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ways to serve in ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church,” says the Rev. Sharon Rubey, director of Candidacy and Conference Relations, Division of Ordained Ministry, Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The DVD shows deacons and elders in a variety of settings that include prisons, hospitals, and the military.

Survey reveals misunderstanding of deacon's role

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — Deacons believe they are accepted and valued but misunderstood, according to a survey of deacons, diaconal ministers and those certified in specialized ministry in The United Methodist Church. Results of the survey were reported during a Division of Ordained Ministry session at the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry's spring meeting. The presentation focused on demographics, appointments, salary level and job satisfaction of deacons — ordained, commissioned and candidates.

According to the 2008 *Book of Discipline*, deacons respond to God's call to lead in service and to equip others for this ministry through teaching, proclamation and worship. They also assist elders in the administration of the sacraments.

The Rev. Anita Wood, the agency's director of professional development, said she was surprised to find that 21 percent of deacons appointed in the local church selected the title or identified themselves as associate pastor in the survey. “Deacons are not pastors and that indicates that we have some work to do in communicating the role of the deacon in connecting the church and the world,” she said.

(For complete text, visit <http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=hwLAKnNILtH&b=2429867&ct=6874783>)

Peggy Johnson's YouTube videos are signs of new times

VALLEY FORGE, Pa. (UMNS) — Bishop Peggy Johnson has a heart for those with disabilities, especially hearing and sight disabilities. So, when she decided to speak to her nearly 1,000 churches in the Philadelphia Area of The United Methodist Church, she created six video messages: Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, The Lord's Prayer, and two versions of an Easter message. The videos are posted on YouTube, with a main goal of making the Gospel accessible. “The deaf community - young and old - has really jumped into YouTube,” Johnson said. “It is reaching deaf people where they are in terms of visual communications.” For hard of hearing persons who do not use sign language or people who have visual challenges, the text for the messages is available online in large font type. Johnson said her Lenten video messages are not a true rendering of American Sign Language, as persons do not usually

sign and speak at the same time. Her latest video — an Easter message — was filmed in two versions: one is in spoken English with sign language, and the other is purely in American Sign Language. The last one includes written text for “the sign language-impaired.”

Find the videos at bishoppeggyjohnson.blogspot.com and www.youtube.com/PhiladelphiaAreaUMC.



UMNS file photo by Mike DuBose

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a United Methodist and the first female president of Liberia, addresses the 2008 United Methodist General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas. Sirleaf appeared with host Jon Stewart on the April 21 episode of “The Daily Show” on Comedy Central.

Liberian President Sirleaf sails through ‘Daily Show’ interview with Stewart

NEW YORK (UMNS) — Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a United Methodist and the first female president of Liberia, was poised, serene and smiling through national appearances on United States television even though her 13-year-old grandson gave her a “heads up” about one of the talk show hosts she was meeting. “He told me, ‘You are going to be meeting Jon Stewart. Grandma you have to be prepared,’” she said during her interview with the host of Comedy Central's “The Daily Show.” Stewart, who usually plays for laughs, was nothing but respectful when he interviewed Sirleaf on the April 21 broadcast. Sirleaf is on a book tour promoting her memoir, “This Child Will Be Great.”

Stewart reflected on the memoir, pointing out her many struggles. He said he was amazed at the obstacles she has overcome to be the first woman head of state in Africa.

“Reading this I couldn't help but think I am going to be meeting a woman who is 200 years old. What you have been through and what you have accomplished in your short life is amazing.”

“You sound like my competitors,” the 70-year-old leader quipped. “They say you have been at it too long. It is time to call it quits.”

Hoops turn fear into friendships in Mississippi

JACKSON, Miss. (UMNS) — What started with the simple act of opening a gymnasium door has turned into a ministry that has reconnected a Mississippi church with its community. Through Books and Basketball, the congregation of Broadmeadow United Methodist Church helps teenage boys with their schoolwork but also does much more. “We started a tutoring program, but it has grown into a comprehensive leadership program,” said Liz Brister, a member at Broadmeadow. “We help them understand what leadership means and how to solve problems in the community. But we're still very tied to basketball; we'll always have that link. Now we require them to go to tutoring and do community service to play.”

South African bishop faces death threats

JOHANNESBURG, South African (ENI) — He has received several death threats and has been under guard by South African police, but that will not stop Bishop Paul Verryn of Johannesburg's Central Methodist Church from sheltering Zimbabwean refugees in the heart of the country's commercial capital. More than 2,600 refugees are awaiting relocation from Verryn's refuge headquarters in the center of Johannesburg, but estimates say the same number live on the streets around the church. Two men were arrested April 7 in a police sting operation when they went to visit Verryn in his office after he had received several death threats. The men claimed they had been paid 30,000 rand (US\$2,900) by unnamed shopkeepers to kill Verryn. However, police said the purpose of their visit was to try to get a larger sum from Verryn. ■



Bishop Paul Verryn, head of Central Methodist Mission in Johannesburg, South Africa, is under police protection.