

FOR IN GOD ALL THINGS WERE CREATED:  
ALL THINGS HAVE BEEN CREATED  
THROUGH GOD AND FOR GOD.  
— COLOSSIANS 1:16

# UMConnection

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Becoming fully alive in Christ and making a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world • www.bwcumc.org • Volume 27, Issue 04 • April 2016

## Remembering Francis Asbury



The Rev. Emora Brannan speaks at the dedication of a new monument (tallest one, to his right) honoring Bishop Francis Asbury and others at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Baltimore. On the platform are the Rev. Travis Knoll, left, pastor of Lovely Lane UMC, and Walter Tegeler, owner of the company that made the monument.

BY ERIK ALSGAARD  
UMConnection Staff

BISHOP FRANCIS ASBURY was remembered as the “The Prophet of the Long Road” on the 200th anniversary of his death during worship at Lovely Lane UMC and ceremonies at Mt. Olivet Cemetery, both in Baltimore, on April 3.

Asbury, an icon of Methodism from its start in Colonial America, arrived on these shores from England in 1771 at the age of 26. He had answered a call as a lay preacher from John Wesley to go to America. At the time, there were about 600 Methodists in the colonies.

At the time of his death, on March 31, 1816, Asbury had ordained about 1,000 clergy and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which he co-founded, stood at more than 200,000.

These facts are well known, said the Rev. Alfred Day, General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History, who preached at Lovely Lane to start the commemoration. However, Asbury’s message for today, he said, is just as important and often missed.

“He stayed,” Day said of Asbury. “When the war for independence was won; when British-born preachers packed up and headed home, British-born Francis Asbury stayed.”

Asbury’s endurance and persistence are not to be overlooked, Day said. “There was no mountain too high, no valley too low, no river too wide to keep him from spreading his version of the Methodist message.”

Asbury, Day said, was an effective leader but not a great preacher. A man who possessed keen organizational skills, Asbury’s genius was derived from his simple mission statement. Day noted that Asbury wrote in his journal during his trip to America that “I am going to live to God and invite others to do so.”

Day also noted similarities between Francis Asbury and another Francis, that of Assisi. Asbury never married and gave nearly all of his money and possessions away during his ministry, Day said. He travelled the country on horseback, logging about 6,000 miles per year while staying in the homes of friends, strangers and converts alike.

“Asbury was a leader with great humility, perseverance, piety and discipline,” Day said. “He also had — and I was surprised to learn this — he had a wonderful sense of humor.”

Asbury knew popular American culture long before anyone else because of his extensive travels, Day said. His mission was to make the Gospel relevant to everyone he met. One piece of American culture he abhorred was slavery; Asbury called it a “moral evil.”

And yet, Asbury made accommodations for slaveholding Methodists, mostly in the South, in order to hold the church together, Day said. “This haunted him the rest of his life.”

At the Christmas Conference of 1784, held in Baltimore, Asbury was ordained a Deacon on one day, Elder the next, and consecrated bishop the next. He became the leader of the new Methodist Episcopal Church.

The Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District, brought greetings at the cemetery on behalf of Bishop Marcus Matthews. The bishop was in Korea, attending the Namboo Annual Conference with which the BWC is in partnership. The relationship between the two groups goes back 130 years, when the Rev. John Goucher, then pastor of Lovely Lane, had a vision of taking Christ to Korea.

John Strawbridge, a direct descendant of Robert Strawbridge, a layman who proclaimed Methodism in what is now Carroll County years before Asbury arrived, spoke at the dedication. Robert Strawbridge, John’s



The Rev. Alfred Day, General Secretary of the Commission on Archives & History, looks at a model of Francis Asbury at Lovely Lane UMC.

seventh great-grandfather, is buried in the Bishop’s Lot. “We are here,” Strawbridge said, “to stand bodily

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## BMCR meets in Baltimore

BY MELISSA LAUBER & LARRY HYGH\*  
UMConnection Staff

STANDING BEFORE THE 330 members of the national Black Methodists for Church Renewal, who gathered in Baltimore March 10-12, U.S. Congressman Elijah Cummings shared how, as a child, he could not come into downtown Baltimore



A BMCR member reads to children.

because it was a segregated city and he was black.

“The thought today that I represent every square inch of these blocks and help to make policy for this city, and this nation ... only God could make my life,” said Cummings, the representative for Maryland’s 7th Congressional District.

Cummings preached to the crowd on the theme “When Holy Meets the Hurting.” He challenged people to recognize that compassion comes through experience. “So often, out of our pain, comes our passion to do our purpose.”

BMCR is one of the denomination’s five ethnic caucuses. Its mission is to raise up prophetic and spiritual leaders who will be advocates for the unique needs of black people in The United Methodist Church.

Within the denomination, in the United States, 6 percent of United Methodists are black. In the

See BMCR, page 3



# ... well said

(a chance to express what that word means to you.)

By MANDY SAYERS  
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

MY FAMILY OF origin was not a fan of the phrase, “I love you.” It just wasn’t something we said out loud to each other. I asked my mom why we never said “I love you” growing up. She was shocked. She said, “Have you ever for one second doubted my love for you? All these years, each day, have you ever for one moment thought that we did not love you?”

I had to admit I had not ever doubted her love. She said, “We can say it if it makes you feel better, but if we already know it, if we live it, in my mind we don’t need to say it.”

Jesus’ commands to “love one another as I have loved you” and the idea that “God is love” both show us that love is an action word, a verb. It’s certainly not something so squishy and changeable as a feeling.

Love is something you do, like washing feet or feeding the hungry or visiting the prisoner. This is a liberating thought, because it means that we could even get better at love through practice, again without regard for something like how we felt about things.

Still, spiritual disciplines are a response to God’s grace and an invitation to that grace. In this dance of faith, the Holy Spirit has a way of “forming the Savior in the soul,” to quote Charles Wesley. Faithful actions put us at risk to have our hearts softened by God’s grace.

Easter celebrates that God so loved the world that God didn’t just say “I love you.” God acted, repeatedly, out of that love, by creating and covenanting, by sending the Son, and when we rejected him, by raising him from the dead. It’s the sort of active love my mother could get behind. It’s the sort of active love we are called to show to others as Easter people.

I am a big, big fan of “I love you” with the people in my life. But I’ve learned from Jesus and Mama that a Resurrection love needs to break open graves, wash feet and change lives.

That’s the way to say, “I love you” this Easter season.



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

“SHOW YOUR LOVE.” — Steve Harvey

From 1994 until 2001, every person that took the stage for amateur night at the famous Apollo Theater in New York City heard those words before they took the stage.

The host of the show for those years was comedian Steve Harvey. Knowing that the person about to perform was full of nerves, facing a hostile audience and probably scared to death, before they came out, Harvey would instruct the audience to show their love by giving them a warm welcoming round of applause. No matter what happened next, the contestant was welcomed not with boos or silence, but with an expression of love.

You see, love is a verb. It is an action. It’s not just what you say, or what people think and feel on the inside, love is what you do. Love is the kind word that you share with the person who needs to hear it. Love is when you go out of your way to make someone feel special, or to lift their load, or to forgive their offence, or to turn the other cheek. Jesus told us, “no greater love is there than to lay down your life for your friends.”

In short, love always requires action. Love will always require you to do something, be something or say something, so that what you feel on the inside can be seen and felt by the one that you love.

Day by day, we have the opportunity to show our love to people. If there is someone who you love, take the time to show them. Show them with a few kind words. Show them with a heartfelt gesture. Show them you love them by spending a little quality time with them unexpectedly.

Let them know that you love them by picking up a little gift, just because you care. Let them know you love them by affirming them and telling them that they are special and loved. If you can’t find the words, or a gift, sometimes a big hug will say what you couldn’t.

What you do matters far less than that you do something. When you love someone, you want them to absolutely know it. So take a little time, day by day, to show your love.

... well said

... well said

## EVENTS

### Older Adults Day Away

April 26, 9:30 a.m.  
West River Center, Churchton

The Rev. Craig McLaughlin, of Mt. Zion UMC in Bel Air, will be the keynote speaker for this annual event. He will speak on human sex trafficking. During the afternoon, a variety of workshops will be held. Lunch is included in the ticket price of \$28 per person. To register, go to [www.bwccampsandretreats.com/WRDayAway.html](http://www.bwccampsandretreats.com/WRDayAway.html).

### Pre-Conference Briefing

April 30, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
First UMC, Hyattsville

All clergy and lay annual conference members are encouraged to attend the Pre-Conference Briefing. This informative session will include an overview of the proposed 2017 budget, a glimpse at proposed legislation and an opportunity to ask questions about Annual Conference.

### Training for Childrens Ministries

May 7, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Designed to provide encouragement and resources for the local church children’s

ministry leaders, teachers and Sunday School helpers. The Rev. Michelle Chaney will be the keynote speaker. The cost is \$25. Register at <http://bwcumc.org/event/training-the-trainers-for-childrens-ministry>.

### Farewell Celebration for Barbara Matthews

May 28, 1 p.m.

A farewell celebration honoring Barbara Matthews, the wife of Bishop Marcus Matthews, will be held at the BWC Mission Center in Fulton. Tickets are \$25. Register at [bwcumc.org](http://bwcumc.org).

### BWC Annual Conference

June 1-4  
Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, D.C.

Churches are advised to budget for attendance for their clergy and lay members. The cost for a three-night stay, including registration and parking but not including meals, is \$833. Breakfast at the hotel is \$26; lunch is \$35, and dinner is \$45. More information about the Annual Conference Session is online at <http://bwcumc.org/sessions/2016-session/>.

## GENERAL CONFERENCE 2016

Stay connected to the 2016 General Conference through the communications ministry of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Staff writers Melissa Lauber and Erik Alsgaard will be on site, reporting and blogging from Portland. Guest blogger, the Rev. Laura Easto, superintendent of the Baltimore Suburban District, will also be there, along with James Quinn helping with photography.

Go to [www.bwcumc.org](http://www.bwcumc.org) for updates, stories and photos, starting May 10. In addition, look for additional posts on the BWC’s Facebook page, and be sure to follow us on Twitter, @bwcumc.



## UMConnection

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# Asbury: ‘Prophet of the Long Road’ remembered

From page 1

beside these people: beside Francis, and John (Emory), and Enoch (George) and Beverly (Waugh). Besides Robert,



The Revs. Fred Day, left, and Emora Brannan lay a wreath at the grave of Bishop Francis Asbury.

Elizabeth (Robert Strawbridge’s wife), and Jesse (Lee) and (E.) Stanley (Jones)... to be reminded that these are people like ourselves; no figures of legend, but simple persons of flesh and of breath who followed God.”

Strawbridge, Vice President of the United Methodist Historical Society of the BWC, said that the gathering at the cemetery was to dedicate a monument, a word that means “reminder,” he said, “which stands firmly on the ground, but drawing from an ancient symbol that points heavenward.”

Also in attendance at the cemetery was Jim Winkler, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, who brought greetings from its 38 ecumenical partners.

The Rev. Emora Brannan, BWC Historian and president of the UMHS, spoke about the journey Asbury took, even in death.

After Asbury died in Virginia, his body was buried there. The 1816 General Conference ordered his remains moved to Baltimore, where it was reported that 20,000 people lined the funeral procession. He was re-interred at the Eutaw Street Church.

The 1852 General Conference authorized the transfer of Asbury’s remains to Mt. Olivet Cemetery, just southwest of Baltimore. It was at that spot that people gathered in the afternoon of April 3 to dedicate a new memorial to Asbury and the other bishops and pastors buried in what is now called “The Bishop’s Lot.”

“Even in death,” Brannan said, “Asbury was an itinerant preacher.”

A new exhibit, “The Brand and the Bishop,” was also opened April 3 at the Lovely Lane Museum.



The memorial for Francis Asbury, Enoch George, John Emory and Beverly Waugh is unveiled.

# BMCR: Members meet for networking and learning

From page 1

Baltimore-Washington Conference, 39,539 — or 23 percent — of United Methodists are African American. Twenty-eight percent of the churches in the Baltimore-Washington Conference are black and 29 percent of the clergy are African Americans.

Within BMCR, two of the emphases are servant leadership and prophetic preaching, said Willa Kynard, immediate past coordinator of the conference’s BMCR chapter.

To welcome BMCR to Baltimore, Kynard organized a project that drew upon Bishop Marcus Matthews’ initiative for churches to partner with local schools.

Kynard invited the Maryland Governor’s Office to participate and they responded by sending more than 300 books and art supplies to Furman L. Templeton Elementary School in Baltimore. BMCR members then met at the school and read stories about African-American issues and heroes to the kindergarten and first graders.

“It’s easy to paint a wall or clean up a building, but BMCR believes in reaching out to the community, to serving children, and to promoting justice and wholeness in authentic ways that nurture relationship and faith-sharing,” she said. “Church is about helping others, not ourselves.”

As the BMCR readers left the school, the teachers said they wished more “church people” would share of their time with the students.

During the BMCR plenary sessions at the old Masonic Lodge on Charles Street, members discussed the upcoming session of General Conference, supporting the Historic Black College Fund and saw the unveiling of a U.S. Postal Service stamp honoring the Rev. Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

One of the highlights of the session was a presentation by four young adult clergy on prophetic preaching.

The panel was led by

the Rev. C. Anthony Hunt, pastor of Epworth Chapel UMC in Baltimore. Among the participants was the Rev. Michael Parker of Ames UMC in Bel Air.

Prophetic preaching, Hunt said, “calls persons and structures back into relationship with God and paves the way for the coming of the reign of God.” It speaks to the hopes and hurts, he said.

Equipping young clergy to preach prophetically often requires mentoring and the sharing of learned wisdom, Parker said. In the Baltimore-Washington Conference, he pointed out, there are only seven pastors of color under the age of 35, and only two of them are female.

There should be more, and those who are ordained, need to be set loose in setting where prophetic preaching is valued and imagination and excellence have not been snuffed out, he said.

As a pastor with 15 tattoos, Parker said he has gained an understanding that he must pastor and preach from a place of authenticity. He advises his peers to do the same.

“God made you to be who you are on purpose,” he said. “Don’t lose yourself.” Having a mentor can help, he added, so can being willing to take risks and have fun.

“Every day,” Parker said, “should be something new. ... God has every desire to exceed your expectations.”

A highlight of the BMCR meeting was the Spirit Banquet, which honored five retiring ebony bishops: Warner H. Brown Jr. (a native of Baltimore), Robert E. Hayes, Jonathan D. Keaton, James R. King Jr. (who will be a guest preacher at the June Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference session) and Marcus Matthews.

Matthews is the resident bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. He retires in September after 42



The Revs. Michael Parker, left, and Tony Hunt share a laugh during a BMCR presentation on prophetic preaching.

years of ministry. During his ministry, most of it as a leader in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Bishop Matthews served as the founding president of the local chapter of BMCR, as treasurer of the National BMCR, was president of the Northeastern Jurisdiction BMCR, and is an honored Harry Hosier member of the organization.



### LOVE ELECTED

The Rev. Tony Love was elected to serve as Vice Chair of the national Black United Methodists for Church Renewal caucus. Love currently serves as coordinator of the Baltimore-Washington Conference caucus of BMCR and works in ministry as the conference Director of Vibrant Communities.



Bishop Jonathan Keaton, second from left, of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference inspects a retirement gift while bishops Warner Brown, James King and Marcus Matthews look on.

*\*Larry Hygh serves as Director of Communications for the California-Nevada Conference. Hygh began his communications ministry in the BWC as a one-year Racial Ethnic Scholarship winner from United Methodist Communications.*



# Stories and lessons of vitality and transformation

BY MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff



In today's world of church growth, vitality is something to which congregations aspire. But in the Washington Region, five unique congregations have begun to simply live out, in the best ways they know, the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

They love their neighbors and make disciples.

On March 5, Christie Latona, seen below, the Washington Region Resource Person, gathered the pastors of these churches together at Leadership Days for a panel discussion. In the music room of Reservoir High School in Fulton, they shared glimpses into the "crazy growth" God has brought them and the shifts their congregations had to navigate to get back in synch with God.

## The word is 'passion'

Two years ago, the Rev. Armon Nelson, became the pastor of Mt. Vernon UMC in Washington, D.C. The church is situated in a community with one of the highest rates of unemployment in the nation.

Nelson spent six months surveying the poverty-struck community and asking profound questions of the congregation. Among them: Do you want a pastor or do you just want to pay someone to do your ministry?

He asked the trustees to take the locks off many of the doors. Noting that the church was in a "food desert," he engaged the congregation in starting a hot-meals program and partnered with Metropolitan Memorial UMC, a more affluent church in Northwest D.C. More than 150 come each week to eat.

Nelson asked: How can we serve you, believing that in serving, the church was honoring God. He also set about creating a welcoming community, offering vibrant worship that focused on healing and celebrating the good things happening in people's lives.

"We understood that together we needed to become a witnessing community," he said.

## The word is 'community'

The Rev. Mary Ka Kanahan pastors St. John United Church, a unique interfaith experiment begun in Columbia in 1969. Today,

the 100-member United Methodist and Presbyterian congregation worships in Wilde Lake Interfaith Center. Many of her members are immigrants from Africa.

When she arrived three years ago, the church was in decline. Kanahan reminded them that United Methodist pastors are appointed to parishes and communities, not just churches. In the past 15 to 18 months, members have stopped focusing inward and realized that the church exists to serve the community, Kanahan said.

Developing relationships with people in the community is important, she said, noting that 1,700 luxury apartment units are being built nearby.

In addition to assessing and meeting the needs of the community, the congregation has been working on revitalizing worship, including more global music, and nurturing small group studies and ministries. About 70 percent of church members are in a small group.

## The word is 'spiritual'

The vibrancy of Goshen UMC in Gaithersburg is the result of a merger of two small African-American churches and the diligence of its pastor, the Rev. Shawn Wilson, who ensures the 300-member congregation is grounded in spiritual disciplines.

Born and raised in a family brimming with United Methodist pastors, Wilson is in his fifth year at Goshen.

"What's helped the church grow?" Wilson is frequently asked. He's definitive in his answer. "We focus on the means of grace." Prayer, Bible study and immersing lives in the Gospel is critical.

Sharing this word in a faith community provides a narrative framework for people. Bible study and prayer lead to service, Wilson said.

The question is, he asks, "how do we pay attention to what God is saying?"

## The word is 'life-bringing'

At first blush, the 104-year old Chevy Chase UMC, in an affluent Washington suburb, might not have seem troubled. However, as with many churches, there were currents of unrest among some in the congregation. This unrest led, in recent years, to decline and budget deficits of almost \$200,000.

But rather than stepping in as a new pastor and working to immediately fix things, the Rev. Kirkland Reynolds led his congregation through an analysis to discern "what would God have us do.

What's working? What brings life?"

In their assessment, the congregations noted two unique ministries: a Saturday morning citizenship class in which church members mentored and supported immigrants preparing for their exam; and Kids on Purpose, a ministry that invites nonprofits to the church to enable children to work together in mission during the Sunday School hour.

Both ministries involved no staff time and not one penny of the budget, Reynolds said. Recognizing these ministries and, through an Appreciative Inquiry process, being open to reorganization, led to a change in heart among many church members.

## The word is 'being'

Abnormal was normal at Community UMC in Washington, D.C. The church, said the Rev. Jalene Chase-Sands, sits on a corner known for the past 65 years as a place where drugs and people were sold. As a former police officer, she recognizes the signs, the pain and the danger.

"In ministry, you have to know what you're getting into," said Chase-Sands. "Hope was missing when I got there."

She began her ministry by listening to the Holy Spirit. "God said, 'love them and help them with their grief.'" She did that the only way she could, by authentically loving people.

"I told them, 'Community is our name and our mission,'" she said. In this ministry, you have to be. Be. Be. Be. Being is believing."

Drawing inspiration from Howard Thurman's book "Jesus and the Disinherited," Chase-Sands found ways to be present in the community to work outside of traditional expectations. "Ministry has to be an adventure," she said, "something you have a passion for. I'm in awe of God all the time."

## New realities

The participants listening to the panel discussion had several questions as they try to figure out how to take their next best step as they move from the "wilderness" to creating vitality.

The wilderness, the panelists assured them, was not a terrible place to be. "The wilderness can be a place of extreme possibility," Wilson said. "God gave us the law in the wilderness, that was better even than manna. God gives life in the wilderness."

And, the panelists added, "when things die in the wilderness, when you get a new reality, you can experience God's preferred future with less resistance."

They also encouraged others seeking transformation to stay faithful and focused, and to remember the joy.

"Make sure what you're doing is fun," Reynolds said. "Have more fun."



Melissa Lauber

Christie Latona

# Clergy learn about boundaries and social media

BY MELISSA LAUBER  
UMConnection Staff



FROM FULL-TIME ELDERS with decades of pastoral service to new Certified Lay Ministers, 11 categories of clergy lead the 85 churches of the Cumberland-Hagerstown District. The diversity of their gifts and qualifications is intensely broad.

But how many of them would "friend" you on Facebook?

On March 7, the pastors gathered at Hancock UMC for a continuing education event where they explored how the act of befriending had less to do with knowledge of social media and more to do with ideas about ethics and clergy boundaries.

Led by Sondra Wheeler, a professor of Christian ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., the group considered how the priesthood is the world's oldest profession, followed by medicine and law. These original professions, Wheeler said, make commitments to forms of human wholeness and well-being — pastors to salvation, doctors to bodily health, and lawyers to justice. With these commitments comes power, "but not simply power over; power for."

Pastors are entrusted with power through a calling to the service of others, Wheeler said, which obligates them to be committed to the moral well-being of others. Even then it can be personally costly. To ensure this power isn't abused, professional boundaries are established that define the practice of ministry.

But these boundaries are not about transgression or barriers not to cross, like on a soccer field, Wheeler said. Rather, they mark a space that allows space for congregants to be vulnerable.

"The whole reason for professions is that people need forms of care they cannot provide for themselves," Wheeler told the clergy. "Boundaries are not to keep you out of

court. They mark off the spaces in which profound risks can be taken and they mark those spaces as inviolate."

Co-mingled in the discussion of boundaries were thoughts about power. Wheeler used principles of physics to describe it. Power, she said, is "simply the capacity to have an effect in the physical world."

To fulfill their calling to proclaim the Gospel and make it visible, clergy must recognize their power and their boundaries.

However, in today's world, many pastors have multi-layered relationships with those in their congregations. They share meals, conversations at Starbucks, are present at special events, and offer God's love and comfort in difficult situations. Friendship can be seen as a model for ministry.

Drawing on the works of the philosopher Aristotle, the pastors defined friendship as being voluntary, between equals, reciprocal, dependent on mutual disclosure and involving mutual care-taking.

Friendship, in this model, they said, "can be the pinnacle of human relationships. Friends are the other half of one's self. A friend is the one to whom you open your soul."

In small group discussion, the pastors considered these characteristics of friendship, along with clergy boundaries and determined being friends with congregants was not in anyone's best interest. Their role, the pastors reported, was "to be friendly, but not friends."

However, in today's culture, maintaining these



boundaries and avoiding friendships is not always easy. On Facebook, people are invited to share with one another as "friends."

To be relevant the church must be present in social media. However, for pastors to keep a strict professional distance on Facebook and other

social media platforms is not easy.

Consider vacation photos or the sharing of personal thoughts, Wheeler said. "Posting on Facebook is like posting on the bulletin board in the narthex."

Even subdividing one's presence and only allowing certain people access to parts of one's page can raise concerns.

"Pastors," the Cumberland-Hagerstown clergy concluded, "should offer devoted personal service, but not friendship."

"Unfriending" people when one moves to a new appointment so that the authority of the new pastor is not challenged can also cause difficult issues, the pastors said.

"We're not here to find all the answers this morning," said the Rev. Susan Boehl, who chairs the district's committee on ministry, which sponsored the Boundaries and Social Media discussion. "But we're learning and having conversation. That's important."

The Rev. Conrad Link, District Superintendent, said he strongly believes in the importance of continuing education. It is one of the strengths of his district and the clergy gather regularly to learn, share ideas and resources and network with one another.



# Resolutions coming to 2016 BWC Annual Conference

***Editor’s note:** Five resolutions will be coming to the floor of the 2016 Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Session in June. The full text of all five resolutions is printed, below. The BWC’s Connectional Table met March 19 to consider each of the resolutions and to hear from the makers of each resolution. By paper ballot, the Connectional Table voted “concurrence” or “non-concurrence” on each resolution. The results of each vote is noted after each resolution.*

## Resolution 1

*Resolution to Amend the Membership of the Nominations Committee*  
**Budget Implications:** None  
**Rationale:** This resolution is to make clear the members of the Nominations Committee and to encourage a balance of laity and clergy.  
**Submitted by:** Jen Ihlo, Chair, Rules Committee  
**Resolution:** Membership of the Baltimore-Washington Conference Commission on Nominations shall include the following:

- Chair person, selected by the Bishop;
- Conference Secretary;
- Director of Connectional Ministries;
- District Superintendents (DSs);
- One Clergy person from each District, selected by the DSs;
- District Lay Leaders;
- Conference Lay Leader;
- President of United Methodist Men;
- President of United Methodist Women;
- One layperson named by the Commission on Disability Concerns;
- One youth, named by the Conference Council on Youth Ministry;
- One young adult layperson, named by the Young Adult Council; and
- Two at-large lay persons, selected by the Conference Lay Leader, following consultation with the District Lay Leaders.

*The Baltimore-Washington Conference Connectional Table considered this resolution; 19 members voted concurrence, 11 voted non-concurrence.*

## Resolution 2

*Resolution to Amend the Rules of the Session to codify the “Circles of Grace” process for consideration of certain resolutions during Annual Conference.*  
**Budget Implications:** None  
**Rationale:** For the past two Annual Conferences (2014 and 2015), the BWC used the Circles of Grace process to discuss and vote on certain pre-identified resolutions. This process was based on The United Methodist Church’s historical value of small group communication as a way to build community. It also avoided the usual debate process, with only three persons on each side of an issue having the opportunity to speak. At the 2015 Annual Conference, a concern arose that there was not opportunity to perfect the resolutions. This concern led to town hall meetings, blog conversations, and other communications with the Rules Committee about Annual Conference members’ views on the Circles of Grace process.

After four town hall meetings, various conversations with and receipt of email and other feedback from members of the Annual Conference, the Rules Committee determined that a method for perfecting resolutions prior to Annual Conference addressed the concerns of most members. The revised resolution was also presented to the Connectional Table and Discipleship Council for their review. Accordingly, the Rules Committee recommends that the Circles of Grace process presented in this resolution be incorporated into the Rules of the Session so that the Circles of Grace process may be used without the necessity of first deciding a motion to suspend the rules.  
**Submitted by:** Jen Ihlo, Chair, Rules Committee  
**Resolution:** Amend Paragraph 5410.J.4, by inserting the following at the end of the paragraph: “The Sessions Committee is authorized to set aside a period of time during the Annual Conference session to consider and vote on resolutions that address matters of social justice using the Circles of Grace process (§5410.K) rather than by debate (§5410.L).”

Delete Paragraphs 5410.J.8 – 16, 18 - 29, and move to a new Paragraph L, titled “Debate” and renumber as paragraphs 1 - 21. Renumber the remaining sub-paragraphs in Paragraph 5410.J.

Insert a new Paragraph 5410.K, as follows:

- K. Circles of Grace
- A. If the Sessions Committee authorizes a topic for Circles discussion (§5410.J.4), it shall
    - a. Determine a time during the Annual Conference Session for the conference to discuss a single social justice matter, based on a resolution or resolutions referred to the Annual Conference;
    - b. Publish the topic and resolution(s) to be considered using the Circles of Grace in accordance with the resolution perfection process developed by the Rules Committee, following consultation with the Discipleship Council and Chair of the Connectional Table.
    - c. Set aside sufficient time at Annual Conference, based on the number of resolutions, for discussion of the resolution(s) and reactions thereto;
    - d. Divide the members of the Annual Conference into small groups of not more than 10, assigned in the order of registration with efforts made to balance the number of clergy and laity in each circle;
    - e. Identify, provide training for, and assign one facilitator for

- each circle;
  - f. Provide training for circle participants;
  - g. Identify an item to be used as a ‘talking stick’ by circle participants;
  - h. Identify not fewer than three roving facilitators to be on the floor during the discussions, observe the small groups, and intervene, if requested by facilitators/participants or as needed; and
  - i. Make provision for participants who so desire to have a place to pray, meditate, or debrief following the Circles of Grace process, and identify qualified clergy and lay persons as guides for these participants.
- B. The Resident Bishop shall lead the conference in worship and set the stage for this time of holy conferencing, including reminding participants that Circles are not debates but opportunities to give and hear various opinions.
  - C. Following this time of worship and stage-setting, the maker of each resolution to be discussed shall have up to three minutes to summarize why he or she believes the resolution is important and should be adopted by the Annual Conference.
  - D. Each facilitator shall ensure that
    - a. no one dominates the conversation;
    - b. all have an opportunity to be heard;
    - c. all speak respectfully with one another;
    - d. the discussion centers on question(s) developed by the Sessions Committee, in consultation with the Rules Committee and Discipleship Council.
  - E. At the conclusion of the period of discussion, the Resident Bishop shall offer a prayer, following which ballots shall be distributed and collected by each facilitator and turned in to the tellers.
  - F. The participants shall then engage in a time of discussion about the process.
  - G. Following the time of discussion about the process, the participants shall be reminded about the option for prayer, meditation, and/or debriefing.
  - H. Results of the balloting shall be announced the following morning.

*The Baltimore-Washington Conference Connectional Table considered this resolution; 29 members voted concurrence, 1 voted non-concurrence.*

## Resolution 3

*Loans to Pastors, Church Staff and Volunteers*  
**Submitted by:** Rev. Deborah L. Scott, Mill Creek Parish UMC, Derwood, MD; Rev. Sarah A. Schlieckert, Arden UMC, Martinsburg, WV  
**Resolution:** Whereas, the sudden death of their beloved pastor caused one of our Conference local churches to find that a financial arrangement, made in good faith, to cover the down payment cost for a house purchased by its appointed pastor was considered an “excess benefit” as defined by the Internal Revenue Code below:

*Certain types of educational, religious and other tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations need to be careful that their leaders do not receive “excess benefits.” This can occur when a person who is defined by law as an “insider” (in this case pastor) receives unwarranted compensation or a low-interest loan or pays the organization below-market rent. Insiders who receive such excess benefits (as well as organization managers who knowingly approve “excess benefits transactions”) could be subject to “intermediate sanctions”; federal excise taxes that impose a personal liability. Moreover, the organizations themselves might be affected adversely if the excess benefits are revealed to donors or the public, which they often are.*

*Nonprofit Organizations*  
*“Intermediate sanctions” can be imposed on two types of organizations: Section 501(c)(3) organizations (religious, educational, charitable, scientific, literary, amateur sports) and section 501(c)(4) organizations (civic leagues, social welfare organizations and local associations of employees). Richard V. Smith, Sibson Consulting 1/7/2011*

Whereas, this benefit, according to the conference Chancellor, Thomas Starnes, “is prohibited by Section 4958 of the Internal Revenue Code and can result in the imposition of substantial penalties, primarily on the person who received the alleged excess benefit, but potentially also on ‘any manager’ of the tax-exempt organization that participated in the transaction.”

**Now, therefore be it resolved,** that local churches in the Baltimore-Washington Conference shall not loan or create any sort of legal entity, “i.e. Partnership Agreement,” that could be construed as offering a financial or other arrangement that may be defined as an “excess benefit” by the Internal Revenue Code, to any appointed pastor, hired church, or volunteer.

**Be it further resolved,** that all local churches that currently are, or may be, in such a good faith arrangement shall report this to their District Superintendent and immediately begin work to resolve and end this arrangement as soon as possible, so as not to jeopardize the tax exempt status of any local church.

*The Baltimore-Washington Conference Connectional Table considered this resolution and made changes, which are reflected in the text above. These changes were accepted by the makers of the resolution; 30 members voted concurrence, 1 voted non-concurrence.*

## Resolution 4

*Policy to be Activated in the Case of the Death of a Pastor While Serving as the Appointed Pastor of a Local Church*  
**Submitted by:** Rev. Deborah L. Scott, Mill Creek Parish UMC, Derwood, MD; Rev. Sarah A. Schlieckert, Arden UMC, Martinsburg, WV  
**Resolution:** Whereas, the death of one pastor actively serving an appointment in our Annual Conference is a tragic and grievous event, Whereas, in the moment of intense grief that takes place upon such a death, our local churches need specific support and guidance from the Annual Conference directly, but not limited to, the assigned District Superintendent.

**Be it resolved,** that a conference policy be established and adopted that would outline steps to be taken upon death notification that would include, but not be limited to:

1. Assisting the pastor’s family and congregation in the funeral and celebration of life.
2. Notify the Annual Conference when such a death occurs.
3. Securing the pastor’s office in such a way to protect any confidential information in possession of the pastor. It should be secured in such a manner that the DS and Chair of SPPRC would be the first to break that seal and care for any such confidential material and records held in the pastor’s office including information contained on electronic devices.
4. Providing on going grief support for the church staff and congregation.
5. Arrange coverage for preaching for at least two months or until the SPPRC feels they can secure substitutes for preaching and leading worship.
6. Create the possibility of an interim pastor that will be paid by the local church to fill the pastoral responsibilities until a new appointment can be made.
7. Work with the congregation and any newly appointed pastor around ongoing grief and transition issues.
8. Should the death occur between the annual church audit/fund balance, arrange for and pay for a financial audit to detail the local churches assets and liabilities at the time of the pastor’s death.

*The Baltimore-Washington Conference Connectional Table considered this resolution; 17 members voted concurrence, 13 voted non-concurrence. By consensus, it was decided that the Rules Committee would suggest an alternative resolution at the Pre-Conference Session April 30.*

## Resolution 5

*Policy requiring the district superintendent to review a church’s annual financial statements with an incoming church’s appointed pastor prior to the pastor’s assumption of duties and perform a periodic review with all continuing pastors.*  
**Submitted by:** Rev. Deborah L. Scott, Mill Creek Parish UMC, Derwood, MD  
**Resolution:** Recognizing that a change in pastoral appointment is an ideal opportunity for a church to do a substantial review of its financial and membership reporting, District Superintendents shall advise pastors who will be leaving their churches to ensure that all the church’s financial and other records are current.

1. For those clergy who are retiring, within 30 days after they announce their retirement, they shall ensure that copies of the church’s audit report for at least the last three years, three years of the end-of-year Profit and Loss statements, balance sheets and budget are compiled into a format to be shared with the incoming pastor, and upon request, with the District Superintendent.
2. For clergy being appointed to a new charge, the church’s audit report, Profit and Loss Statements, balance sheets and budget shall be gathered by the outgoing pastor and shared at the out-take meeting with the District Superintendent and later shared with the new pastor.
3. Each local church shall update their detailed church profile annually before their charge conference meeting. These profiles shall be presented to the new pastor upon their arrival.
4. An overview form, providing details of a church’s finances, shall be included with the other forms churches must complete at the time of a pastoral transition. The bishop’s office and District Superintendents shall ensure that this new form is created, introduced, filled out, and made available to the incoming pastor.
5. The compensation packages for incoming clergy shall be shared with the chairs of the finance and staff-parish relations committees, who shall sign a form signifying their assent to, and support of, this compensation.
6. Best practices in how District Superintendents and pastors can ensure smooth clergy transitions, including items that concern a church’s finances, shall be discussed at the Baltimore-Washington Conference’s annual Transitions Workshop.
7. Superintendents shall develop a process on their districts to ensure that they meet with pastors at least once every two years for a financial review to ensure that both have a clear understanding of the church’s financial status.

*The Baltimore-Washington Conference Connectional Table considered this resolution and made changes, which are reflected in the text above. These changes were accepted by the maker of the resolution; 27 members voted concurrence, 2 voted non-concurrence.*



# Feeding the homeless

By LINDA WORTHINGTON  
UMConnection Staff

MANY OF US see homeless people on the streets and we generally avert our eyes to make them even more invisible than they generally are. It's not that we don't care, but we don't know what to say, or we worry that any money we give will be used for drugs or alcohol.

"I don't want to give them money and I felt awkward passing them by," said Allison Gee, who helped spread the idea of making "care packages" to the Missions Committee and throughout the congregation at Chevy Chase UMC.

"Whatever their motivation is for panhandling," Gee said, "they need help. What seems like your worst day, someone else is having worse."

Feeding America, the largest domestic hunger relief charity in the country, provides food assistance to more than 25 million low-income people in the United States, which includes more than 9 million children and almost 3 million seniors. Being hungry or food insecure is not necessarily being homeless, but being homeless is almost always being hungry.

The CCUMC Missions Committee began a food drive for items to include in care packages. The congregation was asked to contribute non-perishable food, bottles of water and individual servings of applesauce. During the winter months, they also contributed warm socks, which are put in each bag. Money donations are also accepted.

When the collection bins are full, various groups in the church, including the youth and children's ministries, stuff Ziploc bags. The bags included a plastic spoon and a note of the source of the food, but even more, it includes words of encouragement and that God's love is always present. Initial funding was provided by the UMW and the Missions committee.

From the pulpit, the Rev. Kirkland Reynolds, the church's senior pastor, encouraged members to take the bags on their daily outings and give them to those on the streets looking for handouts. To date, they're working on the 800th bag that is helping feed someone who is hungry.

Gee and her children took 10 bags and began really seeing the person behind the outstretched hand or homemade sign around his neck. She spoke friendly words to him as she offered the food.

"I want my children to know about serving others," she said. "I'm hoping they'll see the homeless a little differently."

Gee encounters some of the men regularly at an intersection or in Washington, D.C., near the Verizon Center; others she sees only once. She's also met a woman near the Bethesda Metro garage. One man turned her down; he only wanted money, she said. "I'm sorry, I can't help you," she told him.

Last year, in wealthy Montgomery County, advocates, in an annual exercise, counted 891 homeless, including 35 veterans and 176 chronically homeless. That was 11 percent fewer than they'd seen the previous year. Some of that is because Montgomery County has zero tolerance for homeless families on the street and have moved them into motels or other shelters. Of Montgomery County's 159 medically homeless people last year, 110 now have homes.

## EXPERTS IN COMMUNICATION WILL HELP YOU TELL YOUR CHURCH STORY.

Wednesday, June 1  
Wardman Park Marriott Hotel  
2660 Woodley Road, NW,  
Washington, D.C.

### *Communicating Faith in the 21st Century* 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Caitlin Congdon from United Methodist Commission on Communications will enable you to unlock some of the mysteries and best practices of social media and church marketing. Learn to share your message in ways that matter and ways that transform. This opportunity is not just for church communicators, it's for everyone with a story to tell.

### *Electronic Story-telling* 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

How can your church best tell the story of God at work in your congregation and community? Darby Jones from the United Methodist Communications Commission help you discover the most effective and vital ways to use e-mail and e-newsletters, and will cover strategy, design, distribution and management of e-newsletters. This workshop is open to anyone with something important to say.

Registration  
is \$40.

Register at  
[bwcumc.org/  
sessions/2016-session](http://bwcumc.org/sessions/2016-session).  
Fill out your contact  
information, select your  
conference role as Other/  
Visitor then select limited  
registration and the workshop  
of choice.

If you have any questions, please contact  
our Registrar's office at [AC2016@bwcumc.org](mailto:AC2016@bwcumc.org)  
or (410) 309-3498

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

### Christ watches over cemetery



The Rev. Jay DeMent, center, and members of Salem UMC dedicate a new sculpture of Christ.

UPPER FALLS — Last fall, the trustees of Salem UMC decided the large red oak tree in its 160-year-old cemetery was dying and for safety reasons needed to come down. After removing all the large branches, a 30-foot trunk remained.

The Rev. Jay DeMent and some of the church members were inspired. Why not make a sculpture of it? They contracted Paul Waclo from Stewartstown, Pa., a chainsaw artist, to carve a sculpture of Christ, the Good Shepherd, to watch over the cemetery and the community.

Many friends and neighbors joined church members to watch the progress, which began in January and was finished three weeks later. On March 20, Palm Sunday, following worship, DeMent led the congregation to the cemetery for the sculpture's dedication.

"Christ now stands tall on the cemetery hillside" said family ministries coordinator Judy Jones.

### Church partners with hospitals

BALTIMORE — Gwynn Oak UMC has recently become a partner in a pilot project for a new hospital program. When an elderly parishioner wound up in the hospital recently, the Rev. Dellyne Hinton didn't find out until days later, an experience many pastors have had. "A lot of times people go to the hospital and they don't think to call the church or they are too sick to call," Hinton said.

Gwynn Oak UMC and others hope to build a direct

link between the places of worship and LifeBridge's hospitals, Sinai of Baltimore, Northwest in Randallstown and Carroll in Westminster. The link begins when a person admitted to the hospital consents to allowing the hospital to call the church. The trained faith liaison then will begin coordinating support services for the patients and their families. These might include providing transportation, picking up prescriptions or scheduling follow-up appointments. In the long run, the hope is the new focus will not only save money but create a healthier population.

### UMM distributes 20 tons of potatoes

FOREST HILL — A new United Methodist Mens group has formed from the churches in northern Harford County, and they're wasting no time becoming involved in "good deeds." Their first community project was a Potato Drop, coordinated by the Society of St. Andrew.

A tractor-trailer carrying 40,000 pounds (20 tons) of Maine potatoes arrived at the Dublin UMC parking lot early on March 12. Approximately 40 volunteers from Dublin, Darlington, Deer Creek, and Mt. Tabor UMCs came together to make quick work of scooping the potatoes into manageable 50-pound bags.

They then distributed the potatoes free of charge to the greater Harford County community, both to families in 50-pound bags or entire pallets given to area food pantries, shelters and churches to directly benefit needy families in the area.



### Grow your gift for others

WESTMINSTER — Not only did the community benefit from The Giving Project, but so did the church and ministries in other states. The Carroll County Times first reported the story.

The Rev. Michael Stranathan randomly distributed \$2,000 in \$50 bills in November to the congregation, which included visitors.

With the \$50, people were challenged to "multiply that amount to benefit some persons or organization in need." They were to report the results six weeks later, a time span that incorporated Christmas and the new year.

As of Jan. 1, 22 responses had been received and the \$2,000 yielded \$6,800 in generosity, according to the Times.

One church family multiplied the money with their own and bought gifts for a mother and her 3-year-old. Another helped a family with grocery certificates and paying for the installation of a new door.

### Church helps vets set up housekeeping

ARDEN — Arden UMC was quick to respond when Military Outreach USA sent a "blind e-mail" to houses of worship in the Frederick District, seeking help for collecting basic Move-In-Essential items for veterans moving from homeless shelters to permanent residences. "What do we need to do?" the church asked.

The task was to collect cleaning supplies, toilet paper, towels and other items for 15 vets in the Martinsburg, W. Va., area.

Military Outreach USA, is a national organization, whose mission is to help veterans move out of homelessness. It has members in its Military Caring Network who can answer a call for assistance for vets when needed. To learn more and how your church might help go to [www.militaryoutreachusa.org](http://www.militaryoutreachusa.org).

"I'm proud to hear of churches like Arden that actively provide for the many veterans that served our country and now are struggling for many reasons," said District Superintendent, the Rev. Edgardo Rivera.



VIEWPOINTS

Lives shattered in the blink of a bullet

By Donna Claycomb Sokol\*

THREE WEEKS.

It was three weeks ago this morning when I settled into my favorite chair with a cup of hot coffee on the table next to me and opened the pages of the Washington Post. It's my favorite routine for a Saturday morning, one that normally encourages the calmness we seek for our only day off together. But Saturday, Feb. 20, was different because rather than reading about another homicide in our city on the front page of the Metro section, I was actually reading about someone who was once part of my community.

I knew Clifton as someone who came to our church's shower ministry a few years ago and then to our Tuesday morning "Hope 4 All" group.

Along with another church member, I took him to lunch on his birthday. I served Communion to him on Christmas Eve. I also knew one of Clifton's roommates. He, too, had been a Shower Ministry guest and then a Hope 4 All guest. And so when I first read about Clifton's death, my mind also immediately went to this third roommate who we prayed was still alive. We located him a couple hours later, safe.

But I'd never known anyone who was murdered. I've never read about a homicide that includes the name of someone whose story I know well. How could this be?

The waves of pain and anger came crushing in again on Monday night when I got a message saying, "Ivy died."

Ivy? How could Ivy had died? Ivy is one of the reasons we started our Tuesday morning group. I first met her on a cold January day in 2015 when I went outside with a colleague to make sure everyone was okay. The temperatures were cold enough to kill someone. When we peeled back the layers of green tarp and blankets, we found a cozy communal space holding a few prescription drugs, some food, and lots of clothing all covered with more blankets. It was Ivy's space,

Ivy's belongings, Ivy's temporary home.

And it was this image that captured our congregation's attention enough to figure out how we could offer hospitality in a different way.

Since then, a group of individuals have gathered every Tuesday morning with the exception of one. Each gathering starts the same, with an invitation to tell us who you are and what you have done in the last week to get closer to housing and/or employment. Every person's answers are recorded so we can hold people accountable the following week.

Two of them are now dead.

First Clifton and now Ivy. While it would not have surprised me to learn that Ivy had died several months ago – her body was so frail – she was doing incredibly well. She'd put on at least 20 pounds, looked healthy, and had returned to our group a few weeks ago to start offering encouragement to others. She was housed but she came to tell others they could do it.

Just two weeks ago, she sat next to me. I can still hear her saying, "You came!" to another participant. "I'm so glad! You can do this." She was overflowing with goodness and health and wisdom and triumph.

So, how could Ivy be dead? That was the question that kept going through my mind last Monday night only to later see this article being shared by another person from our church. Ivy had been shot in broad daylight. The one who was rebuilding her life one painful step at a time had everything robbed from her in the blink of a bullet.

I've never felt this kind of pain when it comes to knowing someone has died. The tears of grief started to overflow on Wednesday morning after I successfully kept them tucked inside on Tuesday. How could someone who

finally had so much going for them be killed on a Sunday afternoon? Good God Almighty, can you help us? Can you hear us? Can you prevent this from happening again?

I soon started to ask how we begin to move forward. How long will we wait before reading about someone else we have grown to love? Who else from our community will have their life robbed from them in an instant? Where are you, God?

My heart may always be shattered a bit – not like the bus stop where Ivy was killed – but by the weekly reminders of how broken our community is and how much healing can occur when people who have so much start to share a little, when individuals can muster the capacity to give a second chance even when they see the words "convicted felon," and when we wrestle together to figure out what would Jesus really do.

Our nation is also deeply broken by our addiction to guns. Lives and families and communities are being shattered. The madness needs to stop. Changes in policy are needed.

Will you pray for us, please?

Ivy changed my life. I pray her memory is one of the last things I forget and that it also propels me to encourage our congregation to do everything we can to journey with people and prevent further lives from being robbed.

*\*Donna Claycomb Sokol is pastor of Mount Vernon Place UMC in Washington, D.C. Reprinted and edited with permission from her blog at wordsfromwashington.blogspot.com*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I WAS DISMAYED WHEN I read "Married lesbian recommended as Provisional Deacon by BoOM" in the February UMConnection.

We have come to stretching the Book of Discipline whenever it is convenient to appease someone from the LGBTQ community. True, we cannot judge the person's soul, but we judge their actions by the Discipline, but most importantly, by the Bible, God's holy, inspired Word.

In the article, the approval was, among other things, based on the word "practicing." (T.C.) Morrow became

practicing openly when she "married" another woman. I find it hard to believe that Morrow is celibate in her relationship with her partner. Did anyone ever ask Morrow if she were a practicing homosexual? Marriage by two people of the same sex itself is a qualification as practicing.

In Mark 10:6-9, Jesus confirmed what was written in Genesis 2:24-25, that a man should leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife. Perhaps those of us who still believe that God's Word has preeminence over all other words are considered old fashioned. I say, let us be old

fashioned. Instead of trying to justify sin, we better start preaching repentance of that sin. I know that I do not want any person to look up from Hell one day and say, "I am here because George Harpold did not warn me of my sin."

I stand against homosexuals who have not turned from their sinful ways unto the Lord and that the recommendation for approval for Morrow be reversed.

*George Harpold, pastor  
Eckhart UMC Charge, Frostburg, Md.*



Young Adult Ministry:  
People who want  
to be here

By Rev. Angela Flanagan\*



“THE MILLENNIALS are leaving! The millennials are leaving!”

I cannot read one more blog claiming to have all the answers to why millennials are leaving.

“Mainstream churches are dying!” “Attendance is down!” “Where are the regular tithers?” Doom and gloom.

It seems as though we are too busy picking out a gravestone for the church as we know it to notice that God is in the resurrection business. We are stuck on Good Friday (and we all know weekday services are poorly attended!) while God is calling us to be an Easter people.

So, here's the thing. Yes, church is not an automatic for millennials. They don't just go because it's the thing to do. Guess what? That's been the case for the last few generations. And guess what else? That's not necessarily bad.

Yes, you heard me right. This cultural shift, where people don't attend church “just because,” might just be that sneaky God of ours at it again.

If all we want is pew-warmers, then we might be in trouble. But if we are looking to make disciples who are

ready to transform the world through the power of Jesus, then we want people who actually want to be here.

Yes, the percentage of people who attend church in our country is down. Yes, that means we are going to have to adjust to this new reality. But that also means that the people who ARE coming — they mean it!

They have come for a reason. They have come to seek some good news. They have come ready to do, ready to serve, ready to change the world. They have not come to save the church, and if we ask them to do just that, they are likely to go spend their Sundays working with Habitat for Humanity. Can we really blame them?

We have an opportunity as the church. There is a generation of young people who are ready to go to work to make a better world with or without the church. I pray we are with them. Our culture is changing. When new folks walk through our doors, they aren't doing so out of obligation. They aren't coming because it's the respectable thing to do. They come seeking healing, seeking justice, seeking community, seeking something more than the world is ready to give.

Is the church ready?

*\*The Rev. Angela Flanagan is a Probationary Elder in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, serving at Calvary UMC in Mt. Airy, and the Central Maryland District rep on the Young Adult Council.*



The Rev. Angela Flanagan poses with her husband Danny and daughters Nadia and Sofia.

Courtesy of Rev. Angela Flanagan



# Q & A with Regional Resource People in the BWC

*The Baltimore-Washington Conference is blessed to have several men and women, both clergy and lay, serving as Resource People for each of the four regions. We asked them four questions about their current ministry, and thought we'd share their answers with you.*

## 1) What are you reading?

**Rev. Bill Warehime**, Resource Person, Western Region — One of my favorite readings is and has been: “The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development,” by the Rev. George Bullard. I use his material extensively with churches seeking to understand where they are and how they can or must change.



**Nona Colbert**, Resource Person, Southern Region — “The First Man,” by the Rev. Dortha Stroman, Pastor, Clinton UMC.

**Rev. Ed Grove**, Resource Person for Western Region with emphasis on small membership churches in Berkeley and Morgan counties in West Virginia — The Berkeley and Jefferson County United Methodist clergy meet monthly for fellowship, sharing of announcements, prayer and a book study. This year, the study book is “Walking with Nehemiah,” by the Rev. Joe Daniels, superintendent of the Washington District. It is an excellent text for pastors, laity, and churches who have a heart for taking ministry beyond the bounds of the local church.



**Christie Latona**, Resource Person for the Washington Region — Anything by Brene Brown. Her seminal work on shame and vulnerability has important significance for developing courageous, innovative, daring leaders. And the church needs more of those — both



lay and clergy. “Shift: Helping Congregations Back Into the Game of Effective Ministry,” by Phil Maynard. “How to Change Your Church (Without Killing It),” by Gene Appel and Allan Nelson. Here are the two most interesting/relevant congregational development reads so far this year: “Right Color, Wrong Culture: The Type of Leader Your Organization Needs to Become Multiethnic,” by Bryan Loritts; “The Changeover Zone: Successful Pastoral Transitions,” by Jim Ozier and Jim Griffith.

**Rev. Stan Cardwell**, Resource Person, Southern Region — I’m currently reading “Accidental Saints: Finding God in All the Wrong People,” by the Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber, and re-reading “Forgotten God,” by Francis Chan.



**Rev. Katie Paul**, Resource Person, Southern Region — I’m currently reading “The Lord’s Prayer: Confessing the New Covenant,” by J. Warren Smith. We often mindlessly



go into reciting the Lord’s Prayer each week in worship, but the Lord’s Prayer can be so much more if we will allow it. Smith conveys to the reader that the prayer given by Jesus is an invitation to grow closer in our relationship with God. He slows the prayer down to give vital background to understand the scripture, religious traditions, church history and relationship with God informing each phrase of the prayer. As a skilled master teacher, Smith deeply engages his readers with a tone that is both incredibly pastoral and immensely knowledgeable on the subject of prayer. He unfolds the Lord’s Prayer as one who is convinced that a grounded faith is what sustains believers. Smith writes on both the how and the what of prayer, the way in which we pray, and the content of our prayers. Humility, spiritual intimacy, grace, praise, discipleship, and confession are themes that intertwine throughout the book, creating a rich tapestry that tells the story of the covenantal relationship between God and those who profess Christ’s death and resurrection. I would recommend the book for

personal growth and also for use in small groups as a guide for reflection and deeper discussion on prayer life, both individual and communal.

**Sherie Koob**, Resource Person, Western Region — I’ve been reading Joe Daniels’ “Walking with Nehemiah” along with several of the Clergy Cluster Groups the Rev. Ed Grove leads in the Frederick District. It’s been interesting reading this with them and discussing how Joe’s experiences in DC can be transferred to their areas in West Virginia. One of our pastors told us recently how the chapter on “Take the Risk” helped push her to step out of her comfort zone and speak up for inclusion before the City Council in direct opposition to clergy from other denominations. She felt validated in doing so when one of the other clergy commented that she would burn in hell.



## 2) What are you teaching?

**Koob** — On the teaching front, I’ve been working with Pastor John Unger of Bolivar UMC in Harper’s Ferry (and the Lutheran and Episcopal churches there) to put together a 4- hour workshop we can take to different churches. It includes getting to know the Social Principles, helping the congregation identify one that resonates with them, and crafting ways to address that issue, including best practices for advocating with local and state governments. We’re also reminding them they can identify needs in their surrounding communities through MissionInsite and can use Readiness360 as a tool to help identify programs/areas their congregation is ready to work in/on. In addition, I’m working with a few folks on how the church can address the needs of families dealing with mental illnesses and addictions.

**It seems counter-intuitive, but raise the bar of discipleship — don’t make it easier or set low expectations of members — and offer multiple ways for people to practice discipleship; to become more and more like Jesus.’ — The Rev. Stan Cardwell**

**Grove** — A consistent part of my teaching is personal spiritual discipline and nourishment. Clergy are, by nature, education and training, focused on the care of others. Personal soul care is too often placed on the back burner while other pastoral and ministerial duties are left unattended. The business of pastoral schedules often makes spiritual discipline a low priority, which weakens the impact of pastoral ministry.

**Cardwell** — I’m introducing Hugh Halter’s and Matt Smay’s “The Tangible Kingdom” structure and mission principles to my church, Community UMC of Crofton. TK actually fits nicely into the United Methodist’s Nurture, Outreach and Witness with easy handles — Loving God, Loving One Another and Loving Our World. The Kingdom of God requires all three, not two out of three. So everyone has the opportunity to ask and reflect on these three areas of their “love life.” It’s giving us a framework for making Jesus followers while helping us embrace our call to be missional community. I’m also introducing The City — a social media platform for churches. It’s going to improve our communications significantly and give us a way to connect with one another outside Sunday and church activities.

**Latona** — Two primary things: how to love better and what is required — relationally, strategically, and tactically — to make the shift from membership to discipleship. In my consultative work within Greater Washington and Central Maryland Districts in churches of all sizes, the recurring low scores on The Readiness 360 are in the areas of Dynamic Relationships (how well does our church form relationships and partner with one another, guests and community folk, and how well do we handle inevitable conflict) and Missional Alignment (how aligned are we around the Great Commission). This requires more individual and corporate practice of the means of grace (spiritual disciplines), deep work on forgiving and communication, and refocusing hearts and minds back on the Great Commandment and Commission.

## 3) What do churches need to know right now?

**Grove** — The discovery of tools and resources on navigating the negative, abusive, and sometimes violent political campaign environment. Pastors and church leaders are often at a loss on navigating these choppy waters. Consequently, the church is impotent in responding to the confusion, hurt, anger, frustration and rage being expressed throughout the land. From whom do we seek help, guidance and counsel that keeps us solidly anchored in our Wesleyan heritage, guards us against joining the chorus of uneducated opinion and empowers us to be a voice and agent of justice.

**Warehime** — The number one issue churches know but need to understand is the practice of welcoming. I have never visited a church that thought themselves “unfriendly.” However, their view of welcoming is from the inside looking out. The real key is looking from the outside in — from the visitor’s point of view. They know but need to relearn this practice of welcoming.

**Colbert** — Churches need to know that Conference resources are available to assist them in carrying out their mission, and the Regional Strategists have a depth of knowledge from which they can draw upon.

**Latona** — That God is still speaking and churches are still growing. It looks different now, but there is significant cause for HOPE! We, as disciples of Jesus Christ, have a responsibility to discern where God is calling us and our congregations; we need to be in the active posture of “not my/our will, but Thine will be done.”

**Cardwell** — Discipleship formation is everything. We know the Great Commission — go and make disciples — but the churches that will be healthy and growing in our shifting culture are those that are intentional in spiritual

formation. And that’s not about classroom activity, but how to be and become a Jesus follower by active learning in the crucible of life. I didn’t learn to play baseball by reading a rule book, but by picking up a bat and ball, putting on a glove. There were lots of mistakes, like holding the bat wrong, running the wrong way on the bases, dropping pop flies, etc. But eventually the game clicked — with practice and often while learning from mistakes. Disciple formation is a lot like that. Modernism has placed so much emphasis on book (Bible) learning, and that’s not wrong, except we have folk with a lot of Bible knowledge who look and live a lot like their unchurched neighbors. I’m a big fan of Alan Hirsch, who speaks on Hebrew discipleship which is about obedience and practice that forms the mind rather than intellectual assimilation that often does not change behaviors. It seems counter-intuitive, but raise the bar of discipleship — don’t make it easier or set low expectations of members — and offer multiple ways for people to practice discipleship; to become more and more like Jesus. We’re using an acronym called BLESS to help us grow disciples. It’s in the conferences’ BWC Ministry Toolbox. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NN3oA5AETuI>

**Koob** — Given the current political climate, when given an opportunity, I remind folks that, as Christians, we have an obligation to show grace and to speak out against injustice or anything that could do harm. This is something they know, but sometimes need to be reminded of.

## 4) What one thing do churches not know right now that they need to know?

**Colbert** — That the Southern Region has three Strategists, the Revs. Katie Paul, Rev. Stan Cardwell, and Min. Nona Colbert, who are eager to serve their needs.

**Latona** — Churches need to know that bringing people to their church is not the same thing as bringing people to Christ — especially if their church is focused on membership issues instead of forming mature disciples.

For more information or to contact any of the Resource People, visit [bwcumc.org/about/our-staff](http://bwcumc.org/about/our-staff)