



New England Conference honored the 2008 Black College Student, Jasmine Johnson

MISSION FAIR: The first Annual Conference Mission Fair was held on the lawn outside the chapel, celebrating the many ways New England United Methodists are in mission in their communities and the world. Fay Flanary says it was a great first event... "but wait until you see next year's fair!"

HEALTHY STEWARDSHIP: The Rev. Wee-Li Tan shared the success stories and resources of the United Methodist Foundation of New England in their work fostering healthy stewardship in all our churches in the annual conference. Gary Melville also shared the resources available on the foundation's website—visit them at www.umfne.org.

STATISTICIAN'S REPORT: A focus on mission was continued in the report of Joy Mueller, Conference Statistician. There has been an increase in number of people and churches participating in mission trips. In 2007 our local churches together spent more on mission than in 2006. Since 1995 our churches have more than doubled the amount spent on mission. See the full report at www.neumc.org

Youth Lead Gathering Worship

Dressed in red, and filled with enthusiasm, youth from CCYM (the Conference Council on Youth Ministries) led the conference in our Saturday morning worship. Bearing white crosses with the fingerprints of all Conference Members and guests in attendance, the youth of the conference processed to a hand-clapping contemporary hymn.

Alecia Bridge, one of the youth, shared a spirited slide presentation of her recent mission trip to Kenya. She was impressed by the worship of the Kenyan Christians. "They sang for about 4 hours!" she exclaimed, as the Kenyan's worship lasted almost all day. In the tiny wooden church, crowded with people, "the fellowship was amazing," she said.



Alecia Bridge

She read from scripture as she proclaimed, "By faith we see the world," a faith that is very much needed in our troubled world. It's amazing, she said, "how many people are suffering." But the people of Kenya, she said, "seemed to have

faith, no matter how bad things got." They worked hard, often times with two babies on their back, "yet they told me all the time they're grateful to God for all that they have. Hakuna Matata, they say – no worry!" Alecia's group brought food, toys, medicine and more, yet "I received ten times more than I gave. I think it's

best," she added, "if we pause and think for a moment that we can receive something from them in return!" The conference then affirmed in song that we need together to be "Jesus to the World!"

The "Nets" of Family Systems

As Douglas Rose shared his original composition, "Cast Your Nets on the Other Side," conference members joined in with enthusiasm. The song, one of several submitted to illustrate the conference theme, was a very fitting prelude to the Conference Keynote Speaker, the Rev. Barbara Lemmel, Conference Minister of the Troy Annual Conference for seven years, who spoke about the church as a family system.

She began by sharing that "I come to you as an evangelist...reminding us of the classic definition of evangelism as 'one beggar showing another beggar where to find bread. 'I was called to parish ministry," she said, "but a funny thing happened once I got there... " She went into ministry to share the gospel but found that there were all kinds of complications. "So many details that I didn't have time to find the bread that I needed, let alone to share the bread with my congregation."

Said Lemmel, "I discovered family systems, and that saved my life. That's what made it possible to do what I do." The basic idea of family systems theory, she said, is that "when families come together they don't work like a machine." Rather, because of all the interaction—the net of all the relationships, things get complicated. She said there are "three

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In Brief

THE EPISCOPAL ENDORSEMENT process was begun (after much discussion and reviewing of the rules. The endorsement process will continue (and hopefully conclude!) tomorrow. Nominees are Rev. Linda Campbell-Marshall and Rev. Aida Irizarry-Fernandez. The voting process by which up to three candidates can be endorsed will continue on Sunday. Watch for an update!

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A MOVING MEMORIAL: Bishop Weaver led us into a moving yet celebratory memorial service as the Conference honored clergy, local pastors, spouses, and lay members that died this past year. He talked of "lives of consequence" and the impact that each person that was remembered today had on our lives and our world.

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NothingButNets Challenge!

THE DISTRICT *NOTHINGBUTNETS* CHALLENGE is going strong! Tri-State is still in the lead with more than \$17,000 raised. The total for all districts was nearly \$50K by Saturday afternoon.

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THE GENERAL CONFERENCE REPORT from our New England Conference Delegates enlightened us to the involvement, the hope, the passion, and the lack of sleep experienced by our Delegation during the 10-day General Conference at the end of April.

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The SpiritNET Daily News from Annual Conference. Articles by Michael Stotts and Alexx Wood. Photos by Alexx Wood and Yong Ja Kim.

See all the daily news reports at www.neumc.org/AC08news.

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interlocking families" in the family system of the church: the pastor's family of origin, the family that is the congregation, and individual families within the congregation. A disturbance or unresolved issue in any of those, affects all the others.

She went on to enlighten the attendees on some of the concepts in systems theory, including *homeostasis* - the idea that "any system does not want to change; *anxiety* - both acute and chronic; and *triangulation* - when a third party is asked to or tries to "fix" a relationship that they aren't a part of, noting that this happens a lot in the church. "PPRC's and pastors and other leaders get asked all the time to fix relationships between others," she said.

These concepts describe how any group of people function — how the net of emotional relationships exist and relate between us, said Rev. Lemmel



Keynote Speaker
Rev. Barbara
Lemmel

Lemmel drew the connections between family systems and congregations because the church is a family. Pastors and other church leaders can learn from family systems theory to help their churches foster healthy relationships. Healthy family systems need 3 things: self-differentiation, connection, and a non-anxious presence. "Anxiety is catching, but a non-anxious presence is also catching," she said. If we're a non-anxious presence we can take responsibility if needed for our mistakes but not feeling we have to fix things for others who are anxious."

She cautioned that non-anxious doesn't mean sedate or uneventful. "Don't be afraid to have an adventure." Working together toward a common exciting goal can motivate all in the "family." "We are all on an adventure of what it means to be Christian folks in a postmodern world—it is darn hard," she said. To be church in new ways,

"we're going to have to change in new ways, which means we're going to have to learn what it feels like to *not* be the church of our ancestors anymore." That's very difficult, she warned, "but also that's how we claim the church as 'our church.'" —a people "keeping the faith," but for our own time and place. We can do that, she proclaimed, as long as we remember who we are, and whose we are. "We belong to God."

Conference Actions for Saturday, June 14, 2008

Resolution 120, affirming the Conference Advance Specials, was passed.

There was a healthy debate on **Resolution 208** regarding solidarity and support for justice for undocumented immigrants. After hearing both sides, the resolution passed.

Resolution 214 was not up for a vote, but was a resolution sponsored by the Reconciling Ministries Committee to engage the body in discussion of more inclusive language regarding homosexuality, as we seek to live Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors more fully. It worked—attendees discussed their thoughts and ideas in small groups.

Resolution 205 and 206 regarding white privilege, anti-racism, and resources and trainings for cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments was passed.

See neumc.org for more info on all these resolutions