

Northeast Jurisdiction

11th Deaf Culture Immersion

Jan 3 - 14, 2007 was the 11th Deaf Culture immersion Class taught at Christ UMC of the Deaf in Baltimore, MD. The class is sponsored by Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC and is largely attended by its students. During the twelve-day residential program students learn about the entire spectrum of issues surrounding Deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened and deaf-blind people and the church. The United Methodist Committee on Ministries with Deaf, Late-deafened, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind people sponsored one of the students who was not a seminary student but who is a leader of a Deaf ministry in New Jersey. This year's class had 16 students from: PA, DE, NJ, WV, MD, DC, NY, WI, and VA. Rev. Peggy Johnson, Rev. Jason Hays and Ms. Carol Stevens taught the class. The cost of the class was \$1,400. To attend the 2008 immersion contact Rev. Peggy Johnson at revpink@aol.com.

Deaf-Blind Camp 2007

Applications are being accepted for adult Deaf Blind campers for the Deaf Blind Camp that will be held June 10-15, 2007 at West River Camp in Churchton, MD. The cost is \$225 for each camper and they are required to bring one SSP with them. SSP's (Support Service Providers) receive free room and board but need to provide their own transportation. There is an SSP training class on June 9 in the afternoon and evening for new people as well as experienced SSP's. The theme of the camp will be "Carnival" and it will include Bible studies, support groups, educational events, swimming, boating, wall-climbing, massage therapy, field trips, games, bowling and crafts. For more information contact Peggy Johnson at revpink@aol.com.

Deaf and Sign Language Camps 2007

The Baltimore Washington Conference of the UMC is offering again a number of Deaf and Sign Language Camps during the week of July 22-27. The new director is Kathy MacMillan. Four camps for Deaf (elementary, middle high, high school and "20 something") and two camps for hearing students who want to learn sign language (middle high and high school) will be held. For more information about the camps, contact the camp area at westriver.center@verizon.net.

General Board of Publications visits Christ UMC of the Deaf

December 17, 2006 a camera crew from the UM Publishing House came to Christ UMC of the Deaf to film their Deaf Christmas pageant. This footage will be used in the fall 2007 quarter of the United Methodist Children's Sunday School curriculum. The goal of showing a Deaf Christmas pageant is to promote Deaf awareness but also to teach that God speaks in many languages and that God uses all people to spread God's word

"Through Deaf Eyes"

PBS' 2-hr documentary on 200 years of Deaf Life in America, "Through Deaf Eyes" aired March 21, 2007. The event was filmed in the fall of 2005. Christ UMC of the Deaf was chosen because of the black deaf history documentary that the church produced in 2005 in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Whatcoat Colored Mission for the Deaf. (Whatcoat merged with Christ Church of the Deaf in 1957. Prior to that the black and white deaf congregations worshiped separately).

A Deaf faith community is a rich part of the heritage and culture of Deaf people in America. Rev. Peggy Johnson, Mr. Stephon Williams and Ms. LaSander Saunders were interviewed from Christ UMC of the Deaf. Visit www.pbs.org/weta/throughdeafeyes/ for purchase and other information.

Jurisdictional News

North Central Jurisdiction

Rev. Elke Sharma has replaced Rev. Joo Kang as pastor in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference (IGRC) Deaf Faith Community. Rev. Joo Kang has moved to the MD/DC area to be a pastor there at Magothy UMC of the Deaf and as a chaplain for Gallaudet University.

The IGRC Deaf Faith Community presently extends to cover a Jacksonville church service, and a weekly Genesis bible study, a discipleship group, a diabetic-friendly cooking class, and a music/drama gathering. There are two outreach ministry sites: the bible study ministry in Springfield is studying the Book of Revelation and in O'Fallon is studying the Book of Acts. The outreach sites currently have pending plans to have Deaf Bible Trivia Night and Deaf Christian Movie Night events in their respective areas soon.

The Deaf Faith Community is having springtime Deaf Lay Speaker Workshops in April and May of this year with Rev. Elke Sharma, Rev. Curt Keller and Rev. Joo Kang as the leaders/teachers.

Other plans are also underway for the Jacksonville Deaf Faith Community Church to celebrate their 7th year in Deaf Ministries with a Seventh Year Sabbath Celebration and other related events in 2008.

IGRAC Deaf/ASL Camp



IGRC's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Board and Deaf Faith Community is pleased to be offering their IGRC Deaf/ASL camp again this summer. It will be held the week of July 15, 2007 beginning July 15th at 7PM and ending on July 20th at 4 PM. Rev. Curt Keller and Rev. Elke Sharma will be co-directors for the week. The theme for the week will be "Camp Celebration!" All 9th grade-adult individuals in the NCJ are invited to join us for a week of bible stories about biblical moments of celebration in God's family and camping fun! For more details contact Rev. Curt Keller ckeller@grics.net or Rev. Elke Sharma at pastorelke@yahoo.com or (217) 245-7967 (V/TTY).

SCJ Meets in "Indian Country"

The South Central Jurisdiction UMCD met in October 2006 in Tulsa Oklahoma with 30 participants from five Annual Conferences and the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference.

The youth had their own schedule which included a trip to Oklahoma City Memorial. The conference included an interpreters' workshop by Mark and Melanie Mitchum and a concert on Friday night. Saturday workshops included fundraising, invitation to Orlando 2007, and the Deaf Ministry in Rio Bravo, Mexico. Saturday evening featured a Pow Wow with Cherokee and Ponca people, dancing and drums.

New officers were elected and a by-laws committee established. All the officers are deaf members of the SCJ UMCD.

On Sunday morning we worshipped in our host church, Asbury UMC, where the group was recognized in worship and some of our members participated in the worship service.



L to R: President Karen Harrell, Youth Coordinator Sam White, Barbara Smith, Vice-President, Treasurer Mary Kay Hudspeth. Secretary Erica Feldmann not shown.

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Western Jurisdiction

As you all know, due to circumstances beyond our control, there was no Western Jurisdiction UMCD conference this past year. The WJ president, Rev. Elke Sharma, has changed jobs into a different conference and jurisdiction. As such for now I am the acting president of WJUMCD till the new President is elected. Jeffrey Burns has conveyed to me his desire to resign due to the move in locations, and the opportunity to go back to college. As such the position for President and Secretary is up for election. In addition, other officers are also burned out, and overall much fresh blood is needed to revive and renew the Western Jurisdiction UMCD group. For these reasons, Western Jurisdiction elections for officers will be held at the national conference this July 20 - 22, 2007 in Orlando , FLA. If you are interested in becoming an active part of this exciting leadership opportunity please plan to come to the national conference or let us know in advance of your interest.

--- Aditya Sharma

Deaf VIM Trip to Dominican Republic

"If you ever go to the Dominican Republic please take me with you." That one-line message was e-mailed to me over a year ago. It would become the beginning of the Deaf Volunteers in Mission Trip to Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. The e-mail was sent to me by the Deaf brother of two Deaf women who attend Christ UMC of the Deaf in Baltimore, who were born in the Dominican Republic. The whole family came to the USA fifteen years ago and had not been back since. Their brother, Victor, did not attend church but he longed to see his homeland again.

I dismissed this e-mail request as an idle, somewhat extravagant thought but some months later a sign language

Dominican Republic (cont'd)

interpreter put me in touch with the head teacher at a small struggling Deaf school in the Dominican Republic. The teacher's name was Peggy Blevins.

I had to meet this Peggy who worked with the Deaf children that the National Deaf School in the Dominican Republic would not teach because they had learning disabilities and behavioral issues. She had made a life of giving hope and language and the love of God to children the educators of that country thought were not worth reaching. The next thing I knew Peggy in Baltimore and Peggy in the Dominican Republic, both whose favorite color is pink, struck up quite a conversation through the internet and by the fall plans started to come together for a VIM trip. She wanted me to bring the most valuable gift of all to her students. Not money, not supplies, not even Bibles...but a Deaf Dominican Republic role model. That is when that lone email from Victor began to make sense. Even though he rarely attended church I felt God nudging me to invite Victor to come on this VIM trip to work with these children. He was thrilled to be invited.

God not only planned to have Victor on the team but a "dream team" of other talented hearing and Deaf people from BW Conference Churches and other churches volunteered to take part as well. Together we planned a week of Bible School lessons for the Deaf children and also scheduled visits with the various ministries of the Assembly of God Deaf Church of Santo Domingo. There is no Deaf Methodist presence on the island. The Deaf ministries were mostly found in the Baptist and Assembly of God Churches. The Dominican Republic Assembly of God pastor was Deaf and he assisted our team with street evangelism and Bible Studies with the Deaf in the evenings. What a surprise to find out that the Deaf pastor's wife was a long lost cousin of Victor! He did not know she had married a minister. God's plan for this unlikely team member continued to unfold.

(continued on page 13)

Dominican Republic (cont'd)

We were able to teach the children stories of Jesus using costumes, drama crafts, and games. and in American Sign Language. Most international countries have a different sign language from ours but in the Dominican Republic missionaries introduced ASL and it is still used. Throughout the day as we taught the children I would look up and see Victor seated on a tiny child's chair talking with the students, helping them with their crafts. Each day we sent them home with supplies and treats that we had brought with us: school kits, health kits, stuffed bears, baseball gloves. The children were so appreciative. They had so little.

One day we visited the National Deaf School where we had the opportunity to meet with the principal and advocate for better relations between the Deaf School and the private schools that attend to the needs of the more challenged students. Victor had been a student of this principal years ago and his insights on the changes in deaf education were a valuable part of the discussion.

The Sunday morning worship at the Assembly of God Deaf Church confirmed to me what I had seen many times before -- the universal Deaf Spirit that transcends nationality, ethnicity, language or economic status. The Deaf worshipers signed and prayed and laughed and talked endlessly ...just like the Deaf Church folks back in Baltimore. Hugs and smiles and soul to soul communication ran like a river through the room. Heartwarming testimonies about the love of God were shared. Then Victor rose to address the congregation. "I came here to visit my home country but I found out about God and the love of Jesus. I accepted Christ as my Savior and I want to come back here and help this Deaf school again." I hope that God has this plan in the works. God is always working for good in the world...the hearing world...the Deaf world....it's all God's world. And God is always about the business of using everyone, even the people we don't expect, as bridge-builders of understanding and peace.

Many thanks to those who helped to support this VIM trip through funding and prayers: BW Conference Deaf Ministries, Christ UMC of the Deaf, Peace with Justice Grants, United Methodist Committee on Ministries with Deaf, Late Deafened, Hard of Hearing and Deaf Blind People, Magothy UMC of the Deaf and

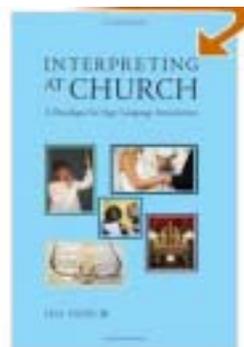
many friends and family members.

Attending the mission trip with me were: Rev. Chris Hughes (Assembly of God pastor) and his family: Jennifer, (wife), Jessica, Jacob & Joanna (children), Diane Rehling (Fallston UMC and sign language interpreter at Hiss UMC), Koretta Scott (Metropolitan UMC - BH), Dionne Dixon and Ann Mason.



City

Interpreting Book Published



INTERPRETING AT CHURCH: A Paradigm for Sign Language Interpreters. is a new book out by our very own Leo Yates, Jr. The book gives guidance to new and seasoned interpreters who primarily work in churches. Not only is the book helpful for interpreters, but enhances deaf awareness for churches who wish to begin a deaf ministry by providing an interpreter. Resources are plentiful throughout. Just a few of the chapters are Scripture analysis, ethics, funerals and weddings. The appendixes are helpful as well. It even includes a religious sign dictionary for those learning the craft. It can be purchased through Amazon.com for \$19.77.

Visiting Zimbabwe

In January of this year, I traveled with the General Commission on Communications to Zimbabwe. That's the Board for United Methodist Communications and I'm a member of the Commission. We held our annual Commission meeting at Africa University, a United Methodist-led University in Old Mutare. We also spent time in service which, for me, turned into an opportunity to make new friends and learn about Deaf ministry in Mutare and Mutambara.

Amos Muyambo, Central Conference Representative for UMCD, was my host. I am so grateful for the time he took to accompany me and teach me.

Our first visit was to the UMC Mutambara school. Amos met me at the hotel with a driver and the Nueve Deaf Preschool mini pickup. The Toyota truck had a shell, and Amos and I made ourselves comfortable on a foam pad spread out to soften the ride. The trip was forty-five minutes away and Amos pointed out effects from the drought. The corn that is grown everywhere should be much taller by this time. I noticed the land was much dryer than the lush green of Mutare and many people walked alongside the road. Driving in a truck felt like a luxury. Cows, too, wandered freely. The truck had to slow down or drive around several cows who just laid down on the pavement, apparently enjoying the heat and the sunshine.

The United Methodist school at Mutambara maintains a Deaf class ranging from ten to fifteen students. Ushered into the headmaster's office, I was treated like a visiting dignitary and I so enjoyed my time with the Deaf students. The school does so much with so little!

Back in Mutare, I was also able to visit a Deaf preschool run by Libby Foster. Just down the hill from Hilltop UMC, the preschool also provides a home for the adult Deaf Club, Sanganai. Again, I was

the honored guest, and the mothers of the children all came to greet me. Libby showed my home, Alaska, on the map, and we talked about the differences in animals between the two areas. I was also able to spend time with members of Sanganai, learning Zimbabwean signs and teaching a few ASL signs.

The Deaf Club makes some wonderful tie-dye clothing, and I returned to Alaska with several items to sell in a fundraising effort at my church, and I'd like to invite all of the UMCD members to join me in helping the UMC Mutambara Deaf school purchase much needed supplies for the program. Please send donations to Deaf Interfaith, c/o Toby Witte-Dix, 911 Regina Drive, Baltimore, Maryland 21227. The inflation rate in Zimbabwe is incredibly high, and a small amount of our money goes a long way. This is an opportunity for UMCD members to come together and support a ministry full of heart and soul with much work to be done. Amos Muyambo and a Deaf leader from the community will be attending the UMCD conference this summer to share about this ministry. Don't miss it!

--- By Candis Shannon



Amos Muyambo with Deaf students at UMC Mutambara School

Officers

President: Dan Kenyon
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SEJ President: Vacant

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WJ President: Rev. Elke and Aditya Sharma
pastorelke@yahoo.com

Past President: Candis Shannon
fireweedccs@yahoo.com

Web site: www.umcd.org

SEJ Changes

Debbie Bennett has resigned as President of SEJ. Thank you, Debbie, for your service to UMCD. Wineva Hankamer, Mary Harris, Lawrence McCamy and others are continuing to help out with the UMCD Conference to be held in SEJ. Many, many thanks!

New NEJ President

Darlene Koontz is the new NEJ President. Many thanks to David Ennis, our previous NEJ President, for his hard work during his term and welcome to Darlene.

Darlene is profoundly deaf and was raised in a deaf family of six. She is married to a wonderful hearing man and is the mother of two grownup children and three grandchildren.

She is currently lay leader in her church and she used to teach ASL classes there for twenty years as well as teaching ASL to paramedics and police officers.

She served on the Americans with Disability Act Committee from her area and is active with church missions and Bible study classes.

Again, welcome Darlene!

Committee Chairs

Archives and History - Francine Kenyon
fmkyn@yahoo.com

Curriculum - Dr. Vae Rose Fultz

Church Promotion Deaf Ministries - Karen Harrell

Church Promotion of Late-Deafened
and Hard of Hearing - Rev. Elke Sharma

Communications Technology - Rev. Rick Springer
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Deaf-Blind - Frank Spiker

Interpreter Committee - Michelle Menefee
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Law Committee
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Petitions Committee - Rev. Kirk VanGilder
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Dallas, Texas 75220

\$ _____ **UMCD Dues (\$10.00 per year)**

\$ _____ **Donation to Endowment Fund**

\$ _____ **Donation for** _____

\$ _____ **Total Enclosed**

Thank you for supporting the United Methodist Congress of the Deaf

Help the Endowment Fund Grow!

At the 2005 UMCD Global Conference, the UMCD Endowment Fund reached its goal of raising \$10,000. Now, as we continue to grow the fund, we will be able to use the interest earned towards ministry.

As of September 2006, our Fund has \$15,000 and is growing through the wise investment by the United Methodist Foundation of the Texas Annual Conference.

UMCD established the Endowment Fund for the purpose of encouraging local churches to develop new ministries with those who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late Deafened or Deaf-Blind. Your donation to the Endowment is a sign of support and challenge to United Methodists.

Please send your tax-deductible donation to:
Rev. Tom Hudspeth/President, UMCD Endowment Fund
9200 Inwood Road, Dallas, TX 75220.
Make your check payable to UMCD, memo "Endowment Fund"