In Brief

Task force to host forum on 'Human Sexuality and Biblical Interpretation'

The Upper New York Conference's Human Sexuality Task Force will host a forum on "Human Sexuality and Biblical Interpretation" from 1-4 p.m. on March 5 at the Liverpool United Methodist Church. In addition to on-site seating, the event will be live-streamed. Rev. Dr. Althea Spencer-Miller, professor at Drew Theology School in New Jersey, and Dr. Bill T. Arnold, professor at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky, will be the featured speakers. This forum will be an opportunity for those present and online to hear how the faithful and thoughtful approaches of these two biblical scholars have led to different conclusions regarding human sexuality. On-site attendance is free and open to the public, but registration is required. The registration deadline is March 2. Go to **www.tinyurl.com/human-sexuality-forum** to register or for more info.

A brief history of Black History Month

The information below comes from **History.com**.

Black History Month, or National African American History Month, is an annual celebration of achievements by black Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of African Americans in United States history.

In 1915, Carter G. Woodson and Minister Jesse E. Moorland founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) – today, known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. In 1926, the ASNLH sponsored the first national Negro History Week, choosing the second week of February to celebrate because it coincided with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas.

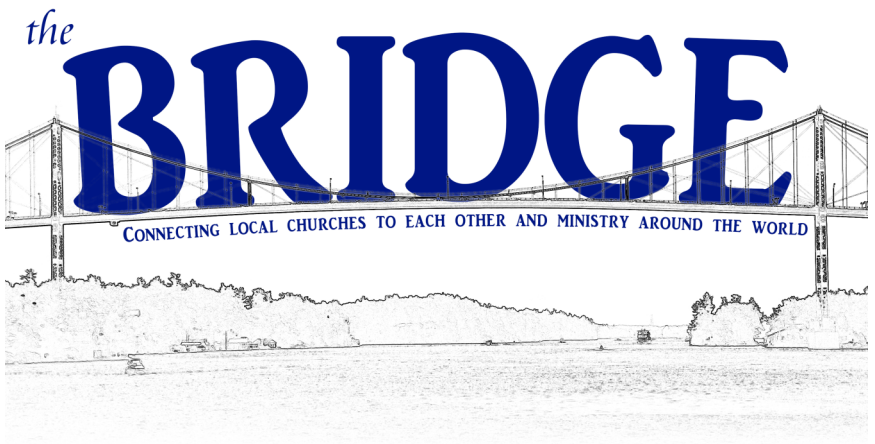
By the late 1960s, Negro History Week evolved into Black History Month, and in 1976, President Gerald R. Ford officially recognized Black History Month.

Go to **www.tinyurl.com/Black-History-Month-2016** for more information about Black History Month and to find resources.

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

www.unyumc.org

Feb. 14 is Scouting Ministries Sunday (Boy Scout Sunday): www.tinyurl.com/scouting-ministries-sunday



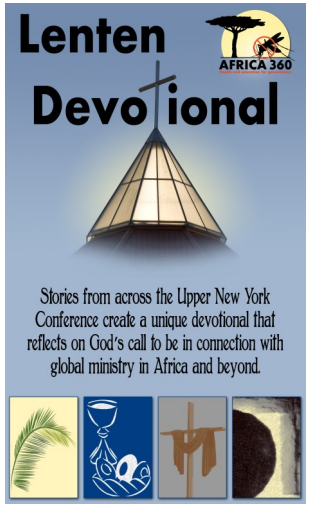
The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

A Look Inside!

Get your copy of the *Africa 360* Lenten Devotional now	Page 2
UNY hosts 'Human Sexuality and Biblical Interpretation' forum	Page 4
Read a brief history of Black History Month	Page 4

February 2016, VOL. I

Get your copy of the Africa 360 Lenten Devotional now



In 2012, the North Texas Annual Conference graciously gave the Upper New York Conference permission to reprint a Lenten Study guide titled "Seeds of Hope," with all proceeds benefiting Upper New York's commitment to Africa University Endowed Scholarships. Inspired by that example, a new Lenten Devotional for *Africa 360* has been created, one that brings together clergy and laity from across the Conference to share their stories and inspire individuals, small groups, and congregations all over the Conference – and beyond – to give and live generously and be conscious of why our God-given connections with one another are so important.

What is *Africa 360* again? This UNY initiative combines the narratives of *Imagine No Malaria* and Africa University, helping eliminate deaths from malaria and raising leaders to improve infrastructure in Africa.

How does *Africa 360* tie into Lent? Perhaps the Conference's Resident Bishop Mark J. Webb sums it up best: "The journey of the Lenten season offers us an opportunity for reflection, transformation, and action as we examine in a fresh way the life of Jesus, the way of the cross, and the reality of resurrection. These 40 days provide us a chance to go deeper in our own spiritual journeys and to refocus every aspect of our lives in relation to the truth and promises of Jesus the Christ."

How does this devotional work? Individuals and small groups will engage with this devotional during Lent, through a unified practice of prayer, Bible study, and sacrificial offerings. As Lent is a time when we focus on Jesus' self-giving love and sacrifice on our behalf, we have the gift and challenge of helping empower God's children in Africa. You should be aware that each day thousands of others are reading and reflecting on the same devotional that you are and praying the same prayer. We encourage you to let this Lenten Devotional strengthen our connection with one another.

What if I can't make every financial challenge? You are not expected to. Each day, you will encounter a different type of challenge. Some days, that is a challenge to help tell the story of *Africa 360*, some days the challenge involves deep prayer. Throughout these 40 days, you may choose to accept the financial challenge of the day offered through the Lenten Devotional, but there is no obligation.

Can we see a sample? How about the one for Shrove (or Fat) Tuesday:

SHROVE TUESDAY

BEGINNING A 40-DAY JOURNEY WITH YOUR CONFERENCE

I don't have movable arms, which makes cooking a little difficult. But flipping pancakes, now that's something that I can handle with the help of some well-placed friends and family! I'm an old-school pancake connoisseur, give me plain buttermilk pancakes with plenty of syrup and I'm happy. Preferably real syrup; you might find me at the maple festivals out in the Niagara Frontier District in March, or up in Northern Flow; thank God the Upper New York Conference has so many places that know how to make syrup!

I've recently learned that the day before Lent begins is about more than pancakes. You know, "Fat Tuesday," or Mardi Gras, wasn't always connected to the wild parties of New Orleans or with piles of pancakes. With Lent being intended as a season of fasting and repentance, people used to empty their cabinets of sweets, yeast, and meat the day before Ash Wednesday – the first day of Lent – so they wouldn't be tempted. Mardi Gras was originally a great feast that ushered in the long Lenten season of simplicity.
(Source: www.alivenow.upperroom.org/?s=lent+101)

So when you're eating pancakes this Fat – or Great – Tuesday, just like me, remember where it really comes from and where we are pointing to: Lent. Tomorrow begins a 40-day journey where we repent of our sins and return to God. Commit to change your life over the next 40 days, re-orienting yourself to a global consciousness that lifts up our sisters and brothers across the world. Together, we are stronger. Together, we are better disciples. Together, we can create the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Prayer: Brilliant Sustainer, thank you for this day before Lent where we can take a few moments of lighthearted family time around the table. As we enter into Lent tomorrow, on Ash Wednesday, we look forward to continuing our journey of returning to You. Bless our journey together. Amen.

Challenge: Over the next 40 days, pay attention to the myriad of challenges and participate in those that speak to your heart. If you give $100 or more, be sure to check the box at the end of this devotional requesting a BobbleWebb, and share a picture of his adventures on Instagram or Facebook!

Submitted by BobbleWebb,
spirited office accessory,
Upper New York Conference

How can I get this Lenten Devotional?

As a free downloadable PDF: **www.unyumc.org/mission/Africa-360-Toolkit**

or you can purchase it through online publisher Lulu.com at:
www.tinyurl.com/A360Lenten Devo2016