

give generously you are supporting these students as they prepare for a life that unites faith with knowledge. What no one person or congregation can do alone, we're doing together. This is the beauty of the United Methodist Connection. Learn more about United Methodist Student's Day at umcsgiving.org.



In Brief

Christmas in the HUB

As Advent approaches and we prepare to celebrate Christmas, we invite you to remember those impacted by disasters as you are doing your Christmas shopping. Christmas in the HUB returns this and will kick off the day after Thanksgiving. Visit <https://vimeo.com/372383601> to learn more about Christmas in the HUB.



While you are shopping for your loved ones this year, please consider using the Upper New York Mission Central HUB Amazon wish lists to purchase items that will help those in need following disasters. You can purchase items for the following kits:

School Kit (<http://bit.ly/schoolkitwishlist>)

Cleaning Kit (<http://bit.ly/cleaningkitwishlist>)

Hygiene Kit (<http://bit.ly/hygienekitwishlist>)

Information of different ways to make cash donations is available at <https://www.unyumc.org/mission/donate-to-mission-central>.

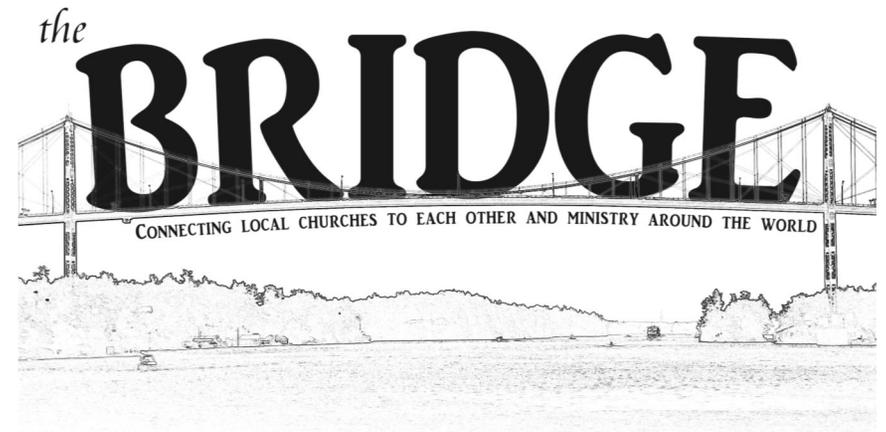
Anyone who makes a cash or supply donation will have their name written on an ornament and placed on the Christmas tree in the HUB.

You are also invited to come to the HUB and take part in Christmas festivities while you work to support those impacted by disaster or hold an event locally though the HUB on the road program. To learn more, about how you can be a part of Christmas in the HUB and support those impacted by disaster contact Mike Block at mikeblock@unyumc.org or (315) 898-2066.

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. For more news and stories visit:

www.unyumc.org

Connect with United Methodists from Upper New York and around the world by following the Upper New York Conference on Facebook at:
<https://www.facebook.com/uppernewyork/>



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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View Advent through a larger lens this season

Do you hear the same Advent story, told the same way year after year? The Rev. Grace Imathiu wants to change that. She was the featured speaker at the 2019 Upper New York Bishop's Retreat held Oct. 22-24 at the RIT Inn in Rochester, NY. There, she encouraged UNY clergy to take a different approach to telling the Advent story.

Rev. Imathiu took the attendees on an Advent journey unlike any other. She examined the story of the birth of Jesus through a larger lens. Her goal was to have the attendees leaving the Bishop's Retreat, "feeling rejuvenated, excited, and having some pieces in place for [their] Advent and Christmas Eve services."

Rev. Imathiu prefaced the Advent story by reminding the audience that the setting was one of chaos, much like today's society. Shepherds were told to "go back where they came from...back to where their ancestors came from."

Rev. Imathiu said that the first Sunday of Advent must look at the "end times," the apocalyptic, because there are so many "end times" in the Bible, throughout history, and in the pews. She said, "There are 'end times' somewhere every day. The Word of God tells me not to be afraid of 'end times' when they come...Leaving behind the Promised Land was 'end times;' when the temple was ransacked and burnt down to the ground, it was 'end times;' when

Africans were kidnapped, abducted and trafficked to the new world, it was end times; when Jews were rounded up for gas chambers, it was 'end times;' when apartheid was made law on African soil, it was 'end times.'"

"Living in end times is a human condition," Rev. Imathiu continued. She listed the following as apocalyptic moments that people in the pews could relate to:

- The realization that Social Security or pension is not guaranteed
- The lost of a loved one
- Terminal illness
- Divorce
- Having children with drug addictions.

Rev. Imathiu showed a video of the awareness test from Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris. The video shows people in white t-shirts and people in black t-shirts tossing a basketball back and forth. The audience had to count how many times the basketball was tossed back and forth between the players in the white t-shirts. What people don't notice as they are fixated on counting the passes, is that a gorilla appears on the screen.

Rev. Imathiu said, "If you want to see the gorilla, God, you have to go off the grid."

Referring to the first sermon of Advent, Rev. Imathiu said, "The world as you know it, you have to let it go if you are going to prepare for Christ."

Traditionally, the first candle of Ad-

vent, symbolizes hope. Rev. Imathiu urges pastors to keep in mind the apocalyptic and encourage their congregation to "Let go and Let God."

On the second Sunday of Advent, where the candle lit traditionally symbolizes the need to repent, Rev. Imathiu pointed out that this is where people should start to make a 180-degree turn, to consider how they can change their life. Rev. Imathiu retold the story of John the Baptist urging people to repent. She suggests that after people, "let go," it may be a good day for the congregation to "get dunked" or renew their baptismal vows.

For the third Sunday of Advent, the theme is to see. Rev. Imathiu asked the audience to consider "the 'only God' things that are evidence of his kingdom."

She said that while incarcerated John the Baptist did an 'only God' thing. She referenced lyrics from Bob Marley's Redemption song, "Emancipate yourself from mental slavery. None but ourselves can free our minds." That is what John did.

Rev. Imathiu pointed to many 'God things' evident through churches; she emphasized churches who welcome and accept those who are oppressed.

And finally, for the fourth Sunday of Advent Rev. Imathiu mentioned that it would be a good idea to remind congregations that "God colors outside the



lines." She said that the fourth Sunday of Advent may also serve as a Father's Day in December.

Rev. Imathiu told pastors that for this Advent, they can be effective by shifting their message the way she has outlined, but that everything else can remain consistent with previous years.

She said somewhat sarcastically, "I know you are excited about preaching already." But then she reminded everyone that "The hymns are going to support the message, so you don't have to do all of it in one sermon; you have prayers; you have testimonials; you have welcome; and you also have the visuals around you for support as you [take] the journey towards Bethlehem."

The significance of United Methodist Student's Day

November 24 is United Methodist Student's Day. This is your opportunity to join millions of other United Methodists to provide scholarships to deserving re-

cipients. Each year, the United Methodist Student Day offering raises up to \$400,000 and helps more than 300 scholars. Right now, there are UMC

young people—who might not have had the resources to attend a school of their choice, or, for some, any school at all—who've been sent by you into the world

God loves because of your giving to United Methodist Student Day. When you

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