



Merry Christmas
From the
South Central District
December Newsletter

The South Central District Office and the Florida Conference Office will be closed during the Christmas holiday from 12/24/11 - 1/2/12. Thank you for planning accordingly.

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O Come O Come Emmanuel

*O Come, Desire of nations bind
all peoples in one heart and mind.
From dust thou brought us forth to life;*

Deliver us from earthly strife. (vs. 7)



Enjoy this area of our newsletter for up to the minute thoughts!

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- [The Black Church Blog](#)
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On November 13th I had the wonderful blessing of being able to attend the celebration of the opening of the new Justice For Our Neighbors office in Lakeland (JFON). Our Lakeland site is being graciously housed by our Westminster Presbyterian friends, making it only the second such site to be housed in a non-UMC church/agency. JFON is more than an acronym; it is a vital and vibrant ministry of The UMC. Below please find an overview of the history and mission of JFON excerpted from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) statement found on the General Board of Global Ministries (GBHEM) site:

[Churches Open Their Doors for Free Legal Clinics](#)

Juan Feliciano



Healing prayers are requested for:

John Reeve, District Lay Leader for recovery after his recent surgery

Rev. Geraldine Christopher for recovery after her recent procedure

Prayers of Sympathy and Comfort are requested for...

Mike Mullins, Associate District Lay Leader and his family due to the death of his sister Nancy Ann Mullins

Prayers of Thanksgiving for..

Aaron Wallis, son of Matthew Wallis of Grace Community at Fish Hawk. Aaron has made a full recovery after his recent surgery.



URGENT NEEDS

Each Justice for Our Neighbors legal clinic is an opportunity for local congregations to "open their doors" with a warm and hospitable welcome for newcomers in their midst. JFON provides a place for community gathering and table fellowship where parishioners and newcomers may come together to seek peace and transformation in a troubled world.

Church Based, Volunteer Led

JFON provides free, professional legal services to immigrants in monthly clinics. This UMCOR program connects a national network of church-based, volunteer-led immigration clinics to asylum seekers and immigrants who need a helping hand to navigate the maze of rules and laws that affect their lives in the United States.

JFON represents the response of the United Methodist Church and its local congregations to the needs of immigrants seeking to reunify their families, secure immigration status, and enjoy the right to work.

The JFON model embraces the mandate of biblical hospitality. The program relies on United Methodist connectional relationships to bring together resources and commitment from local churches, districts, conferences, and UMCOR.

Trained and resourced by UMCOR's national office, JFON volunteers advocate for just and compassionate immigration laws and public policy, networking with other advocacy groups where possible.

The JFON network is coordinated by a national staff in Silver Spring, MD. Some twenty clinic sites in nine annual conferences participate. JFON services are provided by qualified immigration attorneys.

Background

The plight of immigrants made vulnerable by passage of harsh immigration laws led to JFON's creation in 1999, to facilitate the immigration ministries of local United Methodist congregations. The program initially was a response to the immigration reform act of 1996. Later it also focused on the stricter laws passed in the aftermath of 9/11.

JFON continues the long legacy of UMCOR's implementation of the United Methodist Church's resettlement assistance to refugees. The free clinic network extends the support and welcome of the church to marginalized immigrants living in the shadows among us.

It's Part of Our United Methodist Faith

When we welcome sojourners, it is as if we are receiving Christ, and our doing so becomes a sign of our faithfulness.

In the words of the 1986 United Methodist Bishops' Statement on Refugees and Immigration, "God comes to us in the form of the vulnerable person who lacks the benefit of status and protection in an alien land. In the flesh of Jesus Christ of Nazareth God chose to sojourn in a particular way for the sake of all humankind...and restored the possibility of authentic community in which love and

Gifts for Teens
Gifts for Infants
Various food items

[CLICK HERE](#)
for full details and to give
HOPE to those in need!



justice reign and peace prevails."

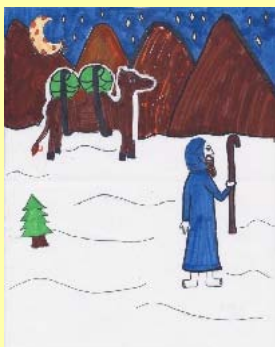
Our preparation and yearning during Advent and the splendor of our celebration of Christ's birth more often than not conveniently overlooks the perilous journey, birth and escape to Egypt undertaken by a young, poor girl named Mary and her husband, Joseph. The stories of 'escape' (from death, poverty, illiteracy, etc.) are still being lived by millions of people and through JFON still being told and addressed. As we anticipate and prepare for Christ's return, I invite you to pray for this ministry and our brothers and sisters to whom it ministers. Most of all pray about your possible support, involvement and advocacy and that of your congregation. Hope is a gift worth giving!

May the Peace of Christmas become Ours, now and forever!

Rev. Dr. Sharon Austin

South Central District Superintendent

Justice for our Neighbors



Dear Friends of JFON. November was an exciting, albeit busy month at Justice for Our Neighbors. On November 13th we celebrated the opening of our third clinic in Lakeland Florida. And trained volunteers welcomed clients and family members the next evening at the first Lakeland clinic. Our attorney, Lina Restrepo saw nine clients at the very successful first clinic.

This month we are especially please to share our Advent Devotional with you for personal use or printing the booklet to share with friends and churches. Happy Advent! Hannah Hanson Education and Advocacy Coordinator.

[For a copy of this wonderful Advent Devotional, please click here.](#)

DISTRICT HAPPENINGS

Considering a Clergy Move in 2012?

In preparation for the upcoming 2012 appointment season, Rev. Austin is scheduling time to meet with pastors considering a move in 2012. If you are considering a move, please send an email to flumc-sc@flumc.org and request a meeting in December. Please bring a copy of your completed pastor's profile form.

If you are an SPRC Chair and are requesting sensing the need for a change in your church's appointed pastor, please send an email request to flumc-sc@flumc.org. Please bring a copy of your completed church profile form. These meetings will be scheduled for January or at the latest February.

South Central District Calendar

December 1: Church and Pastor Profiles available for edit
December 2: District Leadership Christmas Party
December 16: National Chocolate Covered Anything Day
December 24 - Jan 2: District and Conference offices closed for the Christmas holiday
December 25: Christmas Day
December 26: Kwanzaa begins
December 31: New Years Eve

January 1: New Years Day
January 3: District and Conference Offices re-open
January 16: Martin Luther King Day - District and Conference Offices closed
January 23: National "eat pie" day
January 28: District Leadership training - First UMC Brandon 8:30am - 12:30pm

2011 Conference Calendar of Reports Due

December 1: Staff Pastor Parrish Relations Committee District Training 6:30 pm at Palma Ceia UMC.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES &EVENTS



December 1, 2011 - Church and Pastor profiles will be available for edit on December 1st. You may begin to access and update your church and pastor profiles at this time.

January 28, 2012 - Annual District Leadership Training Event to be held at First UMC Brandon. 8:30am - 12:30pm

February 7, 2012 - Mission Centered Ministry Seminar - Staying focused on the mission of "Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World" is essential to being a fruitful congregation. For more information and registration please [click here](#).

TRAINING & EVENTS

Black Church Events



SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT BLACK CHURCH QUADRANT MEETING

Our district is paired with the Gulf Central and South West Districts for a gathering at McCabe UMC, St. Petersburg on Saturday, December 3, 2011. While we hope to have you join your district colleagues, it is more important that you attend one of the event locations. The Rev. Lewis has openly invited us to attend when and where we can, therefore you are encouraged to attend the event in another district, if needed. This event is for clergy and laity so please be sure to RSVP so that the planning team is prepared for you and your group wherever you go.

BLACK CHURCH CONVOCATION - December 9-10 Real church reaching real people in a real world for a real God. For more information, [please click here](#).

Lay Servant Ministries

Beadisciple.com has announced online course offerings which meet the criteria as advanced courses in Lay Servant Ministries. Pastors, please assist us in the dissemination of this information by publishing in your church newsletter, etc. Thank you.

Multimedia Technology in Worship for the Church Volunteer 101 - January 2-13, 2012 - John Zimmerman

Direct link: <http://beadisciple.com/layspeakingministries.html#Multimedia>

Leading Worship 101 for Lay Leaders - January 9 - February 13, 2012 - Dan Benedict

Direct link: <http://beadisciple.com/layspeakingministries.html#Worship>

Biblical Storytelling I - January 16-30, 2012 - Beth Galbreath

Direct link: <http://beadisciple.com/layspeakingministries.html#StorytellingI>

Growing Spiritually through Daily Discipline - January 17 - March 2, 2012 - Debra Dickerson

Direct link: <http://beadisciple.com/layspeakingministries.html#DailyDiscipline>

Biblical Storytelling II - April 15 - May 7, 2012 - Beth Galbreath

Direct link: <http://beadisciple.com/layspeakingministries.html#StorytellingII>

Please refer to the individual links for further information, required text books, and registration.

Blessings to you as we continue to grow together,

Gail Kantz

Lay Servant Ministries - Co-Director, South Central District

flkantz@verizon.net

Interim Ministry Training Seminars

2012 Seminars have been scheduled at Lake Junaluska. [Click here for more information.](#)

Local Church Year End Reports Webinar

December 8th at 3:00 p.m. [Click here for more information.](#)

Upcoming UMVIM Dates

Below are the UMVIM Team Leader dates and locations scheduled for the first half of 2012. All trainings are from 9:00 to 4:00 and lunch is provided. Cost is \$40 per person; \$50 per couple.

January 21 - FUMC Baldwin (outside Jacksonville) [Click here for more information on this event.](#)

February 4 - FUMC Lakeland [Click here for more information on this event.](#)

SEJ Disaster Academy [Click here for more information on this event.](#)

OTHER IMPORTANT NEWS

General Conference Needs YOU!



The General Conference of the United Methodist Church will be here before you know it. About 1,000 volunteers are needed for this event. For more information about volunteering please [click here](#). Should you wish to download a flyer to hand out to the congregation or to post at the church, please [click here](#).



The congregational snapshot gathers on one sheet of paper a significant amount of data about your congregation. While you have had access to all of this information, never before has it been presented together in one place. So, like pieces of a puzzle spread about the house, it was difficult to find and fit the pieces together into a coherent picture of what's going on in your congregation statistically. The Congregational Snapshot now puts the pieces out on the table where you can assemble them into a clearer picture of your congregation's missional vitality. Click this link to get your congregational snapshot http://www.flumc2.org/congregational_snapshot.asp

End of Year Apportionment Payments

Apportionment payments for 2011 must be received either at the Conference office or in the lockbox at Regions Bank by January 13th 2012. This is not a postmarked by date, but is the last day by which monies must be received in the Conference or our bank lockbox to be included in 2011 apportionments receipts. Any payments received after that date will be applied to 2012 apportionments. Any payments received between January 1 and January 13th must be clearly marked as to which year they are to be applied.

[For more information, please click here.](#)

Clergy, SPRC and Finance Reminder

District staff persons are often asked (especially during the Christmas season) about the tax implications of monetary gifts for clergy. Here's the response: *If persons give monetary gifts to the pastor through the church it is considered taxable income. If the gift is given directly to the pastor it is not taxable.*



In these days of economic strain, it is more important than ever that we become educated and proactive on issues concerning our children. This is an ongoing event which Bishop Whitaker supports and attends and in which we also partner with our A.M.E. bishop and brothers and sisters in Florida. For registration and information visit <http://www.flumc2.org/events/detail/3692>

Mission Trip to Cuba is Scheduled

Interested in a week long mission trip to Cuba, there is one scheduled to attend the Sierra Maestra District Conference from February 21 through February 28. Please contact Renee Kincaid (813-885-5674 - rkinc@tampabay.rr.com), South Central District Coordinator for the Cuba ministry ASAP.

Disaster Recovery - A year in review

Want to know what has been going on in the world of conference disaster recovery?
[Please click here for the entire newsletter.](#)

Local Church News

[Brandon First United Methodist Church](#) - Christmas tree lot.
[Ridge Manor Community UMC](#) - Christmas Angel event
[Sun City Center UMC](#) - Celebrate the Season event

For information on any of these events, [please click here.](#)

CLASSIFIEDS

Help Wanted

Christ UMC (Lakeland) is looking for a pianist for the month of December. Continued employment after the Christmas season may become an option. Those interested should contact Ben Arnold (Minister of Music) at arnolds2point0@gmail.com.

[Forward email](#)



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