

as they take their various journeys through life. "As a chaplain to young adults, my goal is to make connections that will foster vital conversations about life, faith and spirituality, work, and learning and to be a supportive presence as they navigate their way on the journey."

In her free time, Rhonda loves to write, read, sing, and listen to music. She's also a serious cook of Caribbean cuisine and an avid Scrabble player. Her favorite place is the beach; her favorite authors include Maya Angelou, Mark Nepo, Richard Rorh, and Terry McMillan. Rhonda has been told and tends to believe in her abilities to captivate an audience when she preaches and speaks publicly.

Rhonda is the proud parent to two of the smartest, funniest, spirited boys, Roman 12 and Rey 9. She vows to live everyday fully and freely. Rhonda loves it here in Central NY and hopes to settle down here for the next "102 years."

Dr. Sam Clemence, Interim Dean of Hendricks Chapel is thrilled to have Rhonda on board. He already has many accolades to share; he said, "All of us—chaplains, students, and staff are delighted that she has joined the Hendricks Chapel family. Her wonderful enthusiasm and boundless energy has already made a positive difference in our chapel programs."

*The **Bridge** is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world.*

www.unyumc.org

This serves as another great example of how our connective system allows us to do more than any individual church could do alone.

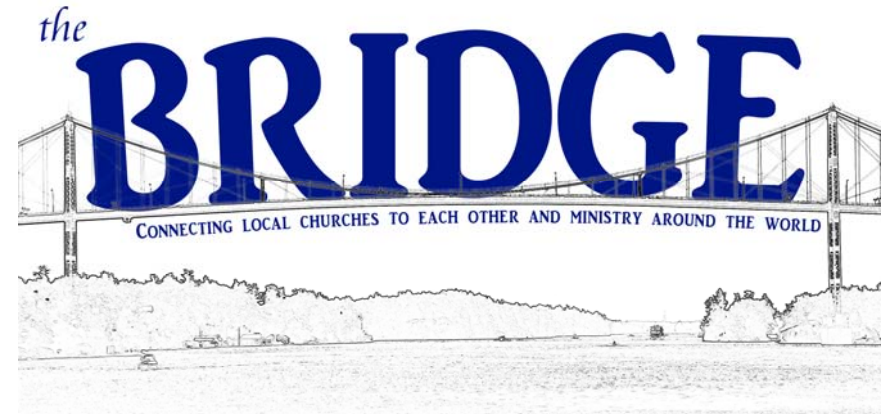
When so many churches worked to improve their Ministry Share giving, it provided the opportunity for leaders to restore this important ministry to the SU campus.

Dr. Clemence expressed his utmost gratitude for this happening; he said, "It is personally gratifying to me to see the rejuvenation and energy in our Methodist chaplaincy. We are so grateful to the Bishop for appointing Rhonda Chester to this important position—Syracuse University and the Methodist Church have had a very special relationship for well over 140 years and the appointment of Rhonda reaffirms that special relationship."

Editor's note: To learn more about the amazing ministry that Ministry Shares enable watch for the fall issue of the *Advocate* or go to the Ministry Shares Tool Box on the Conference website at: <http://www.unyumc.org/resources/ministry-shares-toolbox>.



Rhonda Chester



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

A LOOK INSIDE!

Increased Ministry Share giving allows CF&A to recommend
SU chaplain position to be reinstated part-time

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Increased Ministry Share giving allows CF&A to recommend SU chaplain position be reinstated part-time

By Shannon Morehouse

In early 2016, the Upper New York Conference, had to make some very difficult financial decisions due to the shortfalls in Ministry Share giving. Among the very painful cuts that had to be made to the Conference spending plan was the full-time position of the Chaplain position at Syracuse University's (SU) Hendricks Chapel. However, from the moment the decision was made to cut funding, there was a commitment to continue this ministry in new ways. The 2016 session of the Upper New York Annual Conference clearly echoed this desire.

District Superintendent, Rev. Nola Anderson; the Crossroads District Leadership Team; Bishop Mark J. Webb; and, Executive Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Connectional Ministries, Rev. Bill Gottschalk-Fielding worked closely with the Chancellor of Syracuse University and the Interim Dean of Hendricks Chapel to find a way to make this desire a reality. Thanks to creative thinking and a modest increase in Ministry Shares, the Upper New York Conference Council on Finance & Administration in consultation with the Conference Leadership Team has approved funding to support the Chaplain position on a part-time basis. Just in time for the start of the fall semester at SU, Rhonda Chester has been assigned as a part-time United Methodist Ecumenical Chaplain for Hendricks Chapel.

The Rev. Nola Anderson, The Cross Roads District Superintendent said, "We understood that there was a need for

this Chaplain position. With lack of funds, we initially started looking for ways to employ a team of clergy and laity as volunteers to continue this ministry. Fortunately, because of the increased giving from churches, we had the funds to pay for a part-time Chaplain."

The Rev. Bill Gottschalk-Fielding, Director of Connectional Ministries and Executive Assistant to the Bishop, reiterated the importance of the United Methodist presence on SU's campus; he said, "At Annual Conference last June, many testified to how important our United Methodist presence is on the SU campus. SU was founded by upstate Methodists and we've supported the chaplaincy on campus for over a generation. The prospect of losing that presence due to financial constraints deeply troubled our members. When shared ministry receipts improved some this year, this ministry was the first area to which CFA considered restoring funding. Having a gifted pastor like Rhonda available to serve in this role part-time allows this to happen."

Rhonda's journey to the UNY Conference is quite circuitous. She was born in Guyana, the only English-speaking country in South America. She has been traveling overseas since she was eight and has lived in several different places around the world, namely Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, as well as a few of the United States.

When she migrated permanently to the United States, she started her life in New York City, where her oldest son was also born. After a few years living in both

New York and Connecticut, the family moved to Memphis, Tennessee for a six-month mission outreach program and then to Missouri where she started her work as Director of Youth & Children's Ministry in the Aurora UMC. "I know my steps were ordered to live in Missouri for 10 years because there is no way I

would have just woken up one morning and say, 'I'd love to live in Missouri,'" Rhonda said. As a member of the Missouri Annual Conference, she also served as a licensed local pastor and hospital chaplain.

Her educational journey began at the University of Guyana where she earned a certificate in Language and Communication and a diploma in Freelance Writing from Penn Foster Career School. She earned a BA in Theology from the Caribbean Nazarene Theological College in Trinidad and Tobago. During her years at college, she worked as a youth pastor and assistant pastor.

Passionate about the concept of the ever-evolving self, Rhonda enrolled in the Master of Divinity program at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma and graduated with honorable mention as the United Methodist Outstanding Student Preacher that graduating year.



Hendricks Chapel at Syracuse University

After graduating from seminary, Rhonda took on the challenge to face one of her fears, by entering the hospital setting. She enrolled in a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program at Barnes Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, MO and interned as a hospital chaplain. After her internship, she was accepted into the chaplain residency program at St. Luke's Hospital in Kansas City and Chesterfield, MO. She has successfully completed seven units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) training and is endorsed for professional chaplaincy by the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA).

Eventually, Rhonda desired to move back to the state where her journey in the USA began. She is excited about both her appointments at State Street UMC and at Hendricks Chapel. As a parish pastor and chaplain, her goal is to be a supportive presence alongside others

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