

“If God cares so wonderfully for flowers...
God will certainly care for you.” — Luke 12:28



UMCConnection

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The Rev. Joe Daniels, right, points out an area of new construction at the Beacon Center, part of Emory Fellowship UMC in Washington. The church celebrated a topping off ceremony Feb. 15. See story below.

Emory tops off housing complex

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

WORKERS IN HARD hats, Washington, D.C., government leaders, and people of faith gathered at 6100 Georgia Ave. Feb. 15 to celebrate at a topping off luncheon.

The ritual celebration, hosted by EllisDale Construction, marked the enclosing of the new \$56 million Beacon Center, the future home of Emory Fellowship UMC, an affordable housing complex and retail and community space.

“Every day, we’ve been watching a miracle go up,” said the Rev. Joseph Daniels, pastor of Emory.

The vision for the Beacon Center was first glimpsed by Daniels 23 years ago when he was standing in a dry

cleaners and turned to look across the street from the church.

“We’ve always functioned by the admonition of the proverbial writer who said, ‘where there is no vision, the people perish,’” Daniels said. “When the leader’s passion, the congregation’s purpose and the community’s cry come together it’s a powerful thing. In that space where the three intersect is where God speaks vision mightily and powerfully.”

The 175,000 square-foot Beacon Center will have 99 apartment units, 91 of which are designated as affordable housing (for those who earn less than 60 percent of area median income), with eight units of permanent supportive housing for the homeless; 30,848 square feet

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BWC awards seek nominees

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



WHAT WE CELEBRATE, we become.

With that in mind, the Baltimore-Washington Conference will intentionally celebrate more ministries than ever at the May Annual Conference Session.

But we need your help.

Starting now, the BWC will be collecting stories of ministry excellence as part of an online process that will lead to the celebration in May. Each shared story will be a nomination in one of five ministry areas, two of which carry monetary awards.

Five awards will be given. They include:

- The Harry Denman Evangelism Award for one youth, one clergy and one lay person;
- Youth Worker of the Year Award;
- Young Adult Leader of the Year Award;
- Advocacy and Action Award for faith communities;
- Abundant Health Award for faith communities.

The two awards to faith communities come with a \$1,000 prize. Applications and nominations are due April 30.

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award honors United Methodists in each annual conference whose exceptional ministry of evangelism — expressed in word (what), sign (why), and deed (how) — brings people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ. What distinguishes a Denman Evangelism Award recipient is the commitment to consistently introduce others to the Good News of Jesus Christ in all ministry settings. Their ministry is exceptional for the number of new Christ-followers who credit encounters with this person as critical in helping to start or reignite their faith journey. One youth, one clergy, and one lay person will be recognized. Nomination forms are online at bwcumc.org/harrydenmanaward.

See Awards, page 11

Stars shine at Mt. Zion UMC

By REV. BARRY HIDEY*

QUESTION: WHAT DO you have when you take 300 special guests, 325 volunteers, parents, aides, paparazzi, a former pro-football player, several stretch limousines, glowing faces, endless smiles and put them in a banquet hall with a dance floor?

Answer: A Night to Shine at Mt. Zion UMC.

The Tim Tebow Foundation’s Night to Shine is a worldwide, unforgettable prom-night experience centered on God’s love for people with special needs ages 14 and older. On one night, Feb. 9, 537 churches in 16 countries, representing 37 denominations, came together to host a Night to Shine for approximately 90,000 honored guests, through the support of 175,000 volunteers.

Mt. Zion UMC in Bel Air was a host location for Night to Shine for the first time this past February, and I was blessed to serve as a volunteer that evening. When the limos dropped off each group of special guests at the red carpet, my assignment was to hold the door and welcome them as they entered the church.

Each guest had a partner that spent the evening with them. They walked with them into the banquet hall when they were introduced by name as the King or Queen of the prom — to the cheers of the crowd. Each guest was seated for dinner and enjoyed an evening of eating, dancing and smiles.

My son, Garon, and his two housemates had the night of their lives. One of his housemates, who doesn’t talk and typically doesn’t engage with others, had the biggest smile as he danced the night away. His other housemate, who is a huge Orioles fan, ran across the room to meet, and later dance with, the Oriole Bird.

Watching and talking with some of the parents, I saw smiles and tears of joy because their son or daughter had one of the best nights of their life. The guests that night were people who often don’t get invited to a prom, wear a prom gown (which were provided to anyone who needed one), wear a suit, rent a tuxedo, get their hair done or shoes shined.

See Mt. Zion, page 4



By MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

MY FIRST INTENTIONAL observance of the Lenten season happened when I was a freshman at Duke University. My Wesley Fellowship friends encouraged me to do it, and they even seemed excited about things like Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

I went into the season with fear and trepidation because Lent sounded so ... depressing. All that burlap and ashes and stuff. What I discovered was that creating space and having intentional practices drew me closer to God.

I was pulled out of being trapped by my own never-ending ego, or my own insatiable need to be numb and distracted and in control. I learned that the word Lent comes from an old Anglo Saxon word for spring (as in, the season). That made sense. Lent was a time when God pulled the weeds out of the beds of my heart and made new things grow.

Our word for March is “examine,” which sounds like “yet another thing I have to do.” But I wanted to pair it with “examen” — that ancient prayer practice of the church that looks back on the day with an eye toward spotting the presence of God. God is present. God is speaking, even if it’s in a “still, small voice.” God is acting and calling and healing.

Here is the basic structure of the “examen” prayer.

1. Become aware of God’s presence. Ask God to bring clarity about where God was present in the jumble of your day.
2. Review the day through the lens of gratitude, paying attention to the small things that were gifts to you.
3. Pay attention to your emotions as you reflect back over the day. What is God saying through those feelings?
4. Choose one feature of the day, asking the Holy Spirit to direct you to something from the day that you should focus on. Look at it and pray about it. Allow the prayer to rise up spontaneously.
5. Look toward tomorrow, asking God to give you light for tomorrow’s challenges and gifts.

This Lent, take a closer look around you for the presence of God. Make space to listen and to be present. Examine/ Examen where God is at work in your heart and in your life and in your church. I guarantee that God is there, if we will open our eyes to see and ears to hear.

Ancient church mothers and fathers often greeted one another with the phrase, “Give me a word.” This greeting led to the sharing of insights and wisdom. Today we continue this tradition with this monthly column.

By DARYL WILLIAMS
Pastor, St. Paul UMC, Oxon Hill

I HATE GOING TO the doctor. I really like my doctor, but I hate going to visit him. Sure, I know it is important to go to the doctor and I always get an annual physical, but other than that, I see no need to visit with him.

You see, if my doctor and I could go to Starbucks and grab a cup of java and talk it would be a great time. I’d probably stop by much more often, but the problem is he always wants to chat in the exam room. As opposed to getting comfortable and just chatting, he insists on poking and prodding, listening to my heart and lungs, occasionally drawing blood, and to top it all off he won’t let me stay comfortably dressed while all of this is going on. That is why I hate going to see my doctor.

It’s really not my doctor that bothers me, it’s my doctor doing my exam that bothers me.

In order to see what is right and what is wrong with me, my doctor has to examine all of my vital signs, ask me questions and occasionally become far more invasive than I am comfortable with, all in the effort to fully examine me.

By taking the time to examine me, my doctor can tell me what I am doing right, what I am doing wrong, where I need to make changes, and how to make sure that I am living my best and longest life. He can’t do all of that over a conversation; he has to examine me or it won’t reveal all that I need to know.

During this Lenten season, it is a great time for us to not only go to the doctor for an exam, but to examine ourselves.

During this time, we can do more than give up sweets and eat more fish, we can really do some spiritual poking and prodding. We can listen to our heart and see if there is any bitterness or unforgiveness that we need to clean out. We can listen to our lungs and see if we are breathing in hope and righteousness. We can take a little extra time during Communion to take in the blood of our Savior.

Examining ourselves can sometimes be uncomfortable, and sometimes bring up things we don’t want to see, but it is the only way to make sure that we are living our best lives.

My invitation to you this Lent: take some time to examine yourself.

EXAMINE

EVENTS

UMM Prayer Breakfast
March 17, 8:30 a.m.
Mount Olive UMC, Randallstown
The theme of the BWC’s United Methodist Men’s prayer breakfast is “Kingdom-Minded Men.” Tickets are \$20. Visit bwcumm.org.

VIM Leader Training
March 17, 9 a.m. to noon
Trinity UMC, Prince Frederick
Trainers: Eldon Baldwin and Lori Willis. Cost: \$10 per person to cover materials Contact Pam Bowen: pbowen@bwcumc.org

Five Things Your Visitors are Thinking But Won’t Ask
March 23, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
BWC Mission Center, Fulton
At this workshop, Jason Moore identifies the most pressing issues for visitors and how to address them and grow. \$35. Learn more and register at www.bwcumc.org/event/1036033-2018-03-23-five-things-your-visitors-are-thinking-but-wont-ask/

Native American Ministries Sunday
April 15 - Churchwide Special Sunday
Resources at www.umcsgiving.org/ministry-articles/native-american-ministries-sunday.

At-One-Ment: Clergy retirement event
April 19, 9:30 a.m.
BWC Mission Center, Fulton
A BOOM-sponsored event for pastors to explore issues relating to retirement. For more information, visit www.bwcumc.org/event/978839-2018-04-19-at-one-ment-clergy-in-retirement.

Taste and See
April 28, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Press Room at the Herald Mail, Hagerstown
Become a change-maker as you explore missional entrepreneurship; 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Press Room at the Herald Mail in Hagerstown. Learn more and register at www.tasteandseedmv.com.

Strawbridge Shrine offers confirmation class programs
Tour the home of Robert Strawbridge, the place where the first Methodist convert was made and the first class meeting in the New World was held. Strawbridge Shrine in New Windsor is open for you, your church and confirmation classes. Visit www.strawbridgeshrine.org for details.

Pre-Conference Briefings
Saturday, April 21
Jackson Chapel UMC, Frederick
St. John’s United Church, Columbia
All lay and clergy members attending the 2018 Annual Conference Session in May should attend one of the two Pre-Conference Briefings to learn about and discuss issues coming before Annual Conferenece. The sessions are from 9:30 a.m. to noon at Jackson Chapel UMC, 5609 Ballenger Creek Pike in Frederick, and from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. at St. John’s United Church at the Wilde Lake Interfaith Center, 10431 Twin Rivers Rd. in Columbia. No registration is required.



bwcumc.org/events/annual-conference

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Proposed realignment leads to deeper discipleship

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



UNITED METHODISTS JOIN people, churches, ministries, leaders, needs, causes and prayers together in a way that cultivates disciples and transforms the world. How the church aligns for ministry strengthens those connections.

To further deepen its discipleship, Baltimore-Washington Conference leaders have begun to develop a new approach to ministry that will streamline efforts, awaken potential for partnerships, and shift the focus of hundreds of people from meetings to ministry, from silos to oneness, from operating in fits and starts to moving more rhythmically together.

The realignment was initiated following Bishop LaTrelle Easterling’s year-long listening tour throughout the Conference. As she heard the celebrations, concerns and challenges of hundreds of lay and clergy leaders, the bishop began to see a disconnect between what was intended and what was being lived out.

She began to design a realignment of the structure – for the BWC’s committees and staff – that would, she said, make the conference leaner, more connected, and increase its capacity to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

“During the next year or two, as we live into the changes, we’ll discover together how to deepen discipleship throughout the conference and best use our efforts to meet the needs of our churches, their communities and the broader world, all to the glory of God,” Easterling said.

The ministry staff and budget are in the process of being reorganized around five areas, or Tables, that correspond to denominational and Annual Conference strategic priorities.

“At the 2019 Annual Conference Session, a team will be bringing recommendations for changes to our structure after we have had a year to experiment with the details of what would best serve the purpose of each area and the conference overall, in light of the outcome of the Special Called General Session,” said Christie Latona,

the conference Director of Connectional Ministries. She has been working with leaders toward streamlining 14 existing ministry committees into five Tables, which will operate like purpose-driven, non-profit boards.

The Tables will focus on the areas of leadership development, new faith expressions, young people’s ministry, abundant health, and advocacy and action. These Tables will oversee strategic planning, goal setting and implementation in their given area, organize skilled servant workers via working groups and short-term task forces as needed to both expand the number of people connected with each area while also providing more boots on the ground for implementation support and impact.

One of the factors that led to this streamlined approach was a review of current conference discipleship committees. That review found nine of the 17 committees had not met the previous year or had only convened to create a report for the Conference Journal.

Most of the non-functional committees were not meeting regularly because they didn’t see how their work, described in the Book of Discipline, was connected to meaningful change within the Annual Conference. Additionally, the disconnect and poor communication between the annual conference, districts and local churches and other ministries were named.

Only two committees seemed to be functioning well (they knew their “why” and were implementing their “what” and “how”), and their leaders expressed a need for increased alignment and integration with priorities of the annual conference.

In a series of stakeholder meetings starting in July 2017, the realignment began to evolve. “In the course of holy conferencing, the path toward greater collaboration and impact is being built one conversation and relationship at a time,” said Latona. “There is much trust to be built — with God and one another — so that we can operate fully as one. I have been humbled and honored to work alongside so many excellent and diverse leaders who have spoken the truth in love and who have taken rough ideas and made them better. I have been amazed at the willingness and enthusiasm of both old-timers and

new-comers to actively engage in new ways of being in ministry together.”

Just like in every transition and change initiative, Latona said, there is grief over the fact that there is no going back to the way things used to be.

“Thankfully, God is still holding us and calling us forward into new ways of being the church together even as we maintain our rootedness in who we are as United Methodists and whose we are,” said Latona.

Throughout the creation of the realigned structure care has been taken to align the work with the denomination’s four foci of developing principled Christian leaders, creating new places with new people, ministry with the poor, and abundant health. These four areas came into being in 2006 following a grassroots listening campaign about what we have in common and do better together across the denomination.

This alignment has already shown signs of simultaneously creating common pathways and making leaders more nimble and intentionally able to respond to the challenges facing the church.

The Rev. Rodney Smothers, conference Director of Congregational and Leadership Development, has, in his work, been asking leaders to “discover the why” of what they were doing to more effectively focus on what is essential in their ministries.

The five Tables provide a framework for more clearly defining the why of our work together, he said. Smothers, who places an emphasis on leadership and learning, hopes the Tables will provide a renewed focus on excellence and take people back to the basics of doing outstanding ministry.

Along with the new structure, a new understanding of how the Conference can equip and provide financial resources to local churches and faith expressions doing transformative ministries is emerging.

Smothers and Latona are working on securing matching grant money to underwrite some of the Tables’ work – including grants for leaders and faith communities doing ministry in one of the five Tables. A comprehensive grant structure and online application process is being created and will be rolled out this summer.

The proposed 2019 budget (online

at www.bwcumc.org/events/annual-conference/budget-finance-resolutions/) has been created using the five Tables as a foundation for funding ministry, according to Phil Potter, the chair of the BWC’s Committee on Finance and Administration.

Aligning the financial structure this way is intended to provide for greater transparency into how Conference funds are being spent in ministry and gives a clearer picture of our vision, mission and ministry, said Paul Eichelberger, the Conference treasurer.

The details of the Table structure are being designed and tested as current stakeholders share their opinions on what matters most. The fall will be spent doing listening sessions across the Annual Conference, building plans and equipping leaders to be able to lead their Tables well. Each interim Table is being constructed in collaboration with current stakeholders in areas that have them and will have nine to 12 members each. Each Table will reflect the BWC’s diversity including at least one youth and one young adult. The Tables will facilitate the convening and work of many taskforces that address specific areas of need and ministry with an eye toward inspiring and equipping local faith communities.

Latona said she is excited about the new nominations process. It allows anyone to indicate an interest in sharing their gifts beyond their local context by completing an online form: www.bwcumc.org/conference-agency-leadership-nominations/. This then enables the nominations committee to really see who best fits where, while expanding their understanding of diversity to include age, church size and skill set.

“One of beautiful things about this new approach is that it is built on the understanding that God has already given us everything we need – the gifts, the people, the abilities, the vision and the potential,” Latona said. “Our job is to discover, steward, and align things in a way that uses the Baltimore-Washington Conference to be a meaningful agent of change that more significantly ushers in God’s reign.”

“It’s really all about connecting the dots,” Latona said.

‘Canoeing the Mountains’ offers metaphor for change

IN 1804, MERIWETHER Lewis and William Clark were commissioned to explore the unknown territory that had recently became part of the U.S. as part of the Louisiana Purchase, and to find the waterway through the western territory to the Pacific Ocean. The assumption was that the terrain before them was the same or similar to the terrain behind them.

So off they went with their trusted canoes. Imagine their dismay when they came up against the Rocky Mountains. Suddenly, the traditional, tried and true methods no longer applied. If they were going to face the new challenges, they needed new ways of approaching their mission.

Today’s church is at such a crossroads. Our traditional vehicles of ministry are not designed for the current reality we face. Just like Lewis and Clark would be wasting their time to modify or improve their canoes to get across the mountains, we too are unable to simply tweak or repackage ministry approaches and expect good results.

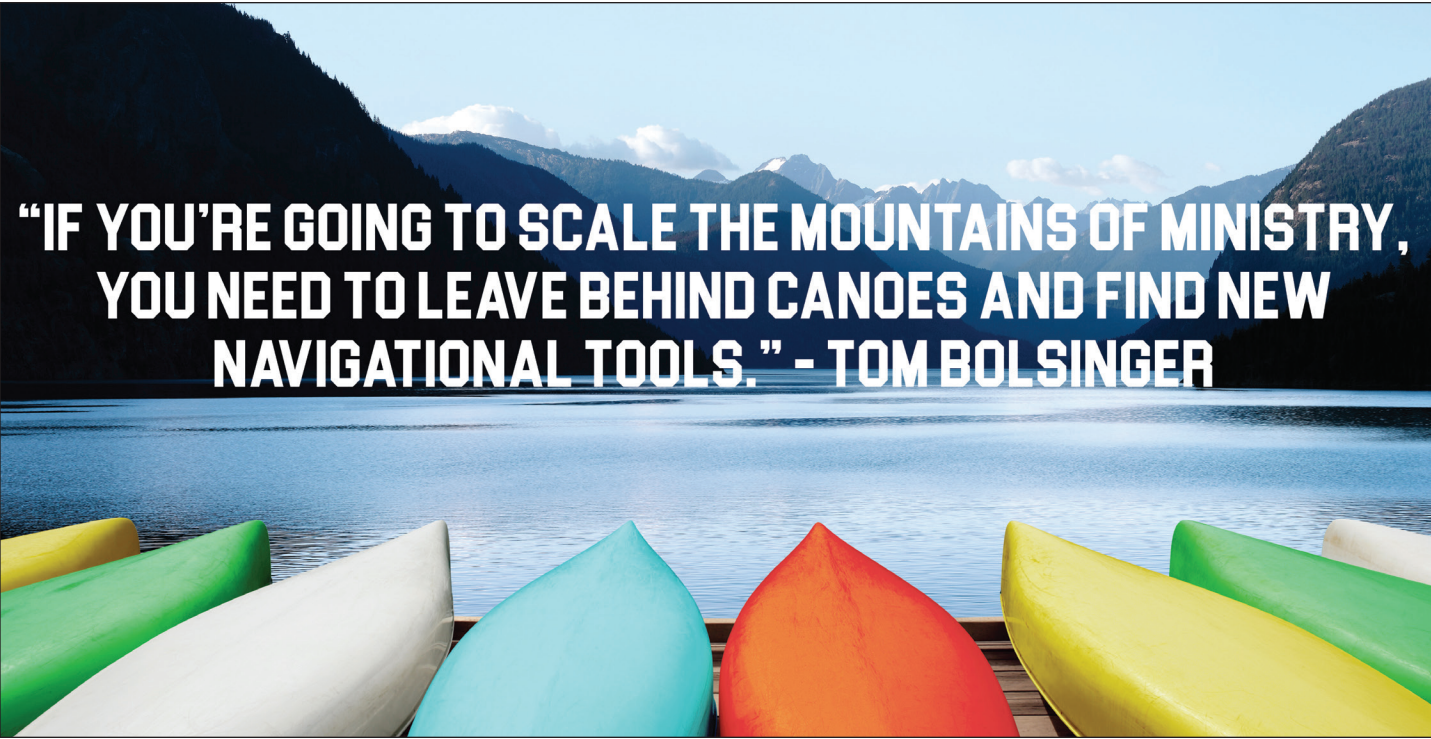
We need to let go of our canoes and find fresh, innovative ways of traveling the paths God is calling us to. This includes both discovering new vehicles and guides for making progress with God in mission together. And this is at every level of the

church from local churches to campus ministries to district ministries to annual conference committees to the general church. Whether you call it missional innovation, traditioned innovation or testing, learning and adapting, much of where we need to focus our energies

lies in passionately pursuing the Great Commandment and the Great Commission in new ways that take into account the new realities we are in.

Dr. Sarah Calvert from the Virginia Annual Conference has developed an outline of the book “Canoeing the

Mountains,” by Tom Bolsinger, which leaders throughout the BWC are reading, with questions to help apply its lessons to local church settings. You can download a copy at www.novaumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/CanoeingtheMountains-Workbook.pdf.



Emory: Beacon Center seeks to restore wholeness to city

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of multipurpose facility and office space for the church; 9,469 square feet of recreation and community program space; a business center, fitness center, bicycle parking, resident lounge, outdoor courtyard area, resident and community programs, and 87 parking spaces.

The Center is expected to be completed in October. Project leaders anticipate the church and residents moving in before Thanksgiving.

“This is surreal, it feels like a dream,” said Hazel Broadnax, sitting in what will one day be the gymnasium.

Broadnax, a member of the church, is the president of the Emory Beacon of Light, a non-profit mission arm of Emory Fellowship UMC. She has been working on the project for more than 10 years.

A former certified public accountant, her financial acumen has been essential in chartering some of the complexities

in finding the funding and creating the partnerships that allowed the building to rise.

A lay volunteer, Broadnax feels like she is living out a calling. “I don’t think I’d be doing this if it wasn’t a part of my purpose,” she said. She sees God’s hand at work throughout the past decade.

She also sees God at work in leading Emory to productive partnerships and advises other churches interested in working with affordable housing to seek an expert consultant as a guide.

From the start, she and Daniels consulted with Gina Merritt, of Northern Real Estate Urban Ventures.

Broadnax celebrates the working relationship the church developed with The Community Developers, a leading nonprofit real estate developer that owns or manages more than 11,000 apartments, nationwide. TCD, she explained, works to invest in communities.

The Community Developers will oversee

the residential and community portions of the Beacon Center.

Broadnax and Daniels also applaud the partnership that has been formed with the D.C. government and about \$20 million in funding provided by the D.C. Housing Production Trust Fund.

Partnership is critical, said Daniels, who embraces the South African proverb, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

As the building project approaches completion, people involved with the Beacon Center are beginning to envision endless possibilities for new partnerships, especially in the area of the wrap-around services for the eight families who will be living there, transitioning from homeless.

Daniels applauds the work of Emory’s 501(c)3, the Beacon of Light, which structured the partnership with the Community Builders so that the two can be co-developers and the church will have a constant alternative revenue stream to support the congregation’s tithes and offerings.

He is also delighted that church members and those in the local community have been employed in the building of the Beacon Center – people like William Owens attend worship on Sunday morning at the nearby school where Emory meets, and then spend weekdays laboring to build their church’s new home.

Twice a day, at 6:10 a.m. and 6:10 p.m., church members pray for all those working on the construction site because there is a feeling that this isn’t just business as usual. The construction and creation of the Beacon Center, for them, is a spiritual act, being done to honor God.

The time since 2016, when Daniels and Broadnax stood with D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser and others to break ground on the Beacon Center, has been a series of leaps of faith, Broadnax said.

“Emory is not a wealthy congregation, but

we trust in God,” said Broadnax. That trust extends to details like knowing they will be able to find the money for all the little touches, like being able to provide stainless steel doors to the elevators in the church.

It has been a spiritual journey for all involved. “Process of patience, persistence and prayer,” she said.

There was a moment, when the project was almost derailed, when the city declared the church a historic landmark. But the congregation continually returned to its deliberate efforts of embracing patience, persistence and prayer and they found a way through to the topping off.

Those in the construction field know that topping off celebrations, like the one recently celebrated at the Beacon Center, are a sign that the construction has reached its literal high point.

But Daniels is certain God has even greater things in store.

“The Beacon Center is not our destiny,” he said. “The Beacon Center is a tool to build consciousness of the need to serve and walk with people who Howard Thurman would call the disinherited, the people who the church turns its back on, the people Jesus ministered to.

“This is about salvation, about creating wholeness, ministering to those in the community physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally, economically — holistically. Jesus came for us to be well, that we may have life and have it to the fullest,” Daniels said. “We will have 260 to 300 people living on top of us. The question becomes what’s next. What’s the next idea, the next place to build and do creative, innovative ministry. ...

“Look what God has done,” he said. “When the building is open, its motto will be ‘To God be the Glory.’”



A street view of the Beacon Center, part of Emory Fellowship UMC.

Mt. Zion: A ‘little bit of heaven right here on earth’

From page 1

But this night was different.

When Nancy Rose spoke about the experience of her 25-year-old son, Rusty, she couldn’t stop talking about how touched and excited Rusty was by that night. I was deeply moved by the evident joy in her voice because of what it meant to her son.

What a powerful ministry Night to Shine has started. We live in a broken world where many who are often thought of as “the least of these,” but are actually beloved sons and daughters of the King, don’t get their time to shine.

This night was a powerful demonstration of the love of Jesus made personal in each guest.

As the Rev. Craig McLaughlin told me, “What we have experienced at Mt. Zion is that the more love we give to those who are forgotten, ignored, judged, and despised, the more love we receive. Jesus repeatedly told his followers to reach out to the poor, the broken and the outcast. The Night to Shine was one of the best nights of my life. It was like experiencing a little bit of heaven right here on earth.”

Perhaps the best part of the evening was knowing that this was just an extension of Mt. Zion’s “Beyond Capernaum,” the ongoing weekly ministry to youth and adults with special needs, their staff and parents, led by Brian Malcolm.

Even after the doors closed and this year’s Night to Shine finished, Mt. Zion’s ministry to those with special

needs continues to be the largest in the region, giving 500 to 650 people each week a place to feel appreciated, valued and have fun.

My hope is that this special night was just the beginning of transforming our community into one that values everyone, regardless of ability, so that our sons and daughters of all abilities feel deeply loved every day.

I think Tim Tebow said it best: “Night to

Shine is more than just a Prom Night. This is a worldwide movement centered on God’s love for people with special needs.”

May the love of God continue to shine brightly.

**Barry Hidey is a retired Elder in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.*



A participant receives a crown during the Night to Shine event at Mt. Zion UMC.



At ‘Night to Shine,’ dozens of people with special needs came together for dancing, fun, entertainment and a prom-like atmosphere.

Adam Hamilton to speak on ‘Unafraid’ at DC event

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



THE WORDS “fear not,” or “don’t be afraid,” appear more than 140 times in the Bible. Fear is a part of the human condition — perhaps more today than ever. But the Rev. Adam Hamilton believes fear should never rob people of the life they want.

On March 12, at 7 p.m. at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., he’ll unveil his new book, “Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times.”

His presentation, sponsored in part by the Baltimore-Washington Conference, will provide a fresh understanding of how people and communities can flourish as beacons of hope and serenity in an anxious age.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling expressed enthusiasm at the opportunity to hear Hamilton discuss his latest work.

“In the end, I don’t think we regret the things we did, as much as we regret the things that fear kept us from doing,” she said. “Fear prevents us from being all God has called us to be. Courage, in the face of fear, makes us strong, makes us bold. It is my hope that the people and the members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference come out in force to hear the Rev. Adam Hamilton speak about his new book, ‘Unafraid.’

“God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power,” Easterling continued. “That power enables us to live with courage

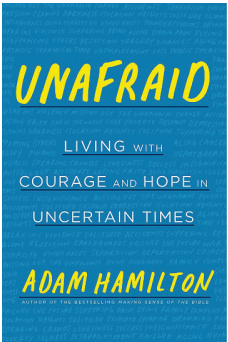
and hope. In this prescient resource, Hamilton empowers us to do so.”

Hamilton is senior pastor of the 20,000-member Church of the Resurrection, the largest United Methodist Church in the denomination. He is the author of 23 books and his reach working for reconciliation and church renewal extends across the globe.

In his ministry, he discovered time and again that fear has power to diminish people’s lives and shapes us all in ways we often don’t fully understand.

“As I was researching fear, I was struck by the fact that humans are hard-wired to fear,” Hamilton said. “Our brain’s amygdala is designed to be on the constant lookout for possible danger and to trigger the fight, flee or freeze response. It is a good gift that is intended to protect us. But when we fear what should not be feared, or we exaggerate a threat, or we ruminate on it, we find that what was meant to protect us can paralyze us with worry or anxiety, can leave us acting in ways that are unhealthy or hurtful. Because we’re all wired for fear, it is easy for others to manipulate our fear for their gain.”

Fear can be used as a great motivator in raising money and selling products. Fear is behind most forms of extremism in religion and politics, and even



war. “Peer beneath broken marriages and friendships, beneath prejudice and hate, and you’ll find fear,” he said. “The good news in all of this is that there are a handful of very basic time-tested things that we can do to overcome our fears — to live unafraid, with courage and hope.

For Hamilton, understanding and conquering fear has an essential faith component.

The frequency in which the divine command to “fear not” appears in Scripture tells us that “our faith in God can play a key part in helping us overcome our fears.” He wrote the book, and with Abingdon Press, prepared videos, small group guides and resources for children and youth, because he thinks “the church can and should play a key role in helping people live unafraid,” he said.

In the book there are four steps that Hamilton returns to again and again which have helped him, his congregation, and now, he believes, the readers of “Unafraid,” to live with courage and hope.

“Unafraid” will be published March 13. The evening before he’ll discuss it and lead a Q&A session at the National Cathedral. Every person in attendance will receive a hardcover copy of “Unafraid.”

They’ll also learn about the small-group study curriculum that is a companion to the book. It includes a five-session DVD, Leader’s Guide, Youth Study Book and Children’s Leader’s Guide.

“Everyone wrestles with fear at some level. It is one of the most basic emotions,

and primary motivators in all of us. I believe those who read the book will find it to be a practical, helpful and inspiring guide to overcoming fear,” Hamilton said.

“I also think that churches who consider making this a churchwide emphasis will find that it will not only help their members, but serve as a terrific outreach to unchurched people as everyone struggles with fear.”

Among the first words of Hamilton’s book is a quote from musician John Lennon. “There are two basic motivating forces: fear and love ... all hopes for a better world rest in the fearlessness and open-hearted vision of people who embrace life.”

“Unafraid” provides the insights to help its readers understand that “courage is not the absence of fear; instead, writes Hamilton, “it is doing what you feel you should do, or what you long to do, despite the fear. As you press through your fear, you live a life of courage and hope.”

For more information on the “Unafraid” event March 12, and to purchase tickets, visit <https://cathedral.org/event/adam-hamilton-book-discussion/>



Adam Hamilton

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LEADERS ENLIVEN CREATIVE, HANDS-ON WORSHIP

As part of a Lenten observance, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling brought worship expert Marcia McFee to the Baltimore-Washington Conference. The sanctuary at Mt. Zion UMC in Highland was full on February 8.



Here We Are to Worship

Marcia McFee is known as the United Methodist expert in creating soul-stirring worship. In her webinar, “Reboot Your Worship,” she outlines five basics for moving congregations to deeper engagement and creating meaningful and memorable experiences of God.

1. Create intentional spiritual journeys — does the worship series hold together in a cohesive way that deepens engagement with the over arching message over time? Have we connected the series theme to other aspects of our life together such as mission and education?
2. Engage the congregation — have we provided significant opportunities for the people to participate as fully as they are able, and are those opportunities adaptable and inclusive for all ages and abilities? Are there many opportunities for leadership by a variety of people? Have the people been engaged in a visceral way, embodying the message in their responsive actions?
3. Be sensory-rich in communicating the message — are we honoring the diversity of ways that people take in information and express themselves by offering the message through all the senses? Are all the ritual artists working collaboratively so that each art form is often layered with other art forms? Are symbols powerfully communicated through sight and sound and action?
4. Offer deeply spiritual leadership — have we “set the stage” for the message through threshold moments that provide a framework for our experience? Are verbal transitions more than simply perfunctory instructions about “what’s next,” or are they helping to guide and engage the congregation in their work of worship?
5. Let it flow — have we done the work of attending to the flow of worship, to transitions and energy dynamics? Does the worship feel like a journey from beginning to end rather than pieces cobbled together? Are we attentive and open to what the Spirit’s movement in the congregation might reveal in the moment of worship that could change “the plan” in small or significant ways?

– Excerpted from “Think Like a Filmmaker: Sensory-Rich Worship Design for Unforgettable Messages.”



Go Deep or Go Home

There once was a youth director in Louisiana, Miss Nina Reeves, who left an indelible impression on Marcia McFee. Reeves took her to lunch and right after sitting down, looked into her eyes and said, “Let us speak of the deepest things we know right away.”

If the church is to begin the task of revitalizing worship, it must learn from Miss Nina Reeves. There is no room for the trivial, or irrelevant. “Go deep, or go home,” McFee said.

The first task, McFee asserts, is to re-articulate the mission of worship. Worship, she said, exists to “build up the body of Christ for its work in the world through encounter with the holy, living God.

This means worship cannot be about pleasing those in the congregation who want what they have always known. Rather, it is about realizing the enormous diversity of the body of Christ.

“Unforgettable messages,” McFee said, “are the result of taking our God-given diversity seriously, especially as it pertains to the myriad of ways we experience the world, process information and assimilate those messages into the fabric of our lives and behavior.”

Pastors and worship leaders are called to move from being “bureaucrats of the program” to becoming “enliveners of the people’s spiritual experience,” she said. “Worship cannot just be a bunch of people in the same room. It has to be a body. It’s how you animate that body.”



Create a Threshold Moment

Leaders of worship must create a compelling invitation to wake people up and invite them into the presence of God. This compelling “threshold moment” is an essential part of inviting people to lean into and become a part of the story. Without it, worshipers stay observers, a step removed and ready to be critical.

Filmmakers know this, said McFee, whose recent book looks at how movie-making can inform worship.

Film makers spend more time on the first two-minutes of the film than they do on the entire rest of the movie because when an audience leans into it, they become story-dwellers, she said.

For this reason, McFee implores churches to do away with the traditional Call to Worship, which uses far too many words, with people speaking in cadence, stripping the language of inflection and drama.

Creating threshold moments, invites people on a journey. “It’s about setting the context, setting the story and setting us in the midst of it,” she said.

The threshold moments must also reflect the unique character of the church year and the seasons of the congregation’s life together.

A reporter once asked McFee, “what’s the biggest problem with worship in our day?” She replied, “We have flat-lined the story.” We’ve made it monotonous, robbing it of intentionality, diversity and nuance, she added.

“Lent feels like Easter, which feels like Advent,” she said. “The story has lost its power because we have forgotten to express the depth and heights and particularity of an amazing narrative of life and faith. It takes real power to take our faith narrative and make it boring — but we can do it! Have you read the stories of our sacred texts lately? It’s far from boring.”



“Not an ‘-ology,’ an ‘-urgy”

Worship is an experience of God, not just talking about it. “It’s not an ‘ology,’ it’s an ‘urgy,”” McFee said. “Liturgy.”

Once you invite someone into the story, you better keep that story going. People notice when the transition between elements of worship change awkwardly and don’t flow seamlessly.

In a film, two hours can fly by, while an hour of worship, divided into five to seven small distinct and seemingly unrelated segments, can seem to last forever.

The answer, McFee has found, is to create sequences, made up of several layers. Music, poetry, movement, the telling of Scripture stories, multi-media images, and a myriad of other elements can be woven and integrated into seamless sequences that engage people in creative and significant ways.

McFee calls it flow, and she’s the Flow Queen, never allowing transitions to jar people out of God’s story as it unfolds in worship.

“As soon as you become aware of the mechanics, you’re taken out of the picture,” she said.

Part of the flow involves good stage management and making sure speakers and singers are at the ready; part of it also involves creating musical moments and other ways of making transitions feel like a part of the worship experience.

Some pastors feel hesitant at the suggestion of using multiple creative expressions in one sequence of worship, even when they’re done with excellence (and they should always be done with excellence), fearing it will take away from their sermons. To that concern, McFee has one answer for those pastors: “Up your game.”



Make the Spiritual Tangible

Worship should be observed as a spiritual practice: preach, sing, pray, repeat, said McFee. “But worship is not about concepts. Concepts will not change your life; a holy experience of the living God will change your life. It will be unforgettable.”

To create unforgettable worship, pastors and other worship leaders need to operate like art directors, creating the world in which the sacred story happens.

An invaluable tool for doing this is symbol and metaphor.

“When we walk into the sanctuary, we want to feel the ethos of the story. We have a deep and innate need for symbol,” McFee said.

Mary Collins, a ritual theorist, said “symbols are like electrical transformers. They allow us to grasp ineffable realities through concrete means.”

To illustrate messages and meaning, metaphors can be used. These metaphors can be anything, said McFee, who calls the act of searching for them to illustrate and illuminate worship – “metaforaging.”

“Ordinary things – water, bread, light, all the ordinary stuff becomes extraordinary when we bring into contact with the faith narrative.

Once she finds a good metaphor, McFee makes it her “anchor image” for the worship services and series she designs.

Digging into her bag, she pulls out a tube of sinus spray. Even this can be used as a sign of hope for the church — whatever clogs us up will be opened up so that spirit might flow freely among us,” she jokes. “We will never run out of ways to talk about how God works in the world.”

Using anchor images, good worship leaders create meaningful ritual. McFee elaborates: “Christian ritual happens when engaged persons express and enact their deepest longings through repeated, as well as innovative, sensory-rich language in such a way that the Spirit of the living God is experienced and imprinted upon them so that they are convicted and sent into the world to go and do likewise as disciples of Jesus Christ.”

One anchor image she found particularly striking was from a sermon in which the pastor spoke about Jesus’ habit of having meals with what seemed like the “wrong people.” Before Communion was over, she rolled out a piece of bright yellow caution tape and strung it up in front of the altar, asking themselves what boundaries they needed to cross in their own lives.

“That caution tape was an ordinary object that became a powerful symbol that keeps reminding me again and again of that message every time I see it out in the world,” McFee said. An “anchor image for a series will be a symbol that can speak powerfully of the underlying message and help it stick with us in indelible ways.”

‘BUT MORE THAN SIMPLY
BEING STORY-TELLERS, WE
ARE INVITED TO CREATE AN
EXPERIENCE OF THE STORY — TO
INVITE THE CONGREGATION TO BE
“STORY-DWELLERS.”’

WORSHIP WITH MARCIA MCFEE

ary 8 as McFee shared wisdom and advice and experiences of God.



A Word about Silence

The average moment of silence in United Methodist worship is nine seconds long, McFee has discovered. When planning for silence, recognize people's discomfort, she said.

Getting into silence will be a big deal. You can't hop into long moment of silence. Move your way up.



Getting Complaints?

Trying new ways of worship can take courage. Often leaders worry about complaints from the congregation.

Complaining about the new, McFee has found, is "really often an unarticulated fear about losing God." Recognizing this can change the dynamics of change.

When addressing change, make sure the new is excellent and invite the people along on the journey of new ways of encountering God.



This is your Brain on Worship

A good worship leader understands that a few decades ago, people learned in a critical distance model. Like listening to a radio, they absorbed information and inspiration in worship from someone speaking to them.

In today's post-modern era, people receive information through critical immersion as they are invited into and immersed in a narrative of sight, sound and experience. When one considers the way we now realize brains work, sensory-rich offerings in worship become essential.

Effective worship leaders also understand Howard Gardner's theology of multiple intelligence.

"People are intelligent in different ways," McFee explained. There's:

- Verbal linguistic – these learners appreciate sermons;
- Musical rhythmic – they respond to song;
- Logistical mathematical – these learners see the connections between things;
- Visual special – they notice the many visual details of the sanctuary;
- Bodily kinesthetic – they express themselves by doing.

There are also inter-personal and intra-personal styles of being and interacting. Those with an inter-personal style love interaction and when elements of relationship and community are missing, they see worship as cold and sterile. Those with an intra-personal style want to go inward and appreciate silence and depth. A boisterous passing of the peace will leave them feeling ill at ease and perhaps even like worship is not "reverent" enough.

McFee finds it useful when planning to consider: the verbal, visual and visceral. Studies have found that in the fifth grade, out of every 10 students, two are auditory learners, four are visual and four are kinesthetic.

"All of our brains do all of these thing, some more than others," she said. Good worship doesn't compartmentalize; it takes all these styles into account and encourages them to "play together," McFee said.

One way to do this is to focus on layering, bringing words, actions, symbols, sequence, lighting, color, timing and music together in one experience. "Layering is how we experience everyday life," she said. "We combine sensory experiences to create meaning.

Sometimes, words aren't even the primary means of expression. "Music sets mood, tone, and context. Visuals, including color palettes, lighting contrast, panoramic, or close-up views, create deeply symbolic contributions to the sequence of events. Action, or 'blocking,' becomes carefully thought out because of its immense impact. And dialogue is compact and rich. These are the elements of deeply meaningful and memorable worship as well," McFee said. "We take some pretty incredible stories and transformational messages, and we try again and again to bring them to life in deeply meaningful ways that speak in different ways to all people."



Create Worship Series

McFee is a staunch advocate of worship series — not "one-hit wonders."

Preaching series are not antithetical to lectionary preaching, she stressed. To those who ask "Why can't I just preach what's on my heart?" she replies, you can. "But also consider this: if you do that, you hold your entire congregation captive to your spiritual journey."

One of the greatest strengths of using worship series, McFee said, is that they give you a "container for the familiar and the new – the 'a-ha' and the 'oh, yeah.'"

Series:

- Create communal spiritual journeys;
- Give you a lens to look at hymns, prayers and other aspects of worship;
- Christian education, mission evangelism and other ministries can focus on the same themes;
- They reinforce a message over time;
- They create the possibility for sensory-rich worship on a consistent basis;
- They help the worship team not get burned out;
- They can be an on-ramp for visitors.

"Why create in a series?" McFee concluded. "Because the only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth."



Planning is a Creative Endeavor

Among United Methodists, more than 50 percent of the people in the pews only connect with their church on Sunday morning, said McFee.

"The time you spend planning and preparing for worship will reach more people than anything else you do in ministry. Thinking of the spiritual journey you're going to take people on is one of the most important thing a pastor can do."

To facilitate that planning, McFee strongly recommends that worship leaders go on two retreats a year: one in August or September to plan Advent through Pentecost; and one in January or February to plan Ordinary Time.

The themes, anchor images and other materials created during the retreat should be immediately shared with members of the worship team.

She also recommends creating detailed scripts – not just worship bulletins – of an entire worship series all at the same time, rather than doing them Sunday by Sunday.

The creative process for a series should begin two months in advance; the to-do list of tasks and specifics should be completed a month in advance. She also recommends "putting your body in the space" and attending to as many details as possible before Sunday morning, perhaps in a walkthrough of the service with others on Wednesday evening or before choir practice, to allow yourself to be fully present.

For those uncertain where to begin, McFee wrote, "Think Like a Filmmaker."

"Screenwriter and teacher Allen Palmer says that the story is the most important place to start because it is the vehicle through which we deal with one core universal human truth: life is hard.

"Inspired by the famous mythologist Joseph Campbell, Palmer says we look for these three things when we go to the movies (or worship): 1) to expand our emotional bandwidth – to feel sensations that we rarely experience in our normal lives; 2) to reconnect with our higher selves – to be reminded of what humans are capable of, in terms of both good and evil, and to alter course if we're steering more towards the latter than the former; 3) to be reminded we're not alone."

Marcia McFee offers a variety of training and resources through her [WorshipDesignStudio.com](https://www.WorshipDesignStudio.com). Included in a subscription to the studio is access to articles, webinars, training videos and the resources for more than 60 worship series. McFee also recently published a new book, "Think Like a Filmmaker: Sensory-Rich Worship Design for Unforgettable Messages."



PHOTO CONTEST

The focus for the 2018 Annual Conference is Ephesians 4. In 'The Message,' it begins, "In light of all this..." Thus, the theme for our photo contest is "light."

Twice a month there will be a photography tip in the e-connection on the topic of light, as it pertains to photography. Not receiving the e-connection? Email Communications at info@bwcumc.org and ask to be added.

Submit your photo contest entries by emailing mлаuber@bwcumc.org. You may submit as many entries as you like. The deadline for the contest is May 8. Winners will be announced at Annual Conference.

Three \$100 prizes will be awarded to the best photographs. An additional \$100 will be given to the best photo taken by a youth age 17 or under.

**Let your light shine.
Think outside the box.
Try new techniques.
Expand your creativity.
Feel enLIGHTened.**

Camp Hope rebuilds homes and lives in W. Maryland

By Amy A. Willis*

Forty years ago, the Rev. Tom Kaylor of Frostburg UMC looked at the missions projects his and other area churches were involved in, looked at the needs within his own back yard, and noticed a disconnect. Western Maryland, originally booming with work on the railroads and in the coal mines, was becoming less industrial and more economically depressed. Many families in the area were hit hard with the loss of jobs and, consequently, income, due to the lessening of factory work, railway work, and mining. Kaylor realized that the time and talents of his mission teams could be put to use without ever leaving town. He began Camp Hope, which stands for “Christian Appalachian Mountain Project Helping Other People Enthusiastically.” Camp Hope is an organization that assists homeowners in completing necessary upgrades to their homes that they might not be able to afford or be physically able to complete themselves. Forty years later, Camp Hope is still running stronger than ever and our passion has stayed consistent. The camp has undergone many changes throughout the years. At its inception in 1977, the camp ran for three weeks with a total of 90 campers. Now, you can find Camp Hopers in Western Maryland for four weeks throughout the summer. We have moved around from dorm building to dorm building on the campus of Frostburg State University as we have gradually needed more space to accommodate our now more than 400 campers. The camp has been attended by 107

churches of eight denominations from 11 different states. From painting projects to handicap ramps, flooring to roofing, foundation to landscaping, Camp Hope has expanded its project repertoire to include just about any home improvement project imaginable. Campers come from across the country to work on more than 50 houses each summer. Simply walking around in Western Maryland with a Camp Hope badge or T-shirt on elicits whispers, stories, thank yous, and the occasional hug from previous homeowners and others who have been caught in the Camp Hope wake. Although we strive to do good work, Camp Hope’s true passion lies in building relationships. Each homeowner that agrees to be a part of the Camp Hope experience is deciding to let a team of teenagers use power tools around their house for a week. Everyone has a story to tell, and our homeowners are some of the best storytellers in the business. If you were to walk onto a Camp Hope worksite, you would notice at least one or two members of the team hanging out with the homeowner. Having conversations, learning about the Western Maryland lifestyle and culture, looking at old pictures of weddings and graduations, cooking, watching The Price Is Right — these interactions are the true diamond in the rough of the Camp Hope work. I have had the privilege of seeing Camp Hope from every angle. I started as a camper when I was 14-years-old, working on Mr. Davis’ house. I vividly remember the first time I used a pneumatic nail gun and I can still see the look on my adult leader’s face when I accidentally released the



Courtesy of Amy Willis

chalk line and it wrapped around his head, leaving blue lines across his face. More vividly still, I can recall Mr. Davis’ front porch swing. We had to move the swing into the front yard while rebuilding his porch, but that didn’t deter Mr. Davis from rocking back and forth after lunch every day and telling us about growing up in Old Town, Maryland. I can see Mr. Davis’ smile and hear his crackling voice as he attempted to teach me about the cars he was working on. I will never forget that Mr. Davis said we were the hardest working “bunch o’ youngins” he had “encountered in quite some time now.” I spent many years coming to Camp Hope as a youth, counselor and adult leader. This past summer, I began a new adventure as the program director of Camp Hope. As one of the three year-round part-time employees of Camp Hope, I get to see Camp evolve throughout the year. I am able to witness all 400 of our campers as they slowly recognize the power of stepping outside of their comfort zones.

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the “camp” side of Camp Hope. Campers are led by four college-aged counselors who create games, activities, programs, and devotions for everyone in attendance. The only caveat is that the work needs to get done first! After about a day at Camp, this caveat doesn’t seem so negative anymore; campers look forward to spending time with their homeowners and finishing their project — any volleyball they can fit in is an added benefit. On the 40th anniversary of the inception of Camp Hope, I pray for everyone involved. Most of all, I pray that the love and passion that permeates Camp Hope spreads from those four weeks during the summer into the lives of everyone involved. I pray for 40 more years of ministry with the people I hold dearest in the place that feels like home. Amen. *For more information about Camp Hope, visit camphopemission.com, or contact Program Director Amy A. Willis at camphopeprogramdirector@yahoo.com.*

UMs come together to address the opiod crisis

By Linda Worthington
UMConnection Staff

“CHURCHES ADDRESS THE Opioid Crisis” was the topic as WesleyNexus held its sixth annual interfaith gathering at the Conference Mission Center Feb. 10, in recognition of Evolution Weekend. The Rev. Maynard Moore, founder/director of WesleyNexus Inc., and M. Catherine Bennett from the National Institutes of Health, who moderated the panel, gave introductory remarks. They explained that in order to give context to the enormous problem of opioid abuse, it is necessary to understand how it’s become such a problem in our society. One reason for its severity is that many opioids have been easily and often legally obtained by prescription, stated a report requested by Senator Mike Lee in November 2017. In 2016, there were roughly 64,000 deaths from drug overdoses in the United States with opioids accounting for nearly two-thirds of them, and they continue to rise. Since 1999, opioid-related deaths have quadrupled, and now are added to by deaths from fentanyl and other synthetic opioids, which have more than doubled. Michael L. Oshinsky, program director of Pain and Migraine at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, an expert on neurological pain, headaches, pain disorders and pain management, opened the panel. He pointed out that 25,000,000 Americans have chronic pain daily. Gerard P. Ahern, associate professor of pharmacology and physiology at Georgetown University, spoke about pharmacologic treatments (prescriptions) for alleviating pain, acknowledging that drugs, though not the only way, are the most common.

He summarized the treatments, ranging from NSAIDS, cortisone (steroids) to opioids. Mild pain, he said, is best treated with NSAIDS, moderate pain with opioid and codeine, and strong pain with opioids. Not all opioid-takers become addicted, Oshinsky pointed out. “The faster the opioid gets into the brain and releases the dopamine, the more addictive it is,” Ahern said. Heroin (morphine) enters the brain quickly, and oxycodone (OxyContin) less so. But users have discovered that if it is chewed, it brings the relief/reaction faster. Ahern explained that fentanyl, one of the most recent synthetic drugs on the market, is 100 times more potent than morphine. It works very quickly and there is little time to get an antidote to the user who overdoses. An antidote is Naloxone, which reverses an overdose if received in time. “We need a more sensible approach to opioid use in prescriptions,” Ahern said. Other developments that are needed to fight the epidemic, he said, are a fast-acting inhibitor, non-addictive opioids for pain treatment, and something to treat fentanyl overdoses. After hearing about the genesis of pain and what pharmas are doing about it, the next speaker was Onaje Salim, who works in the U.S. Government’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA). He spoke about the government’s response to the opioid crisis. He provides leadership to a team that administers the \$1.8 billion substance and abuse block grants, a \$1.0 billion opioid-State Targeted Response program, and other related programs in all 50 states. SAMSHA funds treatment and addiction centers and funds research on pain. Salim outlined a 4-point strategy to combat the

opioid crisis:

1. Get better data; he mentioned a “giant cannabis research” project “on something for which we don’t have data;”
2. Find better pain treatments;
3. Do better research on prevention, treatment and recovery;
4. Develop more overdose reverses.

“We’re looking for partnerships that address concerns of the community,” he said. One reason addiction is a community concern is that it “is a condition of loneliness.” “People who abuse alcohol are more apt to abuse heroin and other opioid painkillers,” Ahern said. In combination with alcohol, the drug is 40 times more likely to addict. Salim concluded with several frightening statistics:

- 12-13 million abusers misuse opioids;
- There are 828,000 heroin users, 300,000 fentanyl users;
- 12.5 million people misuse pain relief drugs.

“Drug overdoses exceeded car accidents, guns and HIV in 2015,” Salim said. Alcohol was the main substance abused. The Rev. Leo Yates Jr., a Provisional Deacon who works at the Division of Rehabilitation Services in Baltimore, rounded out the afternoon to share what the churches’ response might be. “All of our churches have people with some sort of addictions,” he said. “And most seminarians do not get training in helping a person wanting to go into treatment or do something for the addiction,” he said. Churches have the opportunity to provide care and not enable the problem further, he said. Forty-three percent of

individuals who go into treatments come back home and relapse. That’s because, though residential treatment is effective, it is insurance-run, so it often doesn’t provide enough time because of cost. “Treatment needs to be holistic,” Yates said. Many who have addictions are also suffering from other conditions. Keep family members in mind when counseling, Yates cautioned churches. There are a variety of ways churches can help with recovery needs. Among them are:

- Hold monthly prayer vigils;
- Organize support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA), that provide safe places for addicts and “are of immeasurable help,” said a church lay member familiar with NA;
- Get training;
- Adopt a treatment facility, which can be done as a shared ministry with other churches. At a treatment facility, where volunteers probably cannot interact with the clients, adopters can focus on staff, clothing closets, providing meals, holding a Bible study and in other ways. (Reach Yates at leoyjr@aol.com).

“This is a social justice issue,” Yates said. “Both addicts and their families need our love and care.” Revealing his own years of being in recovery, he said, “None of us in recovery want to be the lepers in the community.” “It’s a health issue, not a criminal one,” said the Rev. Eliezer Valentin-Castanon, senior pastor of Trinity UMC in Frederick, as he briefly summarized the discussion. “This is wider and deeper and more complex than we imagined.”

Wesley Theological Seminary

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Rev. Mark Knutson
D. Min. student,
Church Leadership Excellence track
Lead Pastor, Augustana Lutheran Church, Portland, Ore.



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MAKING A DIFFERENCE



One of several Washington D.C. police officers honored for their service at Capitol Hill UMC.

Church gives special valentines to police

WASHINGTON, D.C. – For the 19th straight year, Capitol Hill UMC celebrated Valentine’s Day with a Police Valentine Tribute honoring the police at the First District (1Dt) sub-station a couple blocks away. Sharing in the celebration was Ebenezer UMC, members and officers of the community.

The citizens delight officers with food (home-made soup, meatballs, fried chicken and chocolate cake); gag gifts and songs written especially for them.

First District Commander Morgan Kane and Capt. Knutsen surprised church members with a certificate of appreciation for their 19 years honoring the officers. It was accepted by Carol Anderson, standing in for the Rev. Alisa Lasater Willoo, who was out of town.

Cmdr. Kane also had Valentine chocolates for Anderson and Ebenezer’s Lorna Morgan. “A delightful surprise and honor,” she said.

Church offers free lunch

CARPENDALE, W.VA. – When school teachers in West Virginia went on strike in late February and early March, the congregation at Holy Cross UMC on the Blue Ridge Cooperative Parish in Cumberland, invited the children in for free lunch. They were concerned that children would be home alone and not have lunch available because their parents and guardians would be at work. About 15 members of the congregation provide the lunches, serving more than 30 children.

“We wanted to be sure the children had a safe place,” said the Rev. Tom Young. While they come for lunch, many spent time playing games or doing homework.

The church also has a seniors group that meets for a full hot meal. The children joined in with the grandparent generation for the meal, then some of them helped pack box lunches from the left overs to take to shut-ins in the valley around.

The strike lasted far longer than expected, but the church continued its ministry of seeing that children in the community had a lunch each day until the end.

Celebration for 205 years begins

BALTIMORE – To begin celebrating its 205th anniversary, John Wesley UMC began the first of 205 monthly activities, services and programs during the year, on Jan. 15, at a Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, reported the Rev. Joan Carter-Rimbach.

She and the church leaders invited members to donate 205 pairs of new socks, gloves, hats or Bibles. Each person was also asked to write a personal prayer to include in the giant Ziploc bag they packed with the items and Bible.

Volunteers made 205 turkey, ham or bologna sandwiches and put them in brown paper bags to include with the

other items.

After thanking God for the opportunity to serve, they “went out on the streets of Baltimore City to share these gifts of love that came from our hearts,” Carter-Rimbach said. They handed out the sandwiches and packed items and prayed with the recipient unhoused, needy or homeless people they met.

UMM does it again – feeds the hungry

EASTPORT – The conference United Methodist Men held potato drops at Eastport and Cheltenham UMCs Feb. 24, two of the six or seven they hold each year, to bring nourishing food to hungry families. Each of the sites distributed 21,000 pounds of potatoes.

The potatoes are trucked from Maine through the Society of Saint Andrew. For the past two years, part of the distribution is the bagging of the potatoes into 10-pound bags. Into each bag went a handwritten note from the youth at Glen Burnie UMC, saying “God Loves You.”

Eighty volunteers came from 31 area United Methodist churches to help.

The BWC UMM is seeking donations to help defray expenses. Please contact Richard Campbell at rcampbell@bwcumm.org.

BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON AREA RECONCILING UNITED METHODISTS (BWARM) AND THE B-W CHAPTER OF METHODIST FEDERATION FOR SOCIAL ACTION (MFSA) PRESENT

Inclusive

CONVERSATIONS

FOR A WAY FORWARD

An educational conference addressing critical issues in our world & denomination concerning social justice and LGBTQ inclusion.

Workshops, Lunch and Keynote by Dr. Cedrick Bridgeforth
Saturday, April 7, 8:30 AM – 3:00 PM
BWC Mission Center
Register at www.bwarm.org



Mission of Peace offers youth a new outlook on faith

Four youth from the Baltimore-Washington Conference boarded a plane in late December to join 17 other youth to spend 20 days discovering God's Spirit at work in Cuba. The Mission of Peace is a journey to experience God's extended family and learn how people live as disciples of Jesus Christ in their own country.

Sponsored by the Northeastern Jurisdiction, the Mission of Peace is a yearly journey of discovery and Shalom. The group met with other youth from Cuba to exchange ideas about faith and the role of the Church in the world. Youth were immersed in the journey of daily prayer for Shalom and an understanding between God's extended family, and explored ideas on building peace, particularly stressing and nurturing the development of confidence and trust between people. The four youth from BWC, Evan, Karis, Nito and Roman, raised the needed funds through their church, friends and family during 2017 to participate in the Mission of Peace.

Each year, the Northeastern Jurisdiction Council on Youth Ministry selects four youth from each Annual Conference to share in this life-changing experience. Inspired by Bishop Dale White in 1984, the Mission of Peach has traveled to the then USSR, the People's Republic of China, Eastern Europe, Zimbabwe, Guyana, India, Nicaragua, Brazil, Cuba and South Africa.

In 2019, the Mission of Peace will travel to the Philippines. Youth in grades 9 through 12 are welcome to apply. Contact Cheryl Cook for the 2019 Mission of Peace application at ccook@bwumc.org.

BY EVAN GAALSWYK

BEFORE THE MISSION of Peace, I had no idea what to do with my life. I know that a sense of purpose isn't to be expected at my age, but my lack of it still gnawed at me. I'd thought and prayed about this issue, but I still felt lost. I was not expecting the Mission of Peace to be the source of the direction that I was seeking.

Mission trips in the past had been great experiences for me, but I found it difficult to sustain the powerful feeling of fulfillment once I returned home after the trips. Immediately after arriving in Cuba, I could tell that this experience would be different in the best way possible.

What really cemented this feeling for me was the New Year's Eve worship and fellowship that we shared with local people. Sitting by the fire and singing, I felt immense peace, and I got a feeling that I was where I needed to be.

A few hours later, we were split into groups to pray for each other. After the prayer, a Cuban woman that I had only just met offered a testimony to the group that 2018 was going to be a great year for me, and that I would find my calling.

I was amazed, and what the woman said stuck with me, but, being a skeptic sometimes, I thought of it as a coincidence. On Sunday, my thoughts on that changed completely.

During worship at a local church, the pastor, to whom I'd also never spoken, laid his hands on me and told me that God was calling him to pray over me and my direction in life. He told me that I would do great things with my gifts, and that I had a great future

serving God through Spanish (I'm a fluent speaker).

This floored me. I broke down and cried, and even as I'm writing this I'm tearing up. How could this be? My walls of doubt started to crumble, and I started giving serious thought to this call that I was hearing here in Cuba.

However, I may have continued a skeptic had it not been for a service later that night. The service was amazing, but the truly transformative and decisive moment on the trip, and in my life as well, came shortly after. As I was speaking to the pastor, she told me that I had the gift of the Spanish language, and asked, "What are you going to do with it?"

She answered by telling me I couldn't ignore my call: that I needed to use my Spanish to serve God in some way. I felt like a fog was lifted from around me, and that I could now see the path that I was supposed to be traveling on. It was a surreal and amazing feeling, and it still is.

Aside from the other things that the Mission of Peace gave me, it satisfied my deepest need: direction.



Evan Gaalswyk plays with a child during Mission of Peace in Cuba.

BY KARIS ARNOLD

MY TRIP TO Cuba was truly one I will never forget, for it was an absolutely life changing experience. Everything from the other Mission of Peace sojourners to all of the accepting hearts of the people we got to encounter was truly eye-opening, and changed my personal perceptions of Cuba.

I saw a lot of amazingly beautiful things while in Cuba. One of the first things I witnessed that truly touched my heart was on the second day of our trip. That night, we went to a church service at the Iglesia de Albanza (Church of Albanza). While we were attending the service, I did a lot of observing, and while the worship team was playing some music, it was so amazing to just see the Holy Spirit move the people, despite the fact that I had no idea what the lyrics to the song meant.

Another thing I saw that touched my heart was one afternoon, on about the third or fourth day, we threw a little surprise party for a woman named Regla, who had fallen out of a mango tree at age 12 and was paralyzed from the neck down, leaving her wheelchair bound. Once we surprised Regla with cake, we sang her some songs. While we were singing our songs, I looked up from my song booklet and Regla had the biggest smile on her face; my heart was overjoyed.

Another account I have was on New Year's Eve. On New Year's Eve we went to the CCM (Cuba Connection Ministry) Farm for a huge bonfire with those in the community. Together, we shared a time of dancing, fellowship, prayer, song and testimony. For me this was awesome, because we were all able to enjoy our time together despite our language barrier.

Another experience that touched my heart was when we would go to the different churches and sing for them and they would absolutely love it. The people we would sing for would follow along

with our motions, and would have the biggest smiles on their faces. It also warmed my heart when we volunteered with a differently abled children's ministry. The children would sing songs or recite Bible verses they had memorized, and that was so powerful.

The idea that those children were so firm in their faith despite their differences was a beautiful thing I got to witness. I was also touched by the smiles of the differently abled children we visited in their homes.

One particular child that really made my heart sing is when we sang to Jaunquiel, a bedridden boy. He had the biggest smile on his face that I've ever seen.

Lastly, the acceptance of us by all of the people we visited was truly heartwarming. Everywhere we went we were greeted with open arms, open hearts and a smile, which really made me feel like that was where I was supposed to be at that time.

This trip had a huge impact on my faith life, but did not really show through until I returned home. I used to not really sing in church or let the spirit move me through swaying or anything like that, but ever since I witnessed the people of Cuba let the Holy Spirit move them, my outlook changed. I became more open to it, and now I sing every song and sway in my pew.

I also have become all around more aware of what's going on in the worship service. I pay greater attention to the lyrics of the songs, the Scripture reading, and my pastor's sermons. In these things, I have an easier time finding God in the little things.

Overall, I found my trip to be the most eye opening thing I've ever been able to be a part of. The trip made me realize that the misconceptions aren't true by any means. I absolutely love that I was able to interact with people from a country different from mine, and a language different from mine and simply spread the love of the Lord to many. I am so incredibly blessed to have been able to be a part of the Mission of Peace trip to Cuba.



Front L to R: Roman Ditzenberger, Evan Gaalswyk, Karis Arnold, and Nito Slack attended the Mission of Peace in Cuba as the delegation from the BWC.

Awards: Celebrating excellent ministry in the BWC

From page 1

The Youth Worker of the Year Award will be given to a person who exemplifies inviting, inspiring and strengthening youth skilled servant workers. Nomination forms are online at bwumc.org/youthworkeraward.

Advocacy and Action Award: \$1,000 will be given to one faith community that exemplifies partnering with their communities in advocating to transform systems that disenfranchise, marginalize and oppress. Nomination forms are online at bwumc.org/advocacyandactionaward.

Abundant Health Award: \$1,000 will be given to one faith community that

exemplifies the fostering of spiritual, physical and mental health for all and promotes an understanding of the interconnectedness of all aspects of health. Nominations forms are online at bwumc.org/abundantthehealthaward.

The awards are a part of an effort to recognize and support individuals and faith communities that are flourishing and working to enhance God's reign. This strategy includes a component, which will be rolled out this spring and summer, of providing grant money for inspiring and innovative ministry in local faith communities.

One example is the Peace with Justice grant. The application process for this

and other grants will be standardized and automated to streamline the online application system.

The BWC Peace with Justice grants are for up to \$2,000. This funding is made possible by the annual Peace with Justice Offering. Fifty percent of this offering, which will be taken on May 27, is retained for local Peace with Justice ministries. Peace with Justice witnesses to God's demand for a faithful, just, disarmed and secure world. The deadline to apply for this year's grants is April 1. Application forms are online at bwumc.org/peacewithjusticeaward.

Work is also underway to create Missional Innovation for Advocacy and Action grants of up to \$5,000. These

grants will be awarded to a team of people, of whom at least one is connected to a United Methodist faith community. Any team that applies must have a tested plan to address an aspect of a system of oppression and/or injustice in collaboration with impoverished, marginalized and disenfranchised communities.

The applications for missional innovation grants are expected to be online this summer.

For more information about the BWC's Discipleship Ministries Grants and Awards, visit bwumc.org/ministries/grants-and-awards.

Read any good books lately? These pastors have...

“It cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people.”—John Wesley

We asked several outstanding pastors about what they’re reading, what books influence their ministry and what books they would include if they were creating a library for spiritual leaders. Below are some of their responses.

What are you reading now?

- “66 Love Letters” by Larry Crabb
- “A Bigger Table” by John Pavlovitz
- “Across That Bridge: A Vision for Change and The Future of America” by John Lewis
- “Almost Christian” by Kenda Creasy Dean;
- “America’s Original Sin” by Jim Wallis
- “Barking to the Choir” by Father Gregory
- “Being Mortal” by Atul Gawande
- “Between the World and Me” by Ta-Nehisi Coate
- “Canoeing the Mountains” by Tod Bolsinger
- “Chasing the Scream” by Johann Hari
- “Childhood Disrupted” by Donna Jackson Nakazawa
- “Christianity After Religion” by Diana Butler Bass
- “The Circle Maker” by Mark Batterson
- “Crucial Conversations: Tools for talking when the stakes are high” by Kerry Patterson and Joseph Grenny
- “The Cure for Sorrow” by Jan Richardson
- “The Death of Race: Building a New Christianity in a Racial World” by Brian Bantum
- “Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us” by Daniel Pink
- “The E Myth Revisited: Why most small businesses don’t work and what to do about it” by Michael Gerber
- “Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less” by Greg McKeown
- “Everything Happens for a Reason and Other Lies I’ve Loved” by Kate Bowler
- “Eyes of the Heart: Photography as a Christian Contemplative Practice” by Christine Painter
- “Falling Upward” by Richard Rohr
- “Fear+Less Dialogues: A New Movement for Justice” by Gregory Ellison, II
- “Fearless: Imagine Your Life Without Fear” by Max Lucado
- “The 4 Disciplines of Execution” by Chris McChesney and Sean Covey
- “The Generals” by Thomas E. Ricks
- “Good to Great” by Jim Collins
- “Grounded” by Diana Butler Bass
- “How to Survive the Apocalypse: Zombies, Cylons, Faith and Politics at the End of the World” by Robert Joustra and Alissa Wilkinson
- “Inner Compass: An invitation to Ignatian Spirituality” by Margaret Silf
- “Just Mercy” by Bryan Stevenson
- “Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Other’s Don’t” by Simon Sinek
- “Leadership Pain” by Samuel Chand
- “Letter to a Christian Nation” by Sam Harris
- “Made for a Miracle” by Mike Slaughter
- “Missional Renaissance: Changing the scorecard for the church” by Reggie McNeal
- “The New Jim Crow” by Michelle Alexander and Cornel West
- “Openness Unhindered” by Rosaria Champagne Butterfield
- “Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership” by Gary McIntosh and Samuel Rima
- “Rising Strong” by Brene Brown
- “Scandalous Obligation” by Eric Severson
- “The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert” by Rosaria Champagne Butterfield
- “Sevastopol’s Wars” by Mungo Melvin
- “Sin: A history” by Gary Anderson
- “Smart Love” by David and Jan Stoop
- “The Social Contexts of Disability Ministry: A Primer for Pastors, Seminarians, and Lay Leaders” by Albert A. Herzog, Jr.
- “St. Benedict Toolbox: The Nuts and Bolts of Everyday Benedictine Living” by Jane Tomaine
- “Standout: The groundbreaking new strengths assessment” by Marcus Buckingham
- “Strength Finders 2.0” by Tom Rath
- “Synergy” by Ann A. Michel
- “Tattoos on the Heart” by Father Gregory Boyle
- “The Warmth of Other Suns” by Isabel Wilkerson
- “The Word in the Wilderness: A Poem a Day for Lent and Easter” by Malcolm Guite
- “Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction” by Maia Szalavitz
- “The Validation Breakthrough” by Naomi Fell

- “Weak Enough to Lead” by James Howell
- “When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing” by Daniel H. Pink

What book has most influenced your thinking?

- “5 Love Languages” by Gary Chapman
- “The 360 Degree Leader” by John Maxwell
- “A Presence that Disturbs: A Call to Radical Discipleship” by Anthony Gittins’
- “A Door Set Open” by Peter Steinke
- “Abraham Lincoln Lessons in Spiritual Leadership” by Elton Trueblood
- “Accidental Saints: Finding God in all the Wrong People” by Nadia Bolz-Weber
- “Adam” by Henri Nouwen
- “An Altar in the World” by Barbara Brown Taylor
- “The Anatomy of Peace” from the Arbinger Institute
- “Barna Trends: What’s New and What’s Next at the Intersection of Faith and Culture 2017”
- “Building Communities from the Inside Out” by Kretzmann and Mcknight
- “The Call to Conversion” by Jim Wallis
- “Canoeing the Mountains” by Tod Bolsinger
- “The Chronicles of Narnia” by C.S. Lewis
- “The Cost of Discipleship” by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- “The Divine Conspiracy” by Dallas Willard
- “Essentialism” by Greg McKeown
- “Failing Forward.” by John Maxwell
- “Foucault’s Pendulum” by Umberto Eco
- “Generation to Generation” by Edwin Friedman
- “Generous Orthodoxy” by Brian McLaren
- “God, Christ, Church” by Marjorie Suchocki
- “Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today” by John Cobb
- “The Great Divorce” by C.S. Lewis
- “The Heart of Christianity” by Marcus Borg
- “Heaven: Our Enduring Fascination with the Afterlife” by Lisa Miller
- “Holy Trinity, Perfect Community” by Leonardo Boff
- “Lead Like Jesus: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of all Time” by Ken Blanchard
- “Living Prayer” by Robert Benson
- “Love Wins” by Rob Bell
- “The Meaning of the City” by Jacques Ellul
- “My Utmost for His Highest” by Oswald Chambers
- “Necessary Endings” by Cloud and Townsend
- “The Needs of the Dying,” by David Kessler
- “The Outward Mindset” by the Arbinger Institute
- “The Passionate Church” by Kallestad and Breen
- “The Prophetic Imagination” by Walter Brueggemann
- “Receiving the Day” by Dorothy Bass
- “The Return of the Prodigal Son” by Henri Nouwen
- “The Search to Belong” by Joseph Myers
- “She Who Is” by Elizabeth Johnson
- “Simple Church” by Rainer and Geiger
- “Speaking of Faith” by Krista Tippett
- “Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action” by Simon Sinek
- “The Technological Society” by Jacques Ellul
- “Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist’s Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations” by Thomas L. Friedman
- “Traveling Mercies” by Anne Lamott
- “Unleashing Scripture” by Stanley Hauerwas
- “The United Methodist Deacon: Ordained to Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice” by Margaret Ann Crain
- “Wounded Healer” by Henri Nouwan

Also noted: anything by Richard Rohr; the books of Father Gregory Boyle; worship resources from Iona, and worship resources from Wild Goose Publications; everything by James Cone; everything by Walter Brueggemann, Justo and Catherine Gonzalez, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Gustavo Gutierrez, Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, and William Countryman; for preaching: Barbara Brown Taylor and Debbie Blue.

If you were creating a library for spiritual leaders, what one book, other than the Bible, would be a must to put on the shelves?

- “A Bigger Table: Building Messy, Authentic and Hopeful Spiritual Community” by John Pavlovitz
- “Christ Plays in 10,000 Places” by Eugene Peterson
- “The Cost of Discipleship” by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

- “Disciplines of the Spirit” by Howard Thurman
- “Disunity in Christ” by Christina Cleveland
- “Failure of Nerve” by Edwin Friedman
- “Generations: The History of America’s Future” by Strauss and Howe
- “Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue” by Edwin Friedman
- “Holding Up Your Corner” by F. Willis Johnson
- “The Inward Journey” by Howard Thurman
- “Jesus and the Disinherited” by Howard Thurman
- “Learning to Walk in the Dark” by Barbara Brown Taylor
- “Made to Stick” by Chip and Dan Heath
- “Meditations of the Heart” by Howard Thurman
- “Necessary Endings” by Henry Cloud
- “On the Incarnation” by Athanasius
- “Pastoral Care” by Pope Gregory the Great
- “The Practice of the Presence of God” by Brother Lawrence
- “Praying for Jennifer” by John Cobb.
- “Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know – and Doesn’t” by Stephen Prothero
- “The Storyteller’s Companion” series
- “Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard” by Chip and Dan Heath
- “Theological Dictionary of the New Testament” by Kittel and Friedrich
- “This Odd and Wondrous Calling” by Martin Copenhaver and Lillian Daniels
- “When Bad Things Happen to Good People” by Harold Kushner

What’s your favorite recent work of fiction?

- “11.22.63” by Stephen King
- “A Wrinkle in Time” by Madeline L’Engle
- “All the Light We Cannot See” by Anthony Doerr
- “Darwin’s Radio” by Greg Bear
- “Daughter of the Empire” trilogy, by Feist
- “The Fifth Season” by NK Jemisin
- “The Gustav Sonata” by Rose Tremain
- “The Inspector Gamache” series by Louise Penny
- “Holes” by Louis Sachar
- “Infinity in the Palm of Her Hand” by Gioconda Belli
- “Purple Hibiscus” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- “The Remains of the Day” by Kazuo Ishiguro
- “The Sense of an Ending” by Julian Barnes
- “Song of Solomon” by Toni Morrison
- “The Sparrow” by Mary Doria Russell
- “Split Second” by David Baldacci

Anything by Lee Child, C.J. Box, or John Sandford; everything Flannery O’Connor wrote; and Julia Spencer-Fleming’s “Rev. Clare Ferguson-Russ Van Alstyne” mystery series.

Contributing Pastors:
Several outstanding BWC pastors were invited to contribute book titles. They include the Revs. Kevin Baker, Oakdale UMC; Katie Bishop, New Hope of Greater Brunswick; Cynthia Burkert, retired; Jenny Cannon, Bethesda UMC in Bethesda; Terri Cofell, Harmony UMC; Andrew Cooney, Bethany UMC; Ron Foster, Severna Park UMC; Mark Gorman, Centre UMC in Forest Hill; Charles Harrell, retired; Bruce Jones, LaPlata UMC; Jeff Jones, North Bethesda UMC; Conrad Link, Cumberland-Hagerstown District Superintendent; Craig McLaughlin, Mt. Zion UMC in Bel Air; John Nupp, BWC Director of Clergy Excellence; Kate Payton, Epworth UMC in Cockeysville; Sarah Schlieckert, Melville Chapel UMC; Rodney Smothers, BWC Director of Leadership and Congregational Development; Mary Kay Totty, Dumbarton UMC; Rev. Stephanie Vader, Emmanuel UMC in Scaggsville; Tim Warner, Mill Creek Parish in Rockville; Leo Yates, Centennial Memorial UMC in Frederick; and Evan Young, Annapolis District Superintendent

An annotated list, with the comments of the pastors who suggested these books, and links to purchase each book, is available at bwcumc.org/whatareyoureading