

**North Central New York Conference
of the New York West Area
of The United Methodist Church**

The Rev. Dr. Marcus Matthews
Resident Bishop of the New York West Area
1010 East Avenue, Rochester NY 14607
585-271-3400

The Rev. Dr. Stephen T. Deckard
Director of Connectional Ministries
8422 North Main Street, Cicero NY 13039
315-699-8715, Ext. 316
E-mail: steve@ncnyumc.org

Conference Website: [NCNYUMC.org](http://www.NCNYUMC.org)

Connections Editor:
Editor, PO Box 1515, Cicero, NY 13039
315-699-8715; e-mail: connections@ncnyumc.org

Central Lakes District:
DS: The Rev. Deborah O'Connor-Slater
Administrative Assistant and Editor: Lisa Grinnell
Suite 104, Metcalf Plaza, 144 Genesee St., Auburn NY 13021
315-258-0756; fax: 315-258-0758;
e-mail: CentralLakes@verizon.net
District web page: <http://www.CentralLakes.org>

Crossroads District
The Heart of New York
DS: The Rev. David Underwood
PO Box 505, Baldwinsville, NY 13027
315-635-4873; fax: 315-635-5005;
e-mail: DavidUnderwood@ncnyumc.org
Administrative Assistant: Kathy Spurchise
e-mail: KathySpurchise@ncnyumc.org
District web page: <http://www.CrossroadsDistrict.org>

Finger Lakes District:
DS: The Rev. Richard Barton
1 Franklin Square, Suite 301 Box 4, Geneva, NY 14456
315-781-0118; e-mail: rekba@alltel.net
Editor: Raymond Finger, 145 Daffodil Dr.,
Horseheads NY 14845-1805
607-796-2956; e-mail: RayFinger@yahoo.com
District web page: <http://www.gbgn-umc.org/fld>

Mohawk District:
DS: The Rev. Dr. Sung Ho Lee
Administrative Assistant: Cindy Muder
105 Genesee St., New Hartford NY 13413-2387
Voice/Fax: 315-797-1777;
e-mail: MohawkDistrict@centralny.twcbc.com
Editor: Annette Tongue, 401 Park St., Herkimer NY 13350
315-866-3274; e-mail: annette.tongue@verizon.net
District web page: <http://www.mohawkdistrictumc.org>

Northern Flow District:
DS: The Rev. Beth Benham
Administrative Assistant: Susie Jones
PO Box 272, Heuvelton, NY 13654
315-344-6493; fax: 315-344-6494;
e-mail: nflowdistrict@yahoo.com
Editor: Penni Farrington, PO Box 129, Philadelphia NY 13673
e-mail: packerfan1952@yahoo.com

Casowasco Camp, Conference and Retreat Center
158 Casowasco Dr. Moravia, NY 13118
phone: 315-364-8756 fax: 315-364-7636
e-mail: info@Casowasco.org
Website: www.Casowasco.org

Aldersgate Camp and Retreat Center
7955 Brantingham Road, Greig, NY 13345
phone: 315-348-8833 fax: 315-348-4297
e-mail: info@AldersgateNY.org
Website: www.AldersgateNY.org

United Methodist Resource Center
Darryl Barrow, director
A lending library for all your media needs
8422 North Main St., PO Box 1515,
Cicero, NY 13039
phone: 800-699-8715 or 315-699-3042
e-mail: Darryl@ncnyumc.org
website: www.ncnyumc.org/resource_ctr.html

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Connections@ncnyumc.org.

Financial Perspective by Pat Curtin



As I write this piece in early May the buds are opening on the trees and blossoms are appearing in Central New York. These are signs of new birth and hope, just as the Easter season was during April.

Not knowing when this issue of CONNECTIONS will be published makes me hesitate in making comments about the economic climate because it can fluctuate so sharply. But I hope you realize I am writing this as there is an "up-tick" with hopeful signs in several economic indicators.

The financial environment looks very different in the first week in May compared to the last week in February. There are signs of hope. We never saw any wavering from our local churches in their payment of Shared Ministry in the NCNY Conference. Through the first four months, we actually saw an increase of \$39,000 or 4.6% in shared ministry giving over the same four months last year. This is a sign of the deep commitment of our members for the good work of the Annual Conference.

Many financial advisors recommended investors "stay the course" through the months of downturn last fall and through the

winter. While we did understand that investment values would eventually stop falling, it was hard at times to see that things would indeed be okay in the future.

So what most individuals did was cut back on spending as much as they could, to be prudent. That savings made their own financial situations more stable, but the ripple effect went through the retail industry.

When retail sales are down, those companies cut workers. When workers lose their jobs, retail spending decreases further. This spiral seems to be leveling off. While the impact is still rippling through the auto industry, and other significant employers, we do seem to have hit bottom and see some positive signs of hope. In particular, the stabilization of the financial services industry is fundamental for shoring up so many other industries such as the housing industry. There are signs of improved consumer confidence.

As an Annual Conference we did make adjustments early on. The spending budget was cut 5%

for the first six months of 2009, and we continue to operate within budget. The investment portfolio has continued to grow in market value since the first week in March. There are signs that we as an Annual Conference will weather this financial storm. One difficult area that

the Cabinet is working on is the Direct Bill Arrearages. There is an unusually high balance outstanding for clergy pension and health care. The District Superintendents are working with each delinquent church to help care for these items of clergy support.

So in spite of the hardships that are around us, we as a denomination and as an Annual Conference continue the good work of providing ministry and good mission work to those in need. Your financial support as well as the contribution of your time and service are recognized and greatly appreciated.

Peace and All Good Things,
Pat Curtin
Conference Treasurer

Statistical Tables

One of the most important ways The United Methodist allocates its resources to the vital areas of mission and ministry is through the analysis of data collected each year through the Statistical Tables. Thanks to each member who worked to turn in their 2008 report on time. Unfortunately, not all churches submitted their reports for 2008. The following churches either sent partial or no reports for 2008. As we move toward the formation of the new Annual Conference, we hope we can improve the participation in this important Connectional work.

Central Lakes

- Caroline Federated
- Danby Federated
- Harmony
- Scott

Crossroads

- Camillus First
- Cicero Center
- Delphi Falls United
- Fabius
- Manlius
- Onativia
- Tully United

Finger Lakes

- Avoca
- Big Flats:Hillview
- Cameron Mills
- Catlin
- Coopers Plains
- Dundee
- Elmira:Epworth
- Elmira:Riverside
- Erin
- Italy Valley
- Lowman
- Mitchellsville
- Newark:First
- Pine Valley
- Rathbone
- Sullivanville
- Wellsburg
- Woodhull

Mohawk

- Remsen
- Sherrill
- Westernville

Northern Flow

- Barnes Corners
- Beaver Falls
- Buckton
- Champion
- Copenhagen United
- Degrasse
- DeKalb Junction
- Depeyster
- Edwards
- Galilee
- Great Bend:
- Woolworth Memorial
- Grindstone Island
- Henderson
- Hermon
- Heuvelton
- Kendrew
- Malone
- Naumburg:Beaver Valley
- Russell
- South Edwards
- Waddington