

news briefs:

Duke Divinity School creates alliance with 15 churches

DURHAM, N.C. (UMNS) – Church Street United Methodist Church is one of 15 churches across the country that will team with Duke University Divinity School in a program to develop a new generation of effective pastors.

The churches, which stretch from San Antonio to Greenwich, Conn., were chosen for their strong pastoral leadership and vital congregational ministries, said Dean L. Gregory Jones, who announced the initiative Jan. 9.

Duke students will be assigned to the churches to develop ministries linked to divinity school program areas such as end-of-life care, parish nursing, Christian formation of youth, catechesis and sustained learning. The program, known as Teaching Congregations, is the newest component of the Learned Clergy Initiative. The \$10 million effort, funded through a grant by Lilly Endowment Inc., is aimed at inspiring a new generation of clergy to view ministry as a fulfilling vocation.

Nine of the 15 congregations are United Methodist and include Church Street UMC, Knoxville, Tenn.; Hyde Park UMC, Tampa, Fla.; and Jarvis Memorial UMC, Greenville, N.C.

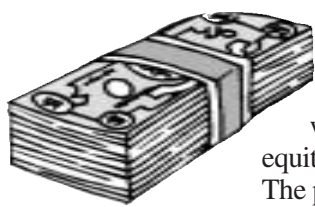
Mission agency voices concerns about detentions

NEW YORK (UMNS) – The United Methodist Board of Global Ministries is expressing concern about the detention of immigrants and the use of military tribunals as anti-terrorism measures by the U.S. government.

“Immigrants and other marginalized persons and communities have increasingly become the targets of heightened government suspicion and harassment,” the agency noted in its “Statement on Anti-Terrorism Measures and Human Rights Issues,” posted just before Christmas on the board’s Web site at http://gbgm-umc.org/global_news.

Pointing out that several countries had adopted new policies affecting immigrants since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, the statement said, “While it is a government’s responsibility to insure the well-being and safety of people, it is also government’s responsibility to respect the fundamental human rights of all people.”

The denomination’s mission agency has a long track record in supporting immigrants and refugees, both on its own and through Church World Service and other ecumenical groups.

Temporary General Aid Fund fulfills mission

(UMNS) With a final payment of \$11,000 to an annual conference in the South, the United Methodist Church has fulfilled a commitment made 37 years ago, when the denomination saw a need for ensuring pay equity among clergy members as a result of integration. The payment was made late last year to the Mississippi

Annual Conference account at the denomination’s Board of Pension and Health Benefits, concluding an important chapter in the church’s history. It signaled the termination of the Temporary General Aid Fund, which had collected and distributed about \$23 million since its creation by the 1964 General Conference.

The fund was created to raise the level of pensions and minimum salaries for clergy in the former Central Jurisdiction and the Rio Grande Annual Conference, serving African-American and Hispanic members, respectively. The Central Jurisdiction was the Methodist Church’s racially segregated, non-geographical jurisdiction, formed in 1939 and eliminated with the 1968 union of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches. ■

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who said that?

“I want an apology, because there was a nun covered from head to toe, and they didn’t make her take it off. I only cover my head, and they didn’t do anything to her.”

Enaas Sansour, 17, a junior at the Islamic Saudi Academy in Alexandria, Va., speaking about being forced in December by a male airline security screener at Baltimore-Washington International Airport to remove her head scarf.

surveys:

Protestant pastors: Great preachers, poor fund-raisers

(RNS) Protestant pastors tend to rate themselves highly as preachers and teachers but don’t consider themselves to be good fund-raisers, a new survey shows.

More than 80 percent of senior pastors surveyed by the Barna Research Group said they believed they were above average in preaching and teaching, encouraging people and pastoring.

Ninety percent said they were “excellent” or “good” at preaching and teaching. Eighty-five percent said they were above average in encouraging people and 82 percent said they were above average in pastoring or shepherding people.

The only area in the survey of 11 aspects of pastoral work in which a majority did not claim to do an excellent or good job was in fund raising. Thirty-one percent of the senior pastors surveyed said they were above average in raising money while 37 percent said they were “average” in that area. Twenty-three percent said they were “not too good” or “poor” at fund raising.

Pastors of charismatic churches gave themselves more positive ratings than did pastors of fundamentalist churches. Pastors who described themselves as having a “liberal” theology – one-fifth of those surveyed – rated themselves more positively than those leading charismatic and fundamentalist congregations.

The survey, consisting of telephone interviews of a random nationwide sample of 601 senior pastors of Protestant churches, was conducted in October and November 2001.

One quarter of Web surfers looking for religion

(RNS) One in four adults who surf the Internet are looking for religious and spiritual material, according to a new survey released last month by the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

The telephone poll of 500 Internet users found more people seeking spirituality on the Web than a year ago – 28 million, up from 20 million last year.

These so-called “religion surfers” are more likely to use the Web for expanding their religious horizons than they are to visit sites for online gambling, auctions, stock trading or banking, the survey found.

Elena Larsen, the report’s author and a Pew research fellow, said the Web – with its wide array of reference and educational material – is an inviting place for religious minorities, new converts and people who might be shy meeting others face-to-face. “The Internet fills many niches for religious people,” Larsen said.

The vast majority of religion surfers – 84 percent – already belong to a house of worship and are more involved in regular worship than the general population. Sixty-nine percent said they were looking for reference materials to enhance their own religious knowledge, and 23 percent of Web surfers said they accessed the Web to find information about Islam. The poll was conducted before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, when Islam gained new prominence.

Only 27 percent said surfing the Web had improved their personal spiritual lives, and 53 percent saw a danger that the Web could provide a forum for dangerous religious fringe groups. ■

Convocation promises, continued from page 1

Swanson, director of operation evangelization with the Lakeland-based Florida Annual Conference since 1999.

Also appearing at the convocation will be the Rev. Judith Anna presenting “The Labyrinth: Journey to the Center” and Mike Pinner on “Understanding Islam.”

Through devotions, workshops, lectures, worship and fellowship, the convocation will help Holston ministers “concentrate on our proclamation of the Gospel to the community of faith and 21st century culture,” said the Rev. Kim Goddard, Wesley Institute director. “We’ve got a great program this year. It’s

practical as well as spiritually uplifting.”

In years past, about 250 Holston ministers have participated in the convocation but Goddard says she hopes for higher attendance this year, given the nation’s tumultuous times.

The cost is \$45 for the program plus accommodations. Full participation earns 2 continuing education credits. To register, call (423) 928-2156. Or, visit www.holston.org; go to the drop-down menu at the top of the page; go to “Wesley Institute”; then click on “Upcoming Events.” ■