

WHAT'S NEW ONLINE?

Now registering: *Fall Adirondack Getaway* at Aldersgate

Renowned Adirondack storyteller Bill Smith and local bluegrass band Cincinnati Creek headline the *Fall Adirondack Getaway* Oct. 2-4 at the Aldersgate Camp & Retreat Center. Participants will enjoy guided nature hikes, an old-fashioned wagon ride, boating, quiet meditation, worship, and more. Join us for a weekend you'll remember for a lifetime. Go to aldersgateny.org/join-us/event/2846 for more information.

UNY provisional elders visit New York City

Provisional elders from the Upper New York Conference gathered for two days last month in New York City to learn about The United Methodist Church's mission and evangelism programs, international advocacy for the Social Principles, and disaster response efforts. The Rev. Nancy Raca, pastor at the Covenant UMC in Rochester, shares the story. Go to www.tinyurl.com/provisional-elders to read the full story.



Commentary: Social holiness urges dialogue on racism

The Rev. Alan Kinney, Chair of the Social Holiness Team, discusses the recent decision to remove the Confederate flag in Columbia, S.C., and encourages Upper New York congregations reach out to other congregations composed primarily of a different racial and/or ethnic origin to begin or continue open and honest dialogue about racism and the pain that still exist in our communities.

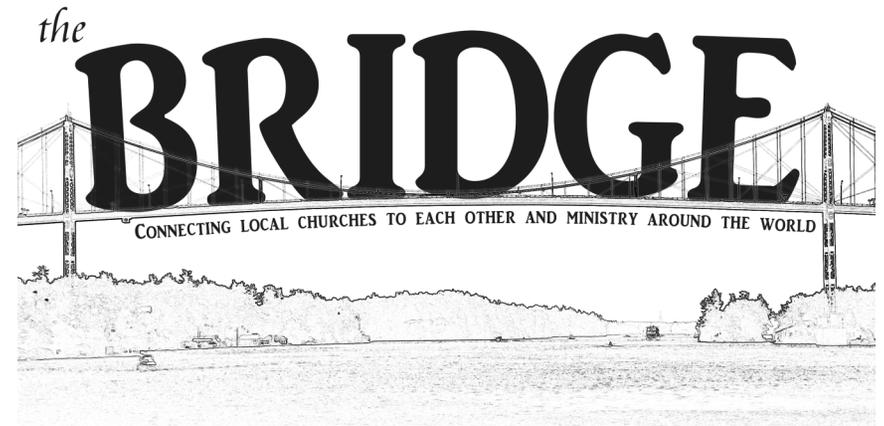
"Symbols can represent completely opposite feelings and experiences for different people," Rev. Kinney said.

Go to www.tinyurl.com/SocialHolinessCommentary082515 to read his complete commentary.

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

"SOW FOR YOURSELVES RIGHTEOUSNESS (AND) REAP STEADFAST LOVE"



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.

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Seneca Street UMC: A haven in Buffalo

By Kathleen Rubino

Though jobs left the area during the Rust Belt Era – and with it many people – one part of Buffalo has a neighbor that will always be there: the Seneca Street United Methodist Church.

As the congregation dwindled from several hundred to a dozen, the Rev. Brian Rotach, pastor at the Seneca Street UMC, said the congregation felt called to connect to the area's children. The church established a Sunday breakfast and dinner to feed the community (about 70 people each week), an after-school program, and a seven-week summer program – which includes a Vacation Bible School, reading camp, and a field trip at the end of each week.

"We're here because the kids are here," Rev. Rotach said.

The church began the programs, but the not-for-profit Seneca Street Community Development Corporation (SSCDC) grows the programs. Cheryl Bird, the

board chair of the SSCDC and wife to Rev. Rotach, started the not-for-profit organization in 2009 to bring additional resources to the area. The SSCDC has developed health, education, and job training initiatives for the community.

"We work together with the residents in the neighborhood to help improve ... their educational opportunities, their job capabilities, their health capabilities, so we can continue to grow the neighborhood to be different for the next generation," Bird said.

The children the church and SSCDC serve face many challenges, including generational poverty and household instability.

"Fortunately, The United Methodist Church is here," Rev. Rotach said. "This has become the district's church and now the (Upper New York) Conference's church. At this moment, there are people from at least eight other United Methodist churches working as volun-

teers among our 80-something children in reading camp today."

One of those churches is the Duluth First UMC in Georgia, Rev. Rotach's sister's church, whose volunteers help with the reading camp for two weeks each summer.

"I think we need more of this," said Charlie Doerlich, a SSCDC reading camp volunteer from Duluth First UMC. "Even though it's just a short two-week period, I think there is a lot to gain both for them (the kids) and for us."

And the church is starting to see results from the programs, as an increasing number of individuals in its programs are graduating from high school.

"I think the church fills a role as it's just a safe place," Bird said. "It's a welcoming place. It's a place where someone will listen to you and care about

you and try and help you."

In addition to the church's other programs, it hosts Narcotics Anonymous meetings, distributes coats in the winter, and handed out food to the community when the November 2014 snow storm buried Buffalo.

Seneca Street UMC has been around for 125 years, but without the generosity of donors, the church would have closed its doors a long time ago. It resides in a very poor neighborhood in Buffalo, and the offering each week is usually less than \$20. Bird calls Seneca Street UMC a "mission church" and joked that it's "the world's biggest recycling bin" that takes donations of any kind to equip the facility. It receives financial support from the United Methodist Women, United Methodist churches, and the Conference.

WATCH A VIDEO ABOUT SENECA STREET UMC AT:



www.vimeo.com/136627834

New Faith Communities director provides update

The Rev. David Masland, Director of New Faith Communities (NFC), gives an update on Upper New York's newest faith communities. "Our mission as United Methodists is always to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," Rev. Masland writes. "And, in Upper New York, we believe one of the most effective ways to do that is to plant new faith communities!"

Go to www.tinyurl.com/NFCUpdate082515 to read more about Upper New York's NFC, including updates on the number of NFCs that are being planted, how the Conference compares to other conferences with planting, where money to plant new communities comes from, and more. Rev. Masland's article is accompanied by graphs of new faith community planting budgets for several United Methodist conferences in the United States.

Participate in *World Week for Peace* in Palestine/Israel

During the week following the *International Day of Prayer for Peace* – Sept. 20-26 – church organizations, congregations, and people of faith are encouraged to make a common witness by participating in worship services, educational events, and acts of advocacy in support of peace for Palestinians/Israelis. The 2015 theme is: "God has broken down the dividing walls."

The Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) of the World Council of Churches invites member churches and faith-based communities to join together for a week of advocacy and action in support of an end to the illegal occupation of Palestine and a just peace for all in Palestine and Israel. Congregations and individuals around the globe who share the hope of justice shall unite during the week to take peaceful actions together to create a common international public witness. Go to www.tinyurl.com/WWforPSept2026 for more information.