

The Golden Cross Program dates back to the earliest days of Methodism in America, when the program primarily supported church-related hospitals and long-term healthcare facilities.

Six United Methodist-affiliated facilities provide a chaplaincy program in Upper New York. This year's Golden Cross offering will be divided equally among the six facilities' chaplaincy programs. They are:

- Beechwood Continuing Care, Getzville (Niagara Frontier District)
- Bethany Village, Horseheads (Mountain View District)
- Folts Center for Rehabilitation and Nursing and Claxton Manor, Herkimer (Mohawk District)
- United Methodist Home at Hilltop Campus, Johnson City (Binghamton District)
- United Methodist Homes at Elizabeth Church Campus, Binghamton (Binghamton District)
- Wesley Gardens, Rochester (Genesee Valley District)

"The chaplaincy programs at our United Methodist institutions are not only a great blessing to those who reside in the care centers, but to their loved ones," said Vicki Putney, Conference Benefits Officer. "Family members have expressed gratitude for the programs and fellowship afforded by the presence of caring spiritual leaders. It is my hope that 2016 will see an increase in the support that we can provide through the United Methodist connection and the Golden Cross offering for the chaplaincy programs in Upper New York."

Although there are no special offering envelopes, churches still need to remit their collected funds on the monthly remittance sheet to the Conference office, with a notation of "Golden Cross."

### Bishop Webb completes 2015-2016 District Days tours

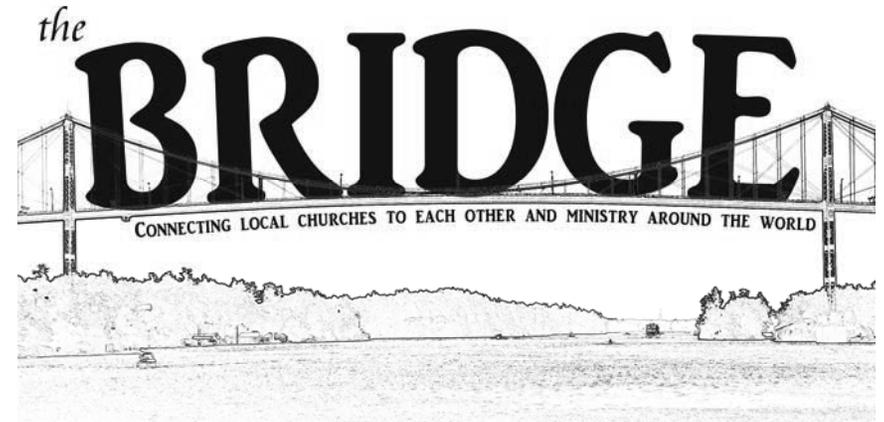
Upper New York Area Resident Bishop Mark J. Webb completed his 2015-2016 District Days tour with visits to the Finger Lakes, Genesee Valley, Mountain View, and Northern Flow districts in March and the Oneonta District in April. The theme of his tour was "Increasing Our Capacity: A Time of Conversation and Encouragement," and it provided conversation sessions for clergy (in the morning and afternoon), district leadership committees (over dinner), and combined laity and clergy (in the evening). Visit the Conference website at <http://tinyurl.com/UNYDistrictDays> to learn more.

Videos from the District Days are also available. For convenience, they have been divided into three shorter videos: Introduction (<https://vimeo.com/162530987>), Wesleyan Ethos (<https://vimeo.com/163267273>), and What it Means to be Radical (<https://vimeo.com/163274937>).

*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](http://www.unyumc.org)

**WISHING ALL MOTHERS A HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY  
ON MAY 8!**



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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# UMC General Conference 101

By Kathleen Rubino

The 2016 General Conference session is fast-approaching, scheduled for May 10-20 in Portland, Ore. So what exactly is General Conference and how does it impact the everyday United Methodist? Read on to find the answers to these questions and more.

## What is General Conference?

General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church, which meets once every four years. It is an international body of nearly 1,000 delegates. The delegates – split evenly between clergy and laity – represent conferences around the world. The Upper New York Conference has six clergy and six laity delegates, in addition to two alternate clergy delegates and two alternate laity delegates. To learn more about our Conference's delegates, visit <http://tinyurl.com/UNYdelegates>.

## What happens during General Conference?

During General Conference, delegates discuss and vote on petitions and resolutions proposed by individuals, agencies, conferences, annual conference sessions, and other groups within the denomination. These actions can result in a

revision to "The Book of Discipline" – the denomination's book of law – and "The Book of Resolutions" – policies of the denomination on current social

issues. At General Conference, the Church's official stance and Church policies are made regarding such issues as human sexuality, abortion, war, and peace as well as determination of ministries and funding.

## How does GC impact me?

- Future goals are set. For example, during the 2012 General Conference session the Four Areas of Focus were supported. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/UMC4AF> for more information.
- Petitions and resolutions are voted upon. Petitions and resolutions impact everything from our public stance on political issues to policies regarding clergy retirement and pensions.
- Future budgets are adopted, including the General Church Oper-



ating budget.

This budget impacts our Conference's General Church Apportionment giving, which will affect local churches' Ministry Share.

- Future plans for Church-wide programs are adopted. For example, last General Conference session, the Church shifted its support from *Nothing but Nets*, which focused on ending malaria only through bed nets, to the more comprehensive initiative *Imagine No Malaria*, which seeks to eradicate malaria in sub-Saharan Africa through distribution of bed nets, communication of life-saving information, improvement of healthcare facilities, and education.
- The guiding principles and policies for the next four years are voted upon at General Conference. This would include changes to "The Book of Discipline" and "The Book of Resolutions."

## How can I connect to GC16?

For more information about this year's General Conference session, please visit <http://www.umc.org/topics/general-conference-2016>.

- To view information related to the Pre-General Conference Briefing held Jan. 20-22 in Portland, Ore., please visit <http://tinyurl.com/GC16-PreCon>.
- Download the GC16 app: <http://tinyurl.com/GC16app>.
- During General Conference, visit the Digital Lounge: <http://tinyurl.com/2016DigitalLounge>.
- Follow or use the hashtag "#umcgc" on social media.
- Follow @UMCGC on Twitter or "2016 General Conference Worship UMC" on Facebook.
- A live stream will be available at [www.GC2016.UMC.org](http://www.GC2016.UMC.org).
- The [www.unyumc.org](http://www.unyumc.org) website and social media will become a hub for all things General Conference with an Upper New York Conference perspective.

For more information about what happens at General Conference and how it affects local congregations, visit <http://tinyurl.com/jxr2xve>.

## **IN BRIEF** The Golden Cross Sunday offering helps to support chaplaincy programs

The Golden Cross Sunday offering is an annual appeal to the members of the Upper New York Conference to help support benevolent services.

In Upper New York, the offering is traditionally received in May, giving congrega-

tions the flexibility to designate any date in the month that best suits their schedule.

Across the denomination, these Conference-wide offerings are used to support health and welfare ministries, such as chaplaincy programs, disability awareness ministries, parish nursing education programs, and AIDS ministries as well as the more traditional programs.

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