhaps you will consider joining the next team that will travel there in March 2007.

What an added joy it was to share my surprise birthday on the cultural night with sisters and brothers in Christ, who prepared a cake filled with candles, wrapped me in their clothing and sang happy birthday in Portuguese—all planned with the happy conspiracy of my husband, Walter, who worked behind the scenes with Bishops’ spouses, Mrs. Machado, Mrs. DeCarvalho, and Mrs. Domingos. I became a year older in The Motherland where I had come home.

As we look with hope to the celebration of Christ’s birth, may we embrace the spirit of our partnership with God’s beloved disciples in Africa who sing this song with the vitality of faith that is alive and full of passion: *Nzamuranza, nzamuranza, Anga kona waku fa nana naye.*

*I worship Christ, I worship Christ. There will never be another like Jesus.*

I join your Ministry staff with prayers for global peace and joy at this Christmas season.

## YOURS IN CHRIST,

*Beverly J. Shamana*

*James Lockwood-Stewart*

*Ted Virts*

*Vickie Armour Healy*

*Jane E. Schlager*

*Jerry Smith*

*Nymphas Edwards*

*Beneni Silva-Metto*

*Linda Wiberg*

*Debbi Grundman*

*Diane Knudsen*

*Jeneane Jones*

*Colin Kerr-Carpenter*

*Betsy Schwarzentraub*

*Mark Parsons*

*Grady Knowles*



## Walking in the Spirit

Bishop Beverly J. Shamana

## Bishop’s Itinerary

Delta District Clergy Gathering  
November 28

Clergy & Congregational Development Summit,  
Conference Center  
November 29 – 30

Fresno District Committee on Superintendency  
December 1

Lindsay UMC  
December 3

Ministry Staff  
December 5

Cabinet  
December 6-8

Council on Finance & Administration  
December 9

San Francisco, Hamilton UMC  
December 16

## Bishops meet outside U.S., greet Mozambican president

MAPUTO, Mozambique (UMNS) – When the United Methodist Council of Bishops opened its fall meeting Nov. 1 with a welcome service in the city of Maputo, the event marked the first time the council has met as a body outside the United States.

Nearly 70 episcopal leaders of the United Methodist Church came to this sub-Saharan country to “demonstrate to the United Methodist Church and to all the world that we are a global church,” said Bishop Janice R. Huie, president of the council. “We embody a global reality by being here.”

Africa, she said, is a place where the church is “exploding.” She noted that it “is a place where we have a unique opportunity to participate in kingdom-building” and to further the denomination’s more than 116-year relationship with Mozambique.

Unlike some African countries where peace is on a slippery slope, Huie said, “Mozambique is at peace. This country has been at peace for a good long time, and we want to nurture it, support it and make it a continuing reality.”

The country has been at peace since 1992, following a United Nations-negotiated peace agreement that ended a civil war. The denomination considers Mozambique a significant area for mission through church growth and redevelopment, education, landmine clearance, water resource development and HIV/AIDS programs.

Bishop João Somane Machado, the country’s United Methodist leader, found it difficult to express his feelings when the first members of the council began arriving Oct. 28 for a series of meetings prior the opening welcoming service Nov. 1.

“I was surprised when they chose to come to Mozambique and decided to go outside the U.S for a meeting,” he said. “It was just unbelievable. I feel so happy that they are in my country. To come here puts the United Methodist

Church in Mozambique at a higher level of recognition and respect,” Machado said. “The government will see that this church is a worldwide church.”

The United Methodist Church in Mozambique has 160,000 members in more than 170 congregations across two annual conferences. It has 132 ordained pastors, 32 deacons and 278 evangelists.

The bishops met in Mozambique through Nov. 6. With offices in Washington, the council comprises 69 active bishops and 100 retired bishops. They are the clergy leaders of the 10 million-member church in the United States, Africa, Europe and Asia.

Accompanying the bishops are spouses and other family members, executives of church wide boards and agencies, and members of mission-related committees and groups that are also meeting. “We feel humble, and we are trying to make everyone feel that it is safe here, that they are at home and they are with brothers and sisters,” Machado said.

### Visit with the president

On Oct. 31, Huie and Machado were part of an episcopal delegation that visited the president of Mozambique, Armando Emilio Guebuza, who has been in office since December 2004.

Calling the visit a privilege, Huie described the president as “a dedicated Christian and a man who is trying to lead his country in ways of peace and self-sufficiency.” The council’s visit was “a way to thank him for the way he has worked with the United Methodist



**Bishop Janice Huie escorts Nelson Mandela and his wife, Gracia Machel, as Bishop João Somane Machado leads the way.**

Church,” including his support of the Chicupe Rural Hospital and other church ministries and projects, she said. “In the same way, we are trying to be supportive of the self-development of the people of Mozambique.”

Both Huie and Machado relayed the president’s interest in the church’s work with AIDS and malaria and his desire to know why the episcopal leaders of the United Methodist Church were in Mozambique. “We shared our historic ties to the country,” Huie said.

According to Machado, the delegation was “warmly welcomed,” and when the president learned the council’s meeting in Mozambique was the first one outside the United States, “he called it a great honor to receive for the first time the United Methodist Church, which is more than 116 years in Mozambique.”

The president, he said, expressed openness to working with the church and said eliminating poverty is one of his top priorities. Machado added that the president’s priorities surrounding poverty, health care and education dovetail with those of the United Methodist Church. “The president noted that they need help and support, even moral and spiritual support. It was a wonderful meeting.”

## Consultation to study impact of 2 church court rulings

By Vicki Brown

United Methodist News Service



(UMNS) — A United Methodist agency is sponsoring a February consultation to study rulings by the denomination's highest court in the case of a pastor who blocked a homosexual man from church membership.

The United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry will gather a diverse group of bishops, seminary professors and pastors to probe the implications of Judicial Council decisions that upheld the right of the Rev. Ed Johnson, pastor of South Hill (Va.) United Methodist Church, to deny membership to a practicing gay man.

The Rev. Jerome King Del Pino, top staff executive of the Nashville agency, said the heated debate across the denomination in the wake of the council's decisions highlights the need for focused, careful and deep-running dialogue about the theological, ecclesial and pastoral implications of the council's action.

"What is needed now is less emotional heat and more theological light," Del Pino said. Johnson was placed on involuntary leave in 2005 by his clergy peers in the Virginia Annual (regional) Conference after he blocked a practicing gay man from taking membership vows in the church. Bishop Charlene P. Kammerer upheld the action, but at the Judicial Council's fall meeting last year, the court found in favor of Johnson and reinstated him.

In Decision 1031, the Judicial Council ruled that Johnson's due process rights were violated when the conference transformed an administrative complaint against him into a judicial complaint. And in Decision 1032, the council ruled that the pastor in charge of a local church has the authority to determine a person's readiness for membership. The council rejected appeals to reconsider those decisions.

Hendrik Pieterse, director of scholarly research and book editor, is organizing the Feb. 15-16 consultation, to be held at the Learning Center at the United Methodist Board of Discipleship in Nashville. Former Cal-Nevada Bishop Melvin G. Talbert and Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker of the Florida Annual Conference have agreed to take part in the discussion.

Other participants will include scholars William Abraham, Perkins School of Theology, Dallas; Leicester Longden, University of Dubuque (Iowa) Theological Seminary; Rex D. Matthews, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta; and Elaine Robinson, Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth.

The working group will also include Cheryl Jefferson

Bell, a district superintendent from the Kansas West Annual (regional) Conference, as well as pastors Sandra Cabrera of Dallas, Mark Horst of Stillwater, Minn., Martin D. McLee of Boston, and Melissa Meyers of Sheridan, Ill. In addition, several staff members of the Board of Higher Education and Ministry will be part of the working group.

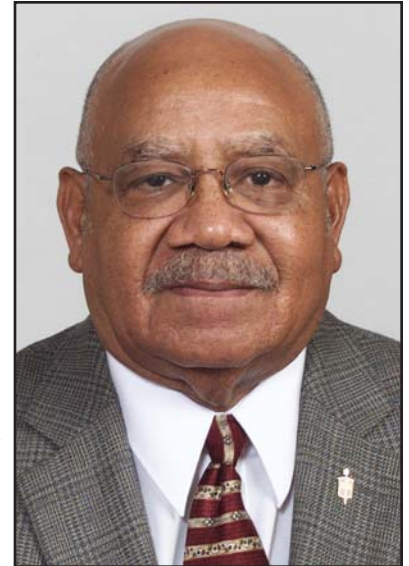
"The issue of homosexuality is important in its own right and merits ongoing, thoughtful analysis, but this consultation is not a referendum on homosexuality," Pieterse said.

"Instead, our aim is to offer a space for careful reflection on a set of theological issues raised by the council's decision that can have far-reaching implications for how United Methodists understand the meaning of membership, the nature of the church and the integrity of the church's appointed leadership."

"Our hope in gathering a theologically diverse group of church leaders in Nashville next February is not only for much-needed theological clarity on the issues but also for a shared theological framework that can guide United Methodists across the globe as they engage these issues in their places of ministry," Pieterse said.

After the group considers papers dealing with the theological implications of the rulings, the members will attempt to craft a statement outlining the results of their deliberation. The statement may include points of disagreement or agreement, agreed-upon insights or conclusions, as well as any desire for further dialogue.

"Regardless of which side of the debate one takes, it is clear that the Judicial Council's actions will have fundamental implications for the nature and practice of leadership in the United Methodist Church in the future," Del Pino said. "As the agency overseeing the church's licensed and ordained leadership, (the board) is pleased to offer a hospitable space in which these issues can be debated in the best spirit of Methodist conferencing."



Former Cal-Nev Bishop Melvin G. Talbert will participate.

# Researchers complete Phase 1, 'State of Church' report

By Fran Coode Walsh

(UMNS)

"What does it mean to be United Methodist?"

Researchers have asked 300 United Methodist members, lay leaders and pastors how they define the denomination, and their answers are compiled in the qualitative phase of the first "State of the Church" report.

Compiled by the Martec Group and commissioned by the Connectional Table, the research combines information gathered in face-to-face conversations and in-depth phone interviews. The Connectional Table, which met Oct. 22-24, is a 60-member group that coordinates the mission, ministries and resources of the denomination.

The Martec Group polled individuals in the United States, Europe, Africa and the Philippines. The goals of the process were to define current realities within the workings of the church; to honor the heritage of the church; and to examine areas for growth.

Connectional Table member Twila Glenn said this is the first time the denomination has attempted to produce a comprehensive overview of the life of the church. The information that surfaced in the early conversations was used to construct an online survey, which was completed by 2,600 people.

United Methodist Meera Buck, Martec's principal researcher for the project, organized the findings into six "frames":

**Personal identity:** Many respondents consider the church as family, and the main reason they belong is they believe in its values. Many are proud of the church's focus and accomplishment.

**Connection:** The church plays an important role in many respondents' lives and provides a sense of belonging. All those polled agreed it is important to make the church relevant to young people, and many

said young people relate better to young pastors. It was noted that in the Philippines and Africa, churches have a much more active youth base.

**Balance:** Finding a balance between traditional and more contemporary worship styles and music is difficult. Churches in the Philippines and Africa have greater success changing traditional music and worship to livelier forms.

**Resources:** Budgetary concerns are paramount for leaders. There is a dependency on volunteers and a need to involve more young people in volunteer work.

**System:** Most respondents said the church was open and welcoming of people with diverse ideas. There were a variety of opinions about the U.S. church's attitude about homosexuality, but the issue was irrelevant to respondents in other countries.

**Future:** There are different views on how the church should change, but most agree it needs to be more accommodating to young people. There was some resistance to change among longtime members.

These findings constitute the qualitative phase of the report. Glenn noted that the task force will also gather research about the church from other sources, such as the Duke Pulpit and Pew Study, and material annual conferences can provide.

"The next step is to analyze the quantitative results and put those together with the other kinds of research from other sources. We will begin to fashion those into a report ... in draft form that attempts to say, 'this is not only who we are, but what we are.' And what that means for where we're going ... and for the United Methodist Church and its role in the body of Christ in the world."

The completed State of the Church report is expected to be ready in time for the next meeting of the Connectional Table in May.

## 2007 Conference camps scheduled

Conference Youth and Camping coordinator Colin Kerr-Carpenter has announced the tentative dates for the 2007 camping program options for Lodestar and Monte Toyon Campgrounds:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Camp</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Director</i>
June 22-25, 2007	Camp Explore	Lodestar	Floyd Quenzer
July 15-21, 2007	Super Camp	Lodestar	Don Lee
July 22-28, 2007	Super Kid Camp	Lodestar	Sara Chisum
July 29-Aug. 4, 2007	Lodestar Senior High Camp	Lodestar	M. Stephenson
Aug. 24-26, 2007	Hispanic Family Camp	Lodestar	To be named
July 15-20, 2007	Toyon Kids Camp	Monte Toyon	To be named
July 22-27, 2007	Camp Quest	Monte Toyon	To be named

### *Other Youth and Children Camps*

June 24-29, 2007	Alive Now	To be determined	Kris Marshall
August 5-11, 2007	Senior High Backpack Camp	To be determined	To be named

For more information, go to [www.cnumccamp.org](http://www.cnumccamp.org), or contact Colin Kerr-Carpenter, Conference Coordinator of Youth and Camping Ministries ([colinkc@calnevumc.org](mailto:colinkc@calnevumc.org)).

# “Outward Bound” travels to Bay View District

By **Jeneane Jones**

*Director of Communications*

The full cabinet and program staff, led by Bishop Shamana, recently toured some of the 59 United Methodist Churches in the Bay View district, completing the first cycle of Outward Bound expeditions that were begun four years ago by the Bishop.



**The Rev. Lin Goodyear (hands held high) explains the layout of the entryway to the Sunday school area is designed to be welcoming to children.**

The tour, Oct 24-26, gave District Superintendents, conference staff and the Bishop an opportunity to hear churches talk about the challenges they face and the successes they are celebrating. It was also an opportunity to visualize first hand the statement “Diverse Cultures – Diverse Geography – One in Christ” that is part of the Conference theme.

At Antioch UMC on the Rock, the Rev. Lin Goodyear spoke proudly of the youth ministry that “focuses on the needs of kids no matter whether you come to our church or not.” More than half of the youth who attend the weekly youth meetings come from other churches in the area, a concept that has helped swell the ranks of their youth ministry to more than 40 teens. “We know we are a bedroom community,” says Pastor Goodyear.

“With lengthy daily commutes we know the people here are experiencing a poverty of time.” Goodyear says that reality surfaced while leading the church through a Church Planning Inventory. Wanting to remain relevant to the current needs of the community was a priority. “We are making plans to take the church to the people—developing regional ministry.” Part of those plans include exploring the potential for starting a Pakistani worship service, and turning a hillside behind the church into an outdoor amphitheater that will be open to groups from around the community.

Some 15 miles south, on the old Byron Highway, the next stop was Byron UMC where the Outward Bound-ers heard how two UMCs have used the needs of the community around them to provide purpose and witness to their

ministry.

The Rev. Alexis Easton shared, “Brentwood has grown 300% in 9 years, becoming ethnically diverse as

well as economically and socially diverse. As our community is changing we need to find ways to build bridges.” Easton says one way is to nurture intergenerational relationships and to support the education of children and youth. “We have a monthly program where seniors speak with children, sharing their faith history. We’ve learned that kids have lots of questions. It gives them a way to ask questions they might not raise otherwise.

Byron UMC, pastored by Dan Sturdivant, is home to a unique ministry that reaches out to cancer patients. Kaleidoscope was started by Byron member Jan Page. Kaleidoscope is part support group, led by the Rev. Sturdivant, and part outreach. A small cottage on the campus of Byron UMC is designed to make “Bags of Hope”—individually created care packages. The walls are lined with bags in various stages of completion, ribbons, bows and items like plush toys, candles, note paper, handmade items, all ready to find a new home with someone dealing with cancer. “When I got cancer 18 years ago,” says Page, “I was too sick to go out. Knowing someone cares and is willing to connect with you during that time is so important.” Since its beginning at Byron UMC in 2003, Kaleidoscope has grown to include more than 50 members who help provide Bags of Hope to 360 recipients. The organization has received numerous requests for information on how to replicate its program.

Kaleidoscope can be reached at the Byron UMC, 14671 Byron Highway, P.O. Box 175, Byron, CA 94514; by phone at (925) 634-1411; or by e-mail at [hopeandconnection@msn.com](mailto:hopeandconnection@msn.com).

The Bay View journey included stops at Asbury UMC in Livermore, where the church has formed a partnership with the Tri Valley Pantry Association to distribute more than 2,000 meals a week to families living in poverty; the Walnut Avenue UMC, where a church tour included outdoor community gardens and labyrinth that ties the church to the community; and Tice Valley UMC, a church without walls, where worship takes place every



**Bishop Shamana listens as Jan Page explains how the Byron Church started Kaleidoscope ministry.**

# Ministry without walls

By Flo Myer

*Tice Valley United Methodist Church*

After walking the labyrinth during their visit to Walnut Avenue UMC in Walnut Creek on Oct. 25, Bishop Beverly Shamana, seven District Superintendents and assorted Ministry Staff—a group of seventeen under the guidance of Jim Lockwood-Stewart, Bay View District Superintendent—arrived in Rossmoor, a retirement community in beautiful Tice Valley, a 2,000-acre section of Walnut Creek. In this last segment of “Outward Bound” experiences initiated by Bishop Shamana six years ago to deepen awareness and engage ministry in all of the districts, they were welcomed by Pastor Donna Morrow DeCamp and members of Tice Valley UMC, lightly referred to as “a ministry without walls” because it functions handsomely despite the lack of an actual church building to call its own.

Learning the history and current situation of Tice Valley UMC from retired former pastor Myron Herrell and envisioning the virtual Sunday service setting within the enveloping walls, the group then proceeded to the downtown Walnut Creek UMC for a nourishing lunch before returning to home base(s).

The TVUMC “walls” surround a very large newly refurbished room which serves as a clubhouse for myriad community functions during the week and then as early-arriving worshippers smoothly install “stained glass window” curtains, banners, hymnal carts, piano, organ, and choir risers it becomes a haven for Sunday services as well as many memorial services.

Since the very first worship service, October 1964 in that same sanctuary, TVUMC activities have been held in various clubhouses and meeting rooms on the Rossmoor “campus,” resulting from a decision reached some thirty years ago to divert the funds that had been collected to build its own church into an interest-bearing fund that could nourish missionary giving while providing a solid financial foundation for a membership less spry than in pre-retirement days, an important consideration in maintaining a church building. As the largest Protestant congregation in Rossmoor and a member of the Rossmoor and Contra Costa County Interfaith Councils, TVUMC participates in many community activities, such as the Brotherhood-Sisterhood Dinner and the annual fall Food Drive for the benefit of the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano counties, followed by the Harvest Festival, a nondenominational community service of thanksgiving.

United Methodist Women meet regularly to enjoy food and feminine fellowship as well as inspiring and informative programs. Tice Valley Methodist Men meet for breakfast once a month, entertaining each other with a recounting of various aspects of past lives. Rossmoor buses provide door-to-door transportation to and from Sunday services for those who no longer drive, enabling them to join the other members and constituents for an enriching sermon, followed by coffee, tea, light refreshments and fellowship. Tice Valley UMC has been described by more than one member as “the most loving, caring and supportive congregation I have ever known.”

*Blest be the Tice that binds??*

## Outward Bound

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Sunday in the clubhouse at the Rossmoor Retirement community (see related article, above).

At Walnut Creek UMC, the cabinet heard about the Bay View District’s Reconciling Ministries, and later in the evening at East Bay Formosan, members of Filipino, Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Tongan and Korean churches took part in a “Live Mic,” an opportunity for the Asian Pacific Island churches to share about the ministries in the district. Oakland Chinese UMC pastor Peter Lau and other pastors shared similar concerns for an aging population and connecting with younger members who have moved away from family and away from the tradition of attending church. Tongan pastor Maile Koloto spoke of the challenges to raise money to expand Laurel UMC. “Our church is growing and on Sunday we spill over into the Fellowship Hall,” said Pastor Koloto. The Taiwanese ministry, the youngest in the conference and the nation, struggles with maintaining its ministry. The Methodist church was introduced to Taiwan while the

country was under a dictatorship. As a result, says Pastor William Chow of Formosan UMC, the Taiwanese people are not so accepting of the United Methodist Church. “We need help reaching out to them. We need strategies and advice from our Chinese and Japanese churches on how to assist those emigrating from Taiwan.”

The Outward Bound event wrapped up on Oct 26, with visits to the Fred Finch Youth Center, Wesley Foundation in Berkeley and dinner with African American Church leaders at Easter Hill UMC.

“It has been a success,” says Bishop Shamana. “The Outward Bound experience helps us stay in touch with each other and the work we are doing. You can trust that we will continue to use Outward Bound as a way to stay connected in the years ahead.”

## Conference News Briefs

### Conference Journals mailed

The 2006 Conference journals are on their way! The publishing house (not Conference staff) has mailed them individually to churches, lay members and pastors *at library rate*, so while some of you have already received your journal, others of you may not have gotten yours.

Please wait until the first full week of December and if you still have not received your journal please contact Conference Secretary Roger Morimoto. He is also the point of contact if extra journals are needed. Roger can be reached at [rmorimoto@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rmorimoto@sbcglobal.net) or at Palo Alto, Aldersgate UMC at (650) 948-6806.

The journal erroneously names Clare Powell in the Conference office as the person to contact for missing/additional journals. There are no extra journals in the Conference office.

### New online tool to help churches develop websites

United Methodist Communications has launched a free online training course to help local churches establish an Internet presence. The on-demand and self-directed course consists of four 30-minute “non-techie” sessions, covering 25 basic how-to steps, that people can complete on their own schedule. Available to anyone who has Internet access and a computer with sound. Supporting guides and resources included.

Web Ministry 101 is designed to help churches develop websites and web ministries that are helpful and inviting, and that provide opportunities for spiritual growth. Use of the web also helps churches reach young people who spend most of their time connected to some form of electronic media.

Go to [www.web.umcom.org](http://www.web.umcom.org) to find out more and to register.

### Conference churches to gain online access via the “Dashboard”

Whether or not your church currently has a website, it will have an online presence in a few weeks, when Cal-Nevada

Conference unveils its new website. Using a tool called the Dashboard, churches will have access to information and the ability to interact with the website in a new way.

“Brick River Technologies has designed technology specifically for our churches that gives them the ability to have their own web presence for free on our website, and it gives them the ability to add information, update and correct their church information—even have their own classifieds,” says Conference Communications Director Jeneane Jones.

Brick River is an East Coast web design firm that primarily works with United Methodist Churches. The Conference Communications Office and Communications Commission have developed a relationship with Brick River to ensure that every congregation in the Conference has a web presence.

“We want to give every church in the conference its own website, and a way to access information and share information in a better way,” says Jones.

Churches will be asked to sign in on the homepage of our newly designed site. The web pages will feature: Church information, local leaders, events and jobs.

There also will be a place to update information and submit forms, an instructions page, and FAQ section with frequently asked questions.

The new conference website will provide pages for each district and will house a variety of online forms and resources. Construction of the new website is scheduled to be completed this fall.

To see some of the other United Methodist conferences that have already used Brick River for their websites, including the Alabama-West Florida conference, go to [www.brickriver.com](http://www.brickriver.com).

### Africana worship book meets long-standing need

The General Board of Discipleship has released a new worship resource called *The Africana Worship Book*.

This rich resource contains calls to worship, liturgies, prayers, litanies, offertory prayers, doxologies, choral readings, creeds, chants and benedictions. The resources are based on Year A of the

Revised Common Lectionary, yet organized by worship element for ease in use.

A 2004 consultation exploring the liturgy needs of African-American United Methodist congregations revealed that these congregations could no longer think of themselves as being solely African-American.

When African-Americans gather for worship, worshipers of African descent come from places such as the continent of Africa, the Caribbean Islands or the Americas.

Clearly there was a need for 21st century Africana liturgy that addresses the ethos, traditions, and innovations of United Methodist worshippers of African descent.

The term “Africana” embraces and affirms this rich diversity and heritage of persons attending worship each week.

Published by GBOD’s Discipleship Resources, *The Africana Worship Book* and CD-ROM were birthed as a result of this needs assessment and discernment process. The cost of the book is \$32.

Congregations may use the accompanying CD-ROM, which is included with the book, in the preparation of printed orders of worship. All the worship resources in the book are available in a cut and paste format for ease of use.

“We use a lot of the liturgies, calls to worship, and prayers of confession. It’s important for us to have this wonderful resource,” said the Rev. Gloria Roach-Thomas, pastor of Camphor UMC in Saint Paul, Minn.

“We’re the only African American UMC in the state of Minnesota. It’s a wonderful way for my congregation to connect with the greater United Methodist Africana liturgies and people. We’re not working in isolation,” she said.

For more information about *The Africana Worship Book*, visit [www.gbod.org](http://www.gbod.org), [www.africanaworship.org](http://www.africanaworship.org) or contact Safiyah Fosua at 877-899-2780, ext. 7084.

### Robes available

A male retired pastor has two clergy robes available for a younger pastor. Contact Rev. Gene Anderson at (530) 865-7961.

# Bishop Shamana to lead tour to Italy

Get your walking shoes and passports ready! Bishop Shamana is gathering friends and family to join her for “a spiritual journey of a lifetime as we experience the art and architecture inspired by the Christian faith, in Italy!”

The trip, Oct 2-11, 2007, will mark the first time that California-Nevada Conference leadership has initiated a trip such as this. Bishop Shamana calls it an “opportunity to be stirred by God’s heart of creativity as we build and deepen relationships as the Body of Christ.” District and Conference offices will have brochures and registration material.

The cost of Spirit of Italy 2007 is \$2898 and includes roundtrip airfare from San Francisco, hotel accommodations, two meals a day and ground transportation. Locations to be visited in Italy include Verona, Venice, Florence, and Assisi, home of St. Francis. The trip will be led by Educational Opportunities, a Christian tour company founded by a United Methodist pastor more than 30 years ago and widely used by annual conferences around the country.

The Spirit of Italy 2007 brochure can be downloaded from the Conference website. A special website for the trip has been set up at <http://spiritofitaly2007.org/>.

## Week of Prayer for Christianity

January 18-25 is the Week of Prayer for Christianity, a time when churches around the world are asked to celebrate their unity in Christ, “that we all may be one.”

The event, created in 1908, encourages local churches to create events which provide a prayerful way of acknowledging that God loves all of us, including those with whom we disagree, and calling us to repent of those things we do which create disunity. The Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches have prepared an excellent collection of resource materials for the week—but *the deadline for ordering the resources is Dec. 15.*

You can download some of the resources (or order what you need) by going to <http://www.geii.org>. They can be ordered in bulk in four-color versions, and some—including a worship service and daily study guide—can be downloaded without charge.

—From the Conference Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns

## Our new Apportionment formula

continued from page 1

paying their Apportionments, and trying to find ways that would change the cultural attitude about that.”

But why the “big hit” for so many smaller congregations? Our old formula had a graduated percentage of Apportionments, from 18 to 24 percent of a congregation’s Net Total Paid, says Ralph Davis, another Income Committee member. That graduated percent has now disappeared. So while some larger churches are carrying a bit less of the load (although still subsidizing pastors’ pensions for the smaller two-thirds of our churches), smaller churches across our Conference are suddenly facing bigger goals.

At the same time, Davis says, the old formula had created a total Conference goal of 20 to 30 percent above what the Conference actually expected to spend. Since we had already set our budget when we voted the new formula, we won’t see a drop down to the actual spending level in the Apportionment base until the ‘08 budget. In the meantime, the jump for small churches is even larger than it would have been.

So how are churches in our Conference managing with increased Apportionment expectations?

Fall River Mills Community UMC started planning earlier this year to do extra, creative fundraising. So on October 7, they hosted a *Lord’s Acre*. “We had food, an outdoor bazaar, a book

sale, and a good time meeting the neighborhood, which we said was part of our goal,” says Pastor Tom Brackney. “We made \$4,000,” says Tom. “The folks were very happy about that. They’d done nothing of this magnitude for a long time, and we really feel the boost. I can still feel it.”

But now Fall River Mills has a whopping 30% increase in their Apportionment goal. After the initial shock, Tom and the congregation resolved to “just do the best we can.” Tom says, “This congregation has a tradition going back for centuries of paying our full Apportionments. [District Superintendent] Ben [Silva-Netto] was very consoling. The folks aren’t really sure whether we can make it or not. But we’re going to trust in the Lord.”

A recommendation may come to ACS next year to alter or repeal the new formula. “My gut feeling is that that would be a mistake, and to do it would be highly irresponsible,” says Ralph Davis. “It’s not looking at the big picture. ... This is not the perfect Apportionment formula, but it’s the best we could come up with according to the current reality.” Only time will tell.

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**A  
Missionary's  
Notebook**

Guest Column  
by

Barbara Ernst,  
Spiritual Director

Dick Ernst,  
Retired Elder

# Side-by-Side:

## Where the Church meets the street

Last summer we joined a group of spiritual direction interns in a morning visitation at the Loaves and Fishes' Friendship Park in Sacramento. The purpose of the visit was to acquaint new spiritual directors with one aspect of life on

the margins. Our guide, the Rev. Linda Kelly, is a United Methodist pastor who serves as director of *Side-by-Side Spiritual Companions*, a ministry with homeless persons and families.

Linda has a tiny office in the center of Friendship Park where she provides a loving, listening ear always tuned in to the spiritual and personal needs of the homeless. Linda is not only a pastor but a trained Spiritual Director and supervisor. Her program reflects heartfelt passion that believes homeless individuals are real folks, needing companionship, community, and the experience that they are loved by God.

Upon entering the park we were struck by the cleanliness and orderliness of the space. People were milling around, visiting friends, and waiting patiently in line for a shower, the phone or breakfast. As we observed, it became clear that this was a meaningful community, people had connections with each other, and they felt free and comfortable in the space. This was their home, their gathering place during the day.

We learned a lot about the marginalized, but also about ourselves. How was it for us? We both felt uncomfortable in this strange new environment! We experienced being the marginalized, the ones who didn't fit in, the ones who felt unseen in this community environment. We were the homeless! These people



weren't looking at us to save them or "do" anything; our typical response to the homeless.

The impression that lingers for us is Linda's ability to walk in the shoes of those whom the church often doesn't see. The institution graciously provides food and other survival needs; Linda and her volunteers go to the next level. Her pastoral presence is undeniable in dealing with life issues such as relationships, bereavement, personal crises and trauma. As we sat in the tiny office there was a continuous knock on the door requesting her presence and/or assistance. She had all the time in the world to listen to each story as it arrived.

Programs of *Side-by-Side* include daily prayer, spiritual retreats, weekly jam sessions and memorial services for the homeless. Volunteer spiritual companions come from the community as co-workers with Linda in this compassionate ministry where the Church *truly* meets the street.

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*Chairperson, Conference Commission on Communications*

**Rev. Ardith Allread**

*Director of Communications* **Jeneane Jones**

*Editor* **Chuck Myer**

*Layout* **Cate Monaghan**

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P.O. Box 980250, West Sacramento, CA 95798-0250;

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# A potluck every day



Photo courtesy of Sacramento Bee and Kevin German

**Editor's  
Desk**  
Chuck Myer

There's a week in December during which I eat very well.

I realize that's true for a lot of people in December. Most people in the United Methodist Church (and other denominations for that matter) are no strangers to potlucks. But, for the week in question, at least, my job requires me to travel around the state attending potlucks every day!

In my capacity as Executive Officer of the Retired Clergy Association, I oversee the activities of various "cluster groups" of retired clergy in various areas around the Conference. These are generally social gatherings that help retired clergy continue to "feel the connection" with their colleagues. Some of the groups, like the Sacramento area "Is-Beens" ("named for the opposite of "Has-Beens") meet for a potluck every month. There are 63 retired clergy and surviving spouses in that area, making it the largest of the groups. Some groups, like those in the Shasta Inland area and Nevada-Sierra, meet several times a year. Other areas have just a few retired clergy scattered much farther apart, so those groups are most likely to meet just for the holiday season.

So it never fails that the second week of December books up fast in my calendar for potluck lunches each year. I also burn a lot of gas, since these gatherings have taken place from Eureka to Dinuba in past years.

Mostly the cluster groups are organized by district. But retired clergy are generally very happy to be retired, and they don't worry about district boundaries after they do (I guess they've had enough bureaucracy!). So they congregate with their nearby friends and colleagues, even if it means crossing over district lines. Somehow, we've been able to coordinate so that two districts aren't having their events on the same day. This has allowed me to attend most of them.

But once there were two lunches in the same district on the same day: the Shasta Inland group in Chico and the Coastal group in Eureka. Here's what I did: by prior arrangement, I attended the Chico luncheon, and while there called the group in Eureka. I offered grace for both meals simultaneously over a speaker phone connection. In that way, both groups felt connected over the miles.

At these events, a number of things happen (besides eating a lot of holiday dishes). Each cluster group has its own style, but basically all of them share news of those present and those not present. Each group has a newsletter

correspondent who dutifully takes down the updates (and prayer requests) and sends them in to the newsletter editor. (Rev. Bill Sanford of Atwater just stepped down from that position after those same ten years, so I have absorbed that responsibility, as well.)

Other typical activities include the singing of Christmas carols. There's always a dutiful clergy spouse who can play the piano! The Chico group put together a string quartet one year. One group spends time honing the membership roster and looking for "lost sheep" who need a follow-up phone call. Another group has read play scripts aloud (the group coordinator, Georgie Summers, is an accomplished playwright.) Some groups just break into friendly discussion groups, while one or two of the group can be seen in comfortable sofas—napping! And, you know what? That's OK.

I have been doing this "work" for over ten years now, and for many of the potluck visitations I've had company: Linda Lasell, benefits liaison for the Board of Pensions.

Unfortunately for all of us, Linda gave up her position in September after her ten-year stint in that capacity. But she still plans to attend some of this year's holiday potlucks! After the years of outstanding service she has provided to our many retirees, she surely has a lifetime invitation to attend them all in the future.

This year one of the lunches will be held in Nevada, at the home of current RCA president Nadine DeWitt. In fact, the group has had two presidents from Nevada in the past three years (John Emerson, who was recently defeated in his bid for a seat on the Nevada State Senate, served as RCA President in 04-05).

I wish I could say I had time to cook superlative dishes for all of these events, but more likely the nearby grocery deli will be getting my business when I arrive in town. One group in the Bay View District uses a different approach: they have the meal prepared. There is a delightful couple, Lee and Mary Roush, who cater special lunches at San Ramon Valley UMC in Alamo, and have for years. The kitchen facility in that church's new Wesley Hall is named for the Roushes since they have become famous as the local chefs.

But the others all rely on the tried-and-true potluck formula. And there are some great cooks out there. One RCA member, Myrtle Findley of Colfax, has even had a cookbook published.

So think of me in early December as I partake of the finest culinary treats from around the Conference. And think of all of the retired clergy who are recharging old friendships and having good old-fashioned fellowship.

Happy Holidays!

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Pat Strandburg**

1675 Winchester Blvd.  
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## New resources for Christmas

### For Children

In **Advent with St. Nicholas: Customs from Around the World (VCX-344)** Holly, a young girl, learns about Advent from a surprise visitor, St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas tells her exciting new things about the Advent wreath and calendar and how decorating the Christmas tree and sending Christmas cards can be practiced in a way that celebrates the Advent spirit of expectation and mystery. A live-action story.

In **A Fruitcake Christmas (DVX-345)** Hermie and his friends are eagerly

anticipating the crowning moment of the holiday season, the arrival of Grannypillar's scrumptious fruitcake, but the greediest cockroaches in the garden steal the fruitcake. Hailey and Bailey, through an act of unheard-of generosity, remind the garden creatures that the celebration of Christmas is not about fruitcake, but about God's gift to us.

### For Youth and Adults

**The Art and Spirit of the Crèche (DVX-512)** unites theologians and collectors with an astonishing and beautiful array of nativity scenes

collected from across the globe.

In **The True Christmas Story (DVX-513)** Ray Vander Laan takes viewers to the Holy Land to discover fascinating truths about events surrounding the birth of Jesus. The archaeological evidence is woven together with biblical teachings and the historical record to contrast two kings-Herod and Jesus. The DVD is inspirational as well as informative.

## Christmas colors—red, green and blue

United Methodist Churches around the Conference will celebrate Christmas in a variety of creative ways this year. There has been growing awareness that while the season provides the year's most festive occasions, it also can be the most difficult for those who have experienced loss.

According to Rev. Audrey Ward, "Near the end of a year of change, loss, or simply the relentless passage of time, we have the possibility of healing that transcends the contradictions and allows hope to find lodging in our hearts."

Rev. Ward's church, Central United Methodist Church in Sacramento, will provide a "Blue Christmas" program on Thursday, December 21<sup>st</sup> at 6 p.m. The church is offering

a comforting service in music and verse in the beauty of its sanctuary. Since December 21 is the longest night of the year, soothing sounds of the winter solstice will be provided by a Celtic harp, cello and other instruments.

The church is located at 5265 H Street in East Sacramento. For more information, please call Audrey Ward, pastor at (916) 452-5016 or 739-8533.

The Cabinet and staff at the United Methodist Center in West Sacramento wish you the happiest of holiday seasons, as you spread your gifts, and the gift of Jesus Christ, to the people of California and Nevada.

Chuck Myer,  
*Connection* editor

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