



Those who wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles....Isaiah 40:31 [nrsv]

Wings

A FAITHLETTER FOR, BY AND ABOUT
UNITED METHODISTS WITH DISABILITIES

Winter 2002 — Vol. 12 Issue 3 No. 47

FROM WHERE I SIT By Jo D'Archangelis

An interview with Kimberly Sue Lovett of Armageddon City, Texas, the 2002 Ms. America's Wheelchair Sweetheart :

JD: Tell me, Kimberly Sue, how does it feel to be Ms. America's Wheelchair Sweetheart?

KSJ: I am just so grateful to God to have been chosen to represent people of my ilk and have the opportunity to show to the world that we're just like everybody else...we're no different...we're the same.

JD: I assume you're referring to people with disabilities. How did you come to be in the wheelchair?

KSJ: I try to avoid using the word "disability." It has such a negative connotation. I prefer the term "challenged to the max." I was born with a rare genetic condition that fused my legs together and coated them with shiny scales.

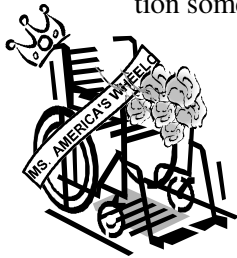
JD: You must have had a difficult childhood.

KSJ: No, not at all, my family, my teachers, my friends, all treated me like I was normal. I went to parties, played soccer, and was the national poster child for the Loreleius Congenitus Foundation — until the age of 11 when I began to "blossom" as we say back home. Why, my friends used to always say they'd forget I was even in a wheelchair...Sometimes I wish they'd remember, especially when they'd all drive away in their cars to go to the movies and leave me on the sidewalk. Then there was that guy who stood me up at the senior prom...But, goodness gracious, those were just teensy-tiny, insignificant events in my life. I was a happy child and a happy teenager, and now I am a happy Ms. America's Wheelchair Sweetheart.

JD: I see in your bio that you have accomplished quite a bit in spite of your...challenge. Could you mention some of your achievements?

KSJ: Let's see now, I have a Ph.D. in biogenetic engineering from Harvard. I won a Grammy for my country-gospel album, "I'm Here To Inspire You." And I have a black belt in Wheelchair Karate. Hyyaah!

JD: My, you do have a formidable chop there — it just missed me by a



hair. Speaking of which, I see you also have your own line of beauty products.

KSJ: Yes indeed, Kimberly Sue's Inspirational Makeup and Haircare Products. Our company slogan is: "You may be challenged, but for heaven's sake you don't have to look it."

JD: What is your philosophy of life?

KSJ: I've always believed that I can do anything I want to do and be anything I want to be. Limitations, obstacles, barriers are only in your mind. All you have to do is think positively and have faith in yourself. Oh, and in God too.

JD: What part does your faith in God play in your life?

KSJ: Well, I just don't think it's God's idea for me to be like this. He wouldn't have given me legs if he wanted me to ride around in a little go-cart all my life. This is all the devil's doing. So I know deep in my soul that someday God will miraculously heal me and I will rise up out of this wheelchair and tromp all over him. Meantime...

JD: Meantime?

KSJ: I have this little company called Kimberly Sue's Eugenics Inc. We're working with stem cells from baby carp to find a cure for Loreleius Congenitus. Heck, if I can't get out of this wheelchair one way, I'll get out of it another thank you very much.

NEW DISABILITY MINISTRIES COORDINATOR FOR CAL-PAC CONFERENCE SELECTED

At the November meeting of the Disability Ministries Task Force of the California-Pacific Conference, Rev. Jerry and Juda Carter were selected to fill the new position of Disability Ministries Coordinator on an interim volunteer basis. Rev. Jerry Carter, an Ordained Deacon in this Conference, has lived for several years with aphasia, a condition in which he has difficulty assimilating spoken language. Juda Carter is a trained social worker. Longtime members of Shepherd of the Hills UMC in Mission Viejo (Calif.), the Carters have ministered with people with disabilities of all types and have a strong commitment to accessibility within the United Methodist Church.

"Jerry and I want to meet with congregations to emphasize outreach and training in ministering with people with disabilities," said Juda Carter. "The suggested format is for us to be guests in a Conference church on a Sunday morning. Jerry can be guest speaker for the sermon, and we would have a short time to meet with the congregation after worship. I would then speak a little about this outreach and invite people to support the ministry in a number of ways, including financial contributions to help make the Disability Ministries Coordinator a full-time position in the conference."

Included in the presentation would be "a very powerful" four-minute video in which various people with disabilities share their stories. "We want to thank the Task Force [now known as the Disability Ministries Advisory Committee] for their faith in us," concluded Carter. "We are very excited by the prospects of this ministry and would be happy to respond to suggestions and questions from both those who are disabled and those who are able-bodied within the church."

The Carters are currently in the process of scheduling speaking engagements at local churches and may be reached by e-mail, Judaathome@aol.com (Juda Carter), Reverendjdc@aol.com (Rev. Jerry Carter), or telephone, [949] 855-8297.



OUR READERS ON WINGS AND OTHER THINGS

(Editor's Note: Reader communications published in Wings are subject to alteration in regard to grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity, length, and the whims of the editor.)

"SIGHTLINESS," AYE; RAMP, NO

I am a [wheelchair-borne postpolio and] member of the First United Methodist Church in Dow City, Iowa. The church is the oldest one in our town and is not accessible. There was a chance to make it accessible by replacing some crumbling steps with a ramp, but perhaps to preserve the historical look of the building the ramp was voted down. This is a very small church, membership under 50 people, and like most churches is struggling to meet expenses.

...I have spoken to my minister and tried very hard to influence the board when I was a member, but they really don't want to hear about it. They think it will be too expensive, and I suspect that one influential member of the administrative board sees ramps as "unsightly."

Do you know of any grants or funding that would help this church become accessible? I miss being able to go to church. I was Sunday School Superintendent, President of UMW, and a member of the Administrative Board, besides helping on various committees. Now I can't get in at all.

Millie Malone
Dow City, Iowa
milmal@frontiernet.net

Some United Methodist Conferences have grant programs to help churches become more accessible. We suggest you get in touch with your own Conference and/or District Office

and ask them what resources are available, if any, for local churches.

We also suggest you get hold of a booklet entitled "**Money and Ideas: Creative Approaches to Congregational Access.**" Published jointly by the Religion & Disability Program of the National Organization on Disability (NOD) and the Alban Institute, the 32-page booklet gives brief stories of 50 congregations, limited in funds, who used innovative ideas and strategies to raise money for accessibility projects. "Money and Ideas" also features an annotated "Selected Resources" section listing helpful books, periodicals, organizations, and websites.

Each booklet is \$3.50 (includes S&H). Contact Lorraine Thal, Religion and Disability Program, National Organization on Disability, 910-16th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20006, telephone: (202)293-5960, e-mail: relig-ion@nod.org, website: www.nod.org.

LARGE PRINT/BRAILLE BIBLES AND UMC HYMNALS?

Is there a place that one can purchase the UMC Hymnal in large print as well as giant-size print Bibles? I also would like to know of a place where I can find several copies of the Bible in Braille and their cost.

William B. Meekins, Jr.
Garden City UMC
Monroeville, Pennsylvania
WBMEEKINSJ@aol.com

Many thanks to Rev. Tom Reinhart-

Marean, Pastor of Visitation, First United Methodist Church, Pasadena (Calif.), e-mail: tomwmrm@hotmail.com, for the following information:

Large-print edition Bibles and UMC Hymnals are available through the **Cokesbury online bookstore** at www.cokesbury.com. For large-print Bibles, go to the search section in the upper left corner of the home page and type "large print bibles" (include quotation marks) and press "enter" or click on "go." The resulting list has the King James Version and the New Revised Standard Version in large print.

For large-print hymnals, click on the "Music" tab at the top of the home page. On the next page, click on "View by Subject" in the left margin and then, on the next page, click on "Music Supplies & Resources." This will get you a page with a column of UM Hymnal editions in the upper left. Highlight and click on the "Large Print Edition." For the Braille edition of the UM Hymnal, simply highlight and click on "Other Major Editions."

Cokesbury, however, doesn't seem to carry Braille versions of the Bible. We suggest you contact Braille Bibles International (www.braillebibles.org), Bibles For the Blind and Visually Impaired International (www.biblesfortheblind.org), or the American Bible Society (www.americanbible.org).

(For the Internet-challenged among us, Cokesbury's telephone number is 800-672-1789.)



SUSAN LEMLY'S BOOK ON "ME!" PUBLISHED

Seven years ago the Rev. Dr. Susan Lemly, United Methodist minister ordained in the California-Pacific Annual Conference, decided to write a book. "Well," said Lemly, who is wheelchair-borne with multiple sclerosis, "Four years of writing, one of editing, and two of looking for a publisher later, it's here!"

In her book, *Christian Discipleship and ME! Narcissism's Impact Upon Our Understanding of Christian Discipleship*, Lemly discusses what she calls "the alarming movement of contemporary Christian thought and its acceptance of our culture's narcissism — the 'me first, I'm worth it, I deserve it' mindset which is defended, indeed applauded, by some amorphous 'spirit.'"

"God's love and the sacrifice of Jesus for our redemption are spoken of in soft, sentimental terms by our contemporary Christian clergy," she says. "No judgment of our actions is given, no repentance is required, no forgiveness is necessary nor need it be offered to another."

(LEMLY continued on page 4)



A non-official, non-profit quarterly newsletter published for, by and about United Methodist adults with disabling conditions

Founder/Editor Computer Layout
Graphic Design Jo D'Archangelis

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E-Wings An e-mail version of *Wings* posted quarterly in unformatted text without graphics is available by contacting Jo D'Archangelis at JODARLIS@aol.com.

Wings Website Selected articles from *Wings* issues 1995-98 may be found at www.satcom.net/mariposa/find_wings.html.

Donations Most of the funding for *Wings'* publication and mailing comes from reader donations. There are no subscription fees. If you think *Wings* is worth it, please make a check or money order payable to the "Fallbrook United Methodist Church" (or "FUMC") and mark it "Wings Newsletter." Mail it to the church address below.

Basic Angel	\$6-\$14	Major Angel	\$15-\$24
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THE GIFT OF THE MESSIAH

By Garlinda Burton



Browne, my high school teacher, was in the frustrating twilight of what had been an exciting, full life. She had been a young woman ahead of her time, a musician in New York during Harlem's heyday. Never married, she had been friends and had had late-night parties and jam sessions with Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Count Basie. She had moved from New York to High Point, North Carolina, during the segregated 1950s to teach in the town's only black high school.

Browne was a woman who refused to let the racial divide hold her or her students back. She taught violin, voice, and piano to country folks' children. She encouraged young people who had never dreamed of attending college to do so and helped pay their tuition. And she made a name for herself by putting on a production of Handel's *Messiah* every Christmas.

The community came to know and support these annual *Messiah* concerts, and graduates of Browne's music class returned year after year to sing with her, extending their Christmas vacations in order to attend rehearsals, compete for solos, and participate in the one-night-only annual *Messiah* reunions.

The Christmas of 1993, Browne's last, was a hard one. Felled by a series of strokes, she couldn't talk (and she had been a non-stop talker). She was in a nursing home instead of her own memento-crammed duplex. She had pushed away her supper and was sitting sullen when I dropped in to visit her. I had skipped Christmas Eve worship, because it didn't seem like Christmas Eve without Browne there to play the violin at midnight, and I couldn't bear the thought of her being alone while I was out wassailing.

Browne could only wave her hands to communicate with me. She smiled and nodded when I understood what she was trying to say. But I missed most of it, and when I failed to catch her meaning she gave me her unmistakable look of impatient disappointment and fell back against her pillows. We both sat there in agony.

But that night I had brought along a cassette tape from a concert nearly ten years earlier — a recording that my mother had made of the *Messiah* concert when I had sung my first solo. (Of the ten or so years that I had sung with Browne, I had won only two solos, which I still consider among my life's finest achievements!) I popped the tape

in, and as the first strains of "Comfort Ye My People" sounded, Browne sat bolt upright in bed. Arms out, she smiled and began to conduct, just as she had for the previous 40 years. She conducted and I sang on cue, not just my solo but the entire alto line — once you learned it under Browne, you never forgot it.

A nurse came in with Browne's medication and stood in amazement. "She's singing! She's really singing!" she said to me. I nodded and Browne shushed her curtly. No talking was ever allowed when Browne conducted a concert. The nurse was joined by orderlies and aids, all standing silent, astonished that the tiny woman who couldn't utter a word suddenly was conducting an intricate piece of music.

At Browne's insistence, I kept singing alto and she sang tenor — I may have been imagining or wishful, but

she seemed to sing the words perfectly. We sang until the end, when she made me stand up for the "Hallelujah Chorus." I'll never forget her look of pure ecstasy as we sang our "hallelujahs" in tandem and in perfect harmony. It was a look I had always coveted in her class. She was pleased with me. I had done well.

When the tape ended, the staff, Browne's roommate, and I applauded. Browne bowed dramatically and eloquently, just as she always had.

Browne died the following spring. But she lives on in us, her students. And each of us — factory workers, ex-cons, housewives, nurses, journalists — still know our parts and can sing them in perfect harmony, a lasting gift from our music teacher, a tie that will always bind. Every Christmas I recall with a smile that last Christmas Eve, when Browne found her voice again and we performed together. It was the best Christmas gift that I've ever given — or received.

From *Alive Now* [November/December 1999]

Editor's Note: Originally written for the Association of Physically Challenged Ministers in the United Methodist Church, this hymn applies equally well to all of us called to ministry in the church.

CELEBRATE CHALLENGE

O praise our Creator, Redeemer, and Friend,
Who called us as shepherds God's children to tend.
And given us talents, lives laden with gifts;
Our darkening clouds to new bright skies God lifts.

Though sound and mobility, sight are not ours,
Yet lives rich with blessings our God on us showers.
We hear that voice calling, "I need you to go,
For my ways, my truths, and my glories to show."

My grace is sufficient, God to us has said,
So weariness, pain, and despair we must shed.
With legs that are stilled on God's pathways we lead,
With hands lacking motion God's creatures we feed.

With tongues that are silent, with voices thus mute,
We sing out our praises with harp and with flute.
With ears hearing not a friend's words most sincere,
We yet hear the song of the angels ring clear.

We celebrate challenge and grateful we feel
That as wounded healers the once lost we heal.
Yes, touching and healing are part of God's work;
We pray that our calling we never will shirk.

Our eyes now are clouded and lacking in sight,
Yet still looking East to the clear, radiant light.
Oh, take now our full lives and gather our hearts
That each to a world lost in pain love imparts.

With Christ leading we focus not on our loss
But eagerly carry our share of the cross.
The spirit infuses with grace from above,
Empowers and quickens all work done in love.

TEXT: Rev. Dr. Helen Betenbaugh, 1990

TUNE: ST. DENIO ("Immortal, Invisible") Welsh Melody 11.11.11
[Alternate Tunes: Anniversary Song, 87; Foundation, 529; Gordon, 172]

“TEN COMMANDMENTS” FOR OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

By Rev. Harold Wilke

I. I am God, your Creator. I have brought you out of bondage. Liberation is a sign of the life I give you.

II. Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. You shall be wholly before me — the entire congregation, excluding no one because of disability. I am God to whom *all* shall have access; you may place no barriers before me.

III. I name you my children; therefore, let no one else define my sons and daughters. Call no one “crippled” or “disabled.” They are persons — persons *with* disabilities.

IV. Fear not one another. I know the confusion of your embarrassment, your fears, your anxieties. Your brother’s or your sister’s disability confronts you; you too are vulnerable. You are both in my care. You are one in my sight.

V. Know that I your God have placed good in all of you. You shall not look down upon or patronize the person with a disability. Recognize that the personhood you share in common is far greater than the differences disability creates.

VI. Your cup runs over with the fullness of life I give you. In your human way you define that abundant life to include response to me in worship, intimacy with one another, education,

employment, a place to live, transportation, meaningful activity, cultural expression, and civic responsibility.

From these opportunities you may not exclude those you call disabled. Your rights are their rights.

VII. I place within you varied gifts, abilities, strengths. Do not forget these same abilities, insights, and knowledge are in those you call disabled, crying out for expression.

VIII. Be grateful for the qualities of life within persons with disabilities which in turn engender within all of you perseverance, humor, coping abilities, patience, and creative victory.

IX. Recognize that in the commonality you all share, there is also frustration, anger, anxiety and despair, reminding you all of your common frailty and your common need for wholeness and salvation, and calling you to mission to provide succor and justice for all.

X. Hold fast to my assurance to all humankind that goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life and you will dwell in my house forever.

Adapted from a presentation given by Rev. Wilke at the United Nations, New York, celebrating the International Year of Persons With Disabilities

OOPS, WE DID IT AGAIN! DEPT.

- The correct e-mail address for Tina Heron (“An Infliction Of Healing,” *Wings*, Fall 2001) is TinaMariaHeron@aol.com, *not* TinaMarieHeron@aol.com.
- Thanks to alert reader Susan Lemly we learn that “A Psalm of Comfort” attributed to “Anonymous” (*Wings*, Fall 2001) was written by Leslie F. Brandt and published in his book *Psalms/Now* under the title of “Psalm 23.”

(LEMLY continued from page 2)



“I attempt to illuminate this heresy and suggest ways to rectify the problem. I hope my book will provide enlightenment for the individual reader and ample fodder for discussion groups.”

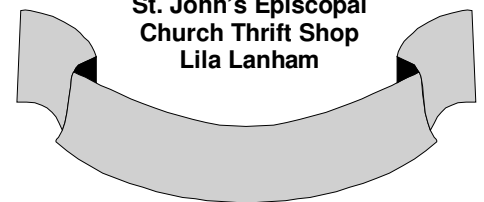
Anyone interested in reading *Christian Discipleship and ME!* may write to Rev. Dr. Susan Lemly, Capistrano Beach Nursing Home, 35410 Del Rey, Capistrano Beach, CA 92624 or e-mail her at RevDoc45@aol.com. Each book is \$12.95 plus \$3.95 S&H.



Honor Roll Of Appreciation

We thank the following people or organizations whose gifts of time and/or money have made possible the publication and mailing of *Wings*:

- Margery Chapman
- Linda Ahnell
- Jill Halley
- Rose Heller
- Lucille Fleming
- Ruth Sciumbato
- United Methodist Women of the Fallbrook UMC
- Rev. Hal Dallke
- (in memory of Genevieve Dallke)
- Virginia Clark
- Nellie Hong
- Wilma Kuster
- John Henker
- John (Jack) Strout
- Russ & Faith Whipple
- St. John’s Episcopal Church Thrift Shop
- Lila Lanham



“A Faithletter For United Methodists With Disabilities
And Those Who Care About Them”

Fallbrook United Methodist Church
1844 Winterhaven Road
Fallbrook, CA 92028

Non-Profit Org.
Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
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