



“Very early in the morning Jesus came to his disciples, walking on the lake.” – Matthew 14:25

UMC *Connection*

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 26, Issue 04 • April 2015

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He arose.
 The tomb is empty;
 the cross and grave defeated by grace.
 As we celebrate this Easter season,
 I invite you to join me
 as we absorb the wonder,
 live in blessedness

and seek to share God’s love
 with a spirit of bold abundance.
 Christ lives! So must we – daring to believe,
 daring to love.
 May you be touched by God this Easter.
 - Bishop Marcus Matthews

Resurrection Promise

50 years later, still part of the Movement



By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

PHILLIP HUNTER GREETED me at the door of his Bel Air, Md., home wearing a yellow shirt, a bow tie and crisp, new bib overalls. The overalls seemed out of place, given that Hunter, 67, is a retired lawyer and doesn’t live on a farm.

But there’s a story behind the overalls, one that Hunter lived personally and one that he’s sharing these days throughout the state.

Hunter, you see, knows a lot about the 1960’s Civil Rights movement in Selma, Ala. He should know. He was born and raised there.

A member of Ames UMC in Bel Air, Hunter was

born in 1947. He has vivid memories of segregated bathrooms, drinking fountains, schools... you name it. The governmental systems in those days were all white; the Ku Klux Klan was frequently active in the community.

His father, the Rev. J.D. Hunter, was a Baptist minister, the president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Selma, and a member of the Courageous Eight. The elder Hunter also was editor of the black newspaper in town, the Selma Citizen.

J.D. Hunter was harassed, going back to the 1940’s,

said Phillip. “Because of his activities, my father was blackballed,” he said. “He couldn’t get a loan to support his business.” J.D. Hunter was also ordered to “cease and desist” all activities by the NAACP by none other than Sheriff Jim Clark, later notorious for his violent behavior on the Edmond Pettus Bridge on March 7, 1965 – Bloody Sunday.

“My growing up experience in Alabama was good and bad,” Hunter said. “As you know, Alabama was highly segregated back then, more like Apartheid in South Africa.” Poll taxes, literacy tests and other schemes

See Selma, page 9

... well said

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

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

OUR DAUGHTER IS in sixth grade, which means she's too old to be a "kid" and too young to be a grown-up, or even a real "teenager" who gets to do teenager things, like drive her friends to the mall. She's what is called a "tween."

I can tell she's planning her future and the things she would like to do when she is old enough. She tells me her first car will be a bright blue convertible, and that she is going to take French as a language in high school because someday, she wants to go to Paris. Her vocational aspirations swing from "famous novelist" to "veterinarian" to "computer animator." She's eager for her real life to start, even as we point out this is her real life.

I deeply understand, of course, the feeling of wanting to get on with it already, to have adventures and to truly live.

Easter is a time when we celebrate that Jesus, who died, is now risen from the dead, and through that resurrection, we too can have life.

At first, of course, this seems like a celebration of heaven and a triumph over physical death. And it is.

But Easter isn't just a ticket to a heavenly home in the sweet by and by. Easter and the life Jesus offers make a difference to us in the here and now, too. We may live in the time "in between" Jesus' first coming and his second, but we are not spiritual 'twens, left to do nothing but plan for the blue convertible of heaven in the world to come.

Because Jesus lives, "I can face tomorrow." Because Jesus lives, "all fear is gone." I would add to that classic hymn, because he lives, I can love my enemy today. Because he lives, I feed the hungry, I clothe the naked, I visit the prisoner. Because he lives, I'm forgiven, and I can even forgive.

Easter isn't just a one Sunday event, lasting as long as the chocolate eggs do. Easter is life, right now, today, for you and for me and for every place where the shadow of death hangs out.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen! And because he lives, life will never be the same again.



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

THERE WAS A saying in the 80s that gathered a lot of steam. You couldn't go more than an hour without hearing it on the radio, on TV, or from someone just walking the street. The statement was meant to tell the hearer that whatever they were talking about, doing, or in some cases obsessing over was so trivial that they just needed to stop it. As a youngster, I was captivated by the statement. It seemed to be what all the cool people were saying. I couldn't wait for my chance to utter the words for myself and joining the cool kids club. By now you have to be wondering what those oh so cool words were. They were, "GET A LIFE."

Get a life was the ultimate 80s put down. When someone dropped it on you, there was no coming back.

Think about it. In the mind of the person making the statement, you were wasting their time (and yours) with whatever you were doing. You would be better off leaving what you were doing behind and starting over with something else, anything else, because this was just not worth the energy you were putting into it.

Back then, I thought it was the ultimate put down, but now I see it a little differently.

The funny thing is, what I thought of as a child as an insult, as an adult has become a call to action. In the gospel of John, Jesus stated, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." In short, Jesus encouraged us to get a life, and a good one.

Too many times we have settled for less than the life that we could have through a relationship with Christ. When Jesus said, "Get a life," he challenged us to make all that we can of the time that we have because that is his gift to us.

This Easter season, remember Christ died for our sins so we could have life here, and life in the hereafter. It is time to stop living with limits and start living the abundant life Christ has for you.

So stop dying in your past and Get a Life with Christ.

... well said

... well said

EVENTS

Festival of Preaching Ecumenical Institute in Baltimore April 17-18

The Ecumenical Institute in Baltimore will host a Festival of Preaching April 17-18. The theme is "Preaching for Transformation in the 21st Century." The goal is to equip preachers to effectively address the pastoral and prophetic issues facing the contemporary church and society. In conjunction with the festival, a spring minimester course, "Preaching in the Black Church Tradition," will be offered. It will be taught by the Rev. C. Anthony Hunt of Epworth UMC in Baltimore. Learn more at www.stmarys.edu/festival-of-preaching.

Pre-Conference Briefings Saturday, May 16 Damascus UMC from 8:30 a.m. to noon First UMC in Hyattsville, 2 to 5:30 p.m.

Lay and clergy Annual Conference members are encouraged to attend one of these briefing sessions to learn and discuss the proposed 2016 budget, and the resolutions and petitions they'll be called to vote upon at the May 28-30 session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in Baltimore. Learn more about the session at <http://bwcumc.org/ac-sessions/2015-ac-sessions>. Members are encouraged to read the resolutions and petitions online before they come and to print them if they want hard copies.

Pre-Conference Workshops:

A number of workshops are being offered on May 27 at the Waterfront Marriott Hotel. They include:

Ministry and Money

9:30 a.m. to noon; 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.
With speakers from the MidAtlantic United Methodist Foundation Staff will explore the book "Ministry and Money."

The Stewardship Journey, a Path for Life

1:30 to 4:00 p.m.
The MidAtlantic United Methodist Foundation Stewardship Committee will explore the life stages of Christian stewardship.

Strengthening Stewardship—What's Credit got to do with it!

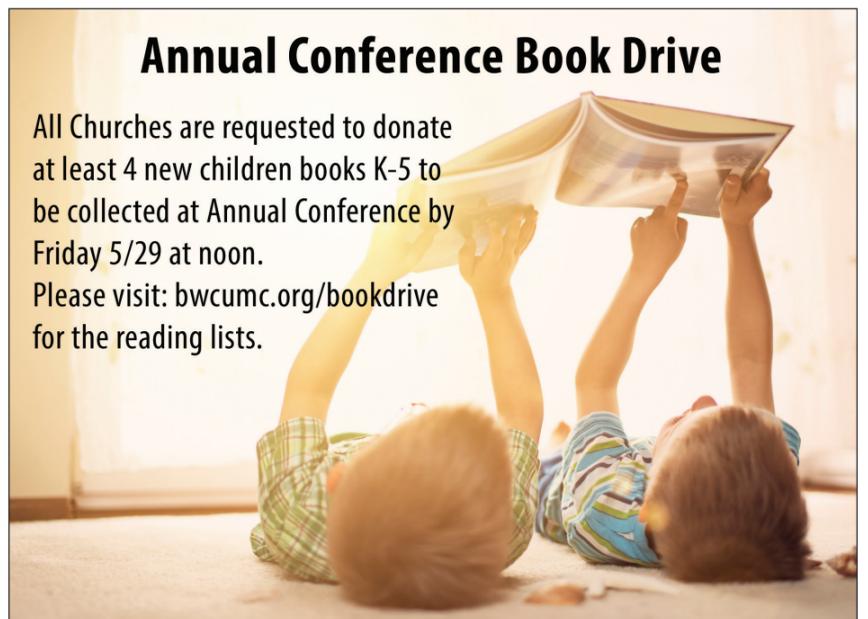
9:30 a.m. to noon; 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.
Kevin Somerville, the Vice President of Business Development for Market USA Federal Credit Union will provide hand-on budgeting insights.

Toward a Beloved Community Ministry: 200 Years of the Foundry/Asbury UMC Congregations

9:30 a.m. to noon; 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.
Members of Foundry and Asbury UMCs examine 200 years of attempts to bridge the racial divide. Register online at <http://bwcumc.org/ac-sessions/2015-ac-sessions/>

Annual Conference Book Drive

All Churches are requested to donate at least 4 new children books K-5 to be collected at Annual Conference by Friday 5/29 at noon.
Please visit: bwcumc.org/bookdrive for the reading lists.



UMConnection

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UMConnection is the newspaper of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church, whose vision is to become fully alive in Christ and make a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world

The UMConnection (ISSN 005386) is owned and published by the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church, 11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759-2594.

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Subscriptions are \$15 per year. The UMConnection is published monthly.

To subscribe, email kspears@bwcumc.org.

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This symbol appears with stories that show your apportionment dollars at work, making a difference in people's lives.

Police cadets, Glen Mar UMC, partner for homelessness

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



HOMELESSNESS IS A hidden issue in Howard County, Md., one of the wealthiest communities in the United States.

Glen Mar UMC, in Ellicott City, for more than 15 years, has been a leader in trying to do something about it. In mid-March, Glen Mar hosted 25 homeless “guests” for a week-long cold weather shelter. And on Thursday, March 19, the church hosted an equal number of Recruit Officers – Academy 39 – who spent the night outside, served meals to the guests at the church and got a taste of what it’s like to be on the outside looking in.

“The cadets will be camping out overnight beside the church,” said Poole, as tents appeared on the lawn outside his office, “much like a homeless person would camp out by Route 1 or near I-95.”

The Recruit Officers were at Glen Mar because every Academy has to choose a community service project with which to be involved, said Gary Gardner, Chief of Police for Howard County. He came to the church to thank the Academy for their service.

“This is all about community policing, and that comes in many forms,” he told the cadets. “It’s all about problem solving and working with the community in partnership with organizations in problem solving.”

One of the organizations the Academy partnered with is Grassroots, a 24-hour crisis intervention and homeless shelter in Howard County. The Recruitment Officers raised \$10,000 for Grassroots.

“It’s really about our recruits, before they hit the streets, understanding more about our community, what some of the issues are, and coming up with some solutions,” Gardner said.

“I’m very, very proud that they’ve raised more than

\$10,000 to help with Grassroots,” he said.

Mary Phelan, Public Information Officer for the Howard County Police Department, said the department is fortunate to have a strong relationship with its community. “We don’t see a lot of these issues that other

homelessness as their issue. “We’re trying to raise awareness about this issue,” he said. “We wanted to get some face time with the homeless population so that they don’t just see us as a figure driving by, they see us as a person, and so do we.”



Howard County police chief, Gary Gardner, left, and Andrea Ingram, executive director of Grassroots, speak with the Rev. Matthew Poole outside Glen Mar UMC on March 19.

communities are seeing,” she said. “But all that takes work, to foster those positive relationships. That’s part of the reason we take on projects like this.”

Ronald Wetherson, one of the Recruit Officers in Academy 39, was part of the team that chose

Glen Mar takes pride in its outreach and involvement to the community, said Poole, including 25 hands-on partnerships with non-profit organizations. “We haven’t solved all the problems,” said Poole, “but it requires the community working together to get there.”

Wesley Seminary leads fruitful conversation on race

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

WHILE POLITICAL, MEDIA and grassroots leaders attempt to address how our “racial history still casts its long shadow upon us,” The United Methodist Church, to many, seems to have lost its voice. On March 17, Wesley Seminary’s new Center for Public Theology broke the silence.

In a panel discussion on “Moving Faith Communities to Fruitful Conversations” renowned journalists, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia and the Assistant U.S. Attorney, seminary professors and area church leaders, took their lead from Wesley’s president, the Rev. David McCallister-Wilson, to explore how “faith informs debate in the public square.” The event was moderated by Mike McCurry, the executive director of the new Center for Public Theology.

The church’s involvement in issues of race, both positive and negative, is nothing new. During the Civil War, the Methodist Church split over the practice of slavery. During the Civil Right Movement in the 1960’s, “everything began and ended in a church,” said Krista Tippett, host of the radio program “On Being” who was one of the panelists.

Tippett had recently interviewed the civil rights leader U.S. Representative John Lewis. He who told her, in that Movement, everything was surrounded by preaching and by singing.

However, on the heels of events in Ferguson, Mo., other incidents of African Americans being killed by white police officers, and the chanting of a racist song by white fraternity brothers in Oklahoma, “the church has been notoriously quiet on this issue of race,” said the Rev. Joseph D. Daniels, superintendent of the Greater Washington District and pastor of Emory Fellowship.

The denomination has not issued a statement, nor does it have a policy on race, he said. The church has turned its face away from people who are marginalized. “Collectively, we’ve turned our face away from the very people and communities Jesus turned his face to; and we wonder why our churches are dying and why 83 percent of the population doesn’t go to a church, mosque or synagogue. People are waiting for the faith community to be relevant to their everyday reality.”

McCurry asked the panelists about the validity of the aphorism of Sunday at 11 a.m. being the most segregated hour of the week. The panelists affirmed that statistics bore this out. (In fact, Religion News Services reports that “two in three, or 66 percent, of Americans have never regularly attended a place of worship where they were an ethnic minority.”)

The panelists also commented on the shifting demographics of the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that in 2045, whites will be in the minority. Some commentators believe this growing multi-racial culture is creating tension and an increase in racial inequality.

But Michel Martin, a correspondent for National Public Radio who is also pursuing a theology degree from Wesley, urged the overflow crowd in the Oxnam Chapel, not to follow the example of those in Jeremiah 6:14, who dressed the people’s wounds as if they were not serious, and cried, “Peace, peace, when there is not peace.”

“I am not one to see disquiet as necessarily wrong,” she said. “I don’t believe that being uncomfortable is a failure when it leads to something important.

And I don’t think it’s wrong when people have uncomfortable conversations, if they’re conversations that need to be had.”

The panel agreed, urging the seminary and local churches to be having the conversations on race that they want to hear.

Silver Spring UMC has been a leader in intentionally creating a multi-cultural congregation. “We have a long history of hospitality and engaging around this issue,” said its lead pastor, the Rev. Rachel Cornwell. “But as diverse as we are, it’s easy to be lulled into thinking we’ve done the hard work.”

Floris UMC in Northern Virginia is also a multi-cultural church. But it’s something they had to work at. “The question was no longer ‘can we be diverse,’ the question had to become, ‘how will we be diverse?’ We had to decide that that was what we would be. It was never going to just evolve. It was not ever going to just happen,” said the lead pastor the Rev. Tom Berlin. “Churches are unusually unchanging.”

If you’re not going to get the truth in church, where are you going to get it?
– Tom Berlin

We need to focus on what do we need to do as a church to change hearts, because changed hearts lead to changed systems.
– Joseph Daniels

To bring about change, Cornwell said, there needs to be fearless voices from the pulpit and the pews. “Leaders need to be both pastoral and prophetic. ... Churches are one of those few places where people sit together across lines of difference – across lines of theological, political, ideological, economic and sometimes racial difference. And so if we are just sitting

in church, side by side with one another and not taking advantage of the opportunity to learn from one another, to encounter each other’s different perspectives and world views, then we’re not doing authentic community.”

Tippett encouraged those present to discover the role that the church can uniquely play, perhaps providing spaces for difficult conversations. “There’s a lot that’s broken, there’s a lot that’s not serving us. ... We need to start having the conversations we want to be hearing,” she said. “This is a wonderful 21st century calling.”

Others on the panel expressed the need for the seminary and the church to claim its role in giving people courage and to cultivate risk-taking.

Do the one thing you feel called to do, Martin said, and “ask the question that should be asked, and listen to the answer.”

Tippett invited congregations and seminaries to purposefully frame the challenge in theological and prophetic ways. “Ask what would it mean to be a beloved community. How do we get better at loving our neighbor? Who is our neighbor? Live those questions,” she said.

During the discussion, McCurry and the panelists often came back to John Lewis, and at one point McCurry asked: “How do you make a difference?” Lewis’ answer was “You need to be a pilot light and not a fire cracker.” He also said, “Make good trouble,” and “When you pray, move your feet.”

The Center for Public Theology at Wesley Theological Seminary is designed to equip leaders of the church to guide and inform discussion that relates faith traditions to critical issues of public importance.

A free download of a video of the panel will be available mid-April. Church members can use it to continue the discussion on their own or to search for particular topics covered. To access the download, e-mail theinstitute@wesleyseminary.edu. For more information, visit www.wesleyseminary.edu.

Changing the narrative from 'church' to 'Kingdom'

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



OUR DENOMINATION HAS been in decline since 1968. There are no shortage of opinions on how to fix the problem. For the Rev. Reggie McNeal, the answer is simple: change the narrative.

That was his message on March 7 at Westphalia UMC at the Southern Region Leadership Day event. More than 475 people packed the sanctuary of the church to learn how change their stories from one of being church-centered to that of being Kingdom-centered.

"As a region, we have been trying to focus our congregations to minister more outside of our holy huddles – to be local missionaries," said the Rev. Chris Owens, Missional Strategist for the Southern Region.

"Instead of always trying to measure vibrancy and effectiveness by how many people we can attract to our church stuff, what if we measured ourselves by how many people we bless and how many lives we improve? That's what it means to share the good news of Jesus Christ. And that's missional."

McNeal, a Southern Baptist from South Carolina who speaks fluent United Methodese, and the author of numerous books, outlined both the problem and the solution for a dwindling church.

The problem, McNeal said, is the fact that the number of people who identify themselves today as being "non-affiliated" with any church has grown to one out of five people. Just five years ago, that number was one out of six.

"We have a clear trajectory of where this sucker is headed," said McNeal in his folksy, self-deprecating manner. "If people would just straighten up and be like us, we'd be fine."

Saying that the church today is at a crossroads, McNeal said the solution isn't in trying to fix the church.

"A church-centered narrative isn't working – it hasn't worked for 500 years," he said. "It's like we're in the 8-track tape-making business today. I believe God has a bigger vision than tending a dying business. We have to re-align ourselves with the story of the Kingdom."



The Rev. Chris Owens, right, prays for Reggie McNeal before his lecture at Leadership Days in the Southern Region.

Noting that the church is a sub-set of the Kingdom, and not the other way around, McNeal said that Jesus mentioned the Kingdom of God 90 times; he only spoke about "church" twice.

"Jesus came to show us the Kingdom," McNeal said, "and that is life as God intends it to be. We're invited to get involved in bringing about the Kingdom of God here and now – the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are healed."

Using Jeremiah 29:7 as one of his texts, McNeal said that the future of the church depends on the condition of our cities, towns and villages and whether or not they are being infused with the Kingdom. "How can we even pretend to be successful if our numbers are up but the city is down?"

The strategy we have to employ, he said, is to change the fabric, the very DNA, of our mission.

"When people brush up against us (Christians)," he said, "they expect to encounter the Kingdom, but instead, we give them 'church.'"

In other words, in many instances, rather than offering God's blessings or the new life that God brings, we insist that people come to church (a building) at a particular time and sit with a particular group of people, McNeal said.

To make the shift in narrative, several things must

change, McNeal said. One of those items is changing our scorecards.

Every church and denomination uses scorecards, McNeal said, which include how we count people who attend church, how much money they gave, and how many new members we made. McNeal said that it is all well and good to count this way, but that's "church-centered thinking." In a Kingdom-centered world, different achievements are celebrated.

"Currently, we ask 'how many people show up and how busy were they?'" he said. "The Kingdom requires us to move beyond that and ask questions that deal with the welfare of the city."

For example, he said, ask how many people served the poor in the past week. Ask who read aloud to first-graders in the past month. Ask how much money the church gave away last year. Ask who served their neighbor yesterday.

Sprinkling his talk with illustrations of congregations that have started to make the switch from church-centered thinking/speech to Kingdom-centered thinking/speech, McNeal said that focusing on the Kingdom brings life.

"If the 'church story' is killing our clergy, why are we telling it?" he asked. "The Kingdom story brings life."

And that Kingdom story, he said, is like an invasion force into the darkness of the world. Jesus is knocking on our door, he said, inviting us to "come out and play" in the Kingdom, not the other way around.

Making the shift won't be easy, McNeal said. "You should not be caught off guard at the resistance or opposition you'll face," he warned. "We've gotten to the point where stress and tension in the church means that something must be wrong. In fact, it might be because something's finally right."

Owens said that the Southern Region invited McNeal to speak at Leadership Day because he is one of the world's leading voices for the missional church.

"He was able to affirm that we don't have to spin our wheels in a futile effort to fix our churches," said Owens. "Instead, we can focus on the kingdom of God, which is all about blessing all people with abundant life."

Washington Leadership Days emphasize faithfulness

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



UNITED METHODISTS HAVE a choice of whether they want their lives to be dull and gray or multicolored, the Rev. Jorge Acevedo told the more than 300 people who gathered March 14 at Blake High School in Silver Spring for the Washington Region Leadership Day.

"We didn't become follows of Jesus to 'sit, soak and sour,'" Acevedo said. But too often that's what we do.

Choosing from 35 workshops, participants explored a variety of topics in line with the event's theme: "Let Your Life Speak." Prior to the learning, worship, and fellowship, they listened to Acevedo, pastor of Grace Church, a multi-site United Methodist congregation in Southwest Florida.

The kind of life we can cultivate is one that shows the world that following Jesus is an



The Revs. Jorge Acevedo, left, and Joe Daniels, together at the Washington Region Leadership Day.

adventure. For too many people, it's tame and domesticated, the leaders of the day stressed. But in order to live the adventure, it's important to live as God calls us to. When we live as Christ, we bear fruit, and bring glory to God.

However, Acevedo said, it's essential to realize that "faithfulness precedes fruitfulness. God wants you to be faithful. ... Our lack of fruitfulness, the church's lack of fruitfulness, may be a direct result of our lack of faithfulness. You can't give what you don't have."

As pastor of a church that went, in 15 years, from 400 members to more than 2,600, Acevedo believes the Gospel "gold-standard" is "increasing the church's numbers daily." He also believes in intentionally seeking "the people nobody else wants to see."

About one-third of the congregation are addicts or people in recovery. The church offers one the largest Celebrate Recovery ministries with 800 members. Acevedo himself is a recovery addict.

The church is thriving with a two campuses created from declining United Methodist churches in the area and the Grace Community Center, a holistic ministry center built in a converted Winn-Dixie store. The members are now exploring starting a site in South Dakota.

But how can any church become full of members who are fruit bearers? Who are faithful? What is required? Faithfulness that leads to fruitfulness needs three things.

According to Acevedo, faithfulness requires community. When Jesus said "you, he's speaking in a plural pronoun — y'all, or us'ns or youz guys," Acevedo said.

Research shows that most pastors and Christian leaders suffer from agonizing loneliness and despair. "But we're not meant to do ministry alone. We're meant to do it in community," he continued. There are more than 60 'one-anothers' in the New Testament. How are you doing at staying connected in authentic relationships with other Christ-followers?"

Faithfulness also requires abiding. In our lives, when we run out of gas in our spiritual lives, God call us to stop "trying" to be a Christian and start "training" to be a Christian, Acevedo said.

For him, training often involves practicing his faith,

including daily devotions. Devotions help you learn to listen to God, they dethrone self, give you a word in the morning that you can often share with someone in the afternoon and they create space for innovation in your life and ministry.

How, he asked, "are you doing staying connected in a rich, authentic relationship with Jesus?"

Faithfulness also requires pruning, said Acevedo, who confessed that he has the potential to sometimes become addicted to the church and to spiritual matters. It's hard for some of us to stop thinking about church, about our ministry and work, but are we putting church before God?

Pruning sometimes involves cutting away, but sometimes it also means being lifted up. It's like the apostle John who described himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved, the disciple who laid his head on the chest of Jesus. When he did this, he could hear the love of God in Jesus' heartbeat.

Acevedo encouraged those present to imagine listening to the heartbeat of God, daring to allow themselves to be pruned and delivered in faithfulness.

In closing, he shared a passage from Brendon Manning's memoir, "All is Grace:"

"My life is a witness to vulgar grace — a grace that amazes as it offends. A grace that pays the eager beaver who works all day long the same wage as the grinning drunk who shows up at ten till five. ... A grace that raises bloodshot eyes to a dying thief's request — 'Please, remember me' — and assures him, 'You bet!' ... This vulgar grace is indiscriminate compassion. It works without asking anything of us. It's not cheap. It's free, and as such will always be a banana peel for the orthodox foot and a fairy tale for the grown-up sensibility. Grace is sufficient even though we huff and puff with all our might to try and find something or someone that it cannot cover. Grace is enough..."

At the heart of his church, Acevedo said, is a simple prayer: "God send us the people nobody else wants or sees." God sends them alcoholics, drug addicts, co-dependents, sex addicts, the angry and the just plain messed up.

In their lives, in their struggles, the congregation finds shared authenticity and reason to believe. In the end, said Acevedo, "all is grace. It is enough. And it's beautiful."

SPECIAL SECTION



NOTE: Six clergy and six lay delegates to the 2016 General Conference will be elected at the 2015 Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference Session in May. In addition, six lay and six clergy delegates, plus alternates, will be elected to the 2106 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference.

The 2016 General Conference will be held May 10-20 in Portland, Ore. The 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference will be held July 13-15 in Lancaster, Pa.

Both the General and Jurisdictional Conferences are quadrennial events, meaning they meet every four years. General Conference is the church's highest legislative body and the only group that can officially "speak" for The United Methodist Church. It's main duty is to enact legislation "over all matters distinctively connectional" (2012 Book of Discipline, para. 16). Jurisdictional Conferences are where bishops are elected and boundaries of Annual Conferences are set, among other duties.

During balloting, clergy vote only for clergy, and laity vote only for laity. Rules and guidelines for the election of delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference are found in the Baltimore-Washington Conference 2014 Journal, pgs. 577-581.

Per the 2012 United Methodist Book of Discipline, all clergy in full connection are eligible to be elected as delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference. Laity candidates must be members of the Annual Conference, professing members of The United Methodist Church for at least two years preceding election, and have been active participants in the church for at least four years preceding election (BWC 2014 Journal, p. 579). Laity had to submit their nomination before April 1 to be considered for election; no nominations will be accepted from the floor of the Annual Conference Session.

Each nominee was asked to submit a short statement about themselves and a photograph. Campaigning is otherwise prohibited. The nominees are listed in alphabetical order.

Please bring this insert with you to Annual Conference. More information about the candidates, including their experiences on church, conference and General Church committees, can be found at www.bwcumc.org/laitycandidates2015.pdf, and www.bwcumc.org/clerycandidates2015.pdf.

CLERGY CANDIDATES

Cynthia Belt

Pastor, Centennial Caroline Street UMC, Baltimore



I am committed to helping make our church more inclusive and more responsive to this present age. I have been an alternate and a delegate to General Conference and fully participated in the process. I am able to look at the issues facing our church from a number of perspectives and I think my outlook would enhance our delegation.



Rudy Bropleh

Pastor, Asbury UMC, Shepherdstown

As the 20th of 23 children, I learned at an early age the importance of communication, cooperation, collaboration, and compassion. I am passionate about equipping and empowering the church, using my background in economics and education to strengthen the UMC by providing trainings in economic empowerment and leadership development. I have served the Church here at home in many countries including Liberia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Israel, South Korea, Haiti, Great Britain, France, Belgium, Palestine, Colombia, Nigeria, and Kenya. I believe the church is the hope of the world, and I desire to help keep that hope alive, in as many places as possible. I would make a good delegate because of my world view, ability to communicate and persuade, commitment to the renewal of our church, desire to balance biblical integrity with social justice, and maintain the unity of our Connection. I envision a Church that prioritizes winning souls.

Joan Carter-Rimbach

Pastor, First UMC, Hyattsville



As a Director on the General Board of Global Ministries and member of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters and Global Aids Fund, I offer a global perspective of the church and our mission with an awareness of the issues we share with others around the world. I bring the passion for inclusiveness and justice and a gift at working with others that is required if we are to move forward to be the Church that God calls us to be. It would be an honor to represent the BWC as a delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences. I have served as a clergy delegate in the past to both Conferences, gaining the experience and knowledge required to make informed decisions. In this critical time in the church's life, I will be fully engaged in the rigorous schedule and am open to the leading of the Holy Spirit.



Terri Rae Chattin

Pastor, Sykesville Parish

I bring a life-long passion for congregations and advocacy on behalf of God's full humanity. As a 5-time delegate to General Conference and 6-time delegate to Jurisdictional I offer vast experience. Through leadership entrusted to me as head of 2012 delegation, Secretary (1996, 2012) and Chair (2000) of GC Church and Society Legislative Committees, I encouraged respect and compassion for diverse voices. I was a GCSRW member (1996-2000) and liaison to Deaf Ministry & GBCS. With more than 35 years in pastoral ministry my conference leadership has included: Board of Pensions; Ordained Ministry; Camp director/counselor; Episcopacy Committee; Co-founder Baltimore-Washington Chapter of MFSA; Founder of Quality of Life Retreats for Persons with HIV/AIDS; Teacher in Africa University Pastors School; BWARM; Leader/participant in 31 VIM trips; Conference Staff (1983-1987); and Frederick DS (2005-2013). Committed to our UMC witness locally and globally, I would be honored to contribute to the 2016 delegation.

Joseph Daniels

Greater Washington District Superintendent; Pastor, Emory UMC, Washington, D.C.



Having served as a district superintendent hire, a provisional member, an elder and pastor in our annual conference for 23 years, and now having served as a district superintendent for the past two years, I believe I possess a strong understanding of the Church at multiple levels. In addition, in leading a growing ministry in the conference, I understand what is necessary for growing healthy congregations and communities of diverse sizes in this day and age. I have served on the General and Jurisdictional Conference delegations for the past three quadrennium. Furthermore, I bring extensive global experience to the church through my work with the Zimbabwe Partnership for more than 10 years, and mission service in other parts of the world. I believe these varied experiences help me serve the Baltimore Washington Conference broadly and faithfully.



Laura Easto

Baltimore Suburban District Superintendent

General Conference is the United Methodist Church at our best! A sacred space gets created, people representing the church from all over the world are called, elected, and gather to be embraced by the belief that we are one in Christ Jesus united by our theological undergirding of Wesleyan thought. It is an honor to represent our annual conference. Understanding the process of working in legislative committees is essential to the work of General Conference. I have chaired the Judicial Administration Legislative Committee. That group carefully evaluates the petitions that pertain to the Disciplinary language and processes around fair process, chargeable offenses, the Judicial Council, and Administrative trials and appeals. It is my hope to influence the work of the 2016 General Conference with my faith and knowledge.



CLERGY CANDIDATES

Ginger Gaines-Cirelli

**Pastor, Foundry UMC
Washington, D.C.**



I am a life-long United Methodist who is passionate about sharing the good news of God's liberating love in Jesus Christ. As a graduate of Yale Divinity School, I've served a variety of congregations: small and large, urban and suburban in the Baltimore Washington Conference, in addition to an uptown Manhattan and two-point charge in the New York Annual Conference. With a focus on engaged theology, shared ministry, and spiritual practices, I've brought depth, health, and growth to every community I have served. I have been a featured teacher and speaker at local, district, conference, jurisdictional, and international connectional events. I served as the Chair of the Conference Board of Discipleship, as a member of the Discipleship Council, and currently serve as Co-Chair of the Annual Conference Worship Team. In 2014, I was honored to become the first woman appointed as Senior Pastor of historic Foundry UMC in Washington, DC.



David Graves

Pastor, St. Paul UMC, Lusby

I have served in the BWC as a Part time Local Pastor, a Full time Local Pastor, a Provisional Elder, and a Full Elder. I have served on a staff, on my own in a small church and as the lead pastor of a multi-staffed church. I care deeply for the United Methodist Church and believe the Wesleyan approach to Christianity (faith and holy living) is the best path for living as disciples of Jesus Christ.

General Conference 2016 will be an important gathering as the UMC seeks to organize itself so that we can continue to live in connection with each other and reverse the long trend of declining effectiveness in the United States. If elected, I will read the materials, conference with an open mind and heart, and prayerfully work for the good of the United Methodist Church.

Jason Jordan-Griffin

Pastor, St. John UMC, Pumphrey



The United Methodist Church has been a beacon of hope for people from all walks of life for generations. As one of the youngest and newly ordained clergy persons in our conference, I've been inspired to be part of continuing the challenging, yet critical and compelling work of making disciples for the transformation of the world, not only for my generation, but for those that are still to come. I believe that lending my ear and voice to the important conversations in 2016 as a delegate can contribute greatly to our rich heritage as Methodists and strong legacy as the Baltimore-Washington Conference. There are many things that are before us as a denomination and a fresh perspective is essential to making progress. It will take courageous, innovative and compassionate leadership to take us into the next quadrennium. Embodying these characteristics, I humbly submit myself to serve on our delegation.



Andrea King

**Associate Director for Ministry
with the Poor, BWC**

I am a life-long United Methodist, deeply rooted in Wesleyan theology, with a broad spectrum of experience across the denomination. I have served in many capacities at the district, conference, and national levels (General Commission on United Methodist Men, Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century Coordinating Committee, and General Council on Ministries Task Force on Racism, to name a few). I was an active layperson in the church before answering my call to ministry, and I have been an ordained clergyperson in the Baltimore-Washington Conference since 1997. I want to be the delegate for those who have grown up in and have grown to love The United Methodist Church. My heart is to see our denomination unified and not divided, keeping true to our doctrine and guided by scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. I offer myself not only as a servant to Jesus Christ but to you.

Conrad Link

**Cumberland-Hagerstown District
Superintendent**



I have been a member of the BWC for both my professional life and childhood. Born in Prince George's County, I have served churches in WV and MD. Prior to ministry I taught Social Studies in PGC school system.

As a delegate I will go with an open mind to listen and discern; to dialogue with colleagues within and outside the BWC. I am open to change, growth, effectiveness, innovation, renewal, compassion and creativity.



Antoine Love

**Director of Vibrant
Communities, BWC**

As the Vibrant Communities Director, I assist our conference with creating new places for new persons in our faith family. My desire to serve stems from my affirmation of our denomination's commitment to develop leaders who will usher our church into the future unafraid and to grow vital faith communities through which disciples are made who shape the world. Lending my voice to these and other pertinent issues facing our church today and tomorrow is important to me because I believe in our church ... our rich history, our dynamic present and our evolving future. After pastoring in the local church for over 20 years, participating in this moment of holy conferencing where the people called United Methodists reason together would be rewarding to me as I bring the richness of the BWC and my own experiences to this table of conversation.

Wade Martin

**Pastor, Brook Hill UMC,
Frederick**



The glorious purpose of our Church is to live out the command of the great commission: "to win disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." I suggest if the church is going to fulfill its holy mission, and if the kingdom of God is going to grow, we need to build bridges of faith, lead people to the cross and into a relationship with Jesus Christ. For decades The United Methodist Church has been looking for a "way forward." Having served four churches that have all grown by the grace of God, I have found the best "way forward" is to lift up the timeless traditional teachings of our faith: grace alone, faith alone, and scripture alone. If we remain faithful to these basic tenants of our faith, the kingdom of God will grow and the world will never be the same. Soli Deo Gloria!



Kenneth Moore

**Pastor, Zion UMC, Lexington
Park**

We are at a pivotal point in our domination over critical issues/legislation that will affect the life of the church as we move forward. In discerning Gods will for our denomination, I possess a diverse portfolio of experience and gifts that I humbly offer in service. If elected, I bring the essential gifts of grace, compassion, a willingness to come to the table and reason together for the best possible outcome for the Church. Serving in the military chaplaincy have given me opportunities globally, to engage, critically evaluate programs and implementation in diverse settings. I believe in cooperation without compromise, respect for others opinions that differ from my own, and act fairly when making decisions. I devote myself to prayer & fasting and seek the lords will in all I do. My experiences as an educator, local church, boards and agencies have given me a firm foundation if elected.

Cynthia Moore-Koikoi

**Baltimore Metropolitan District
Superintendent**



I am seeking to represent the BWC at General Conference because of my passion for the UMC and my desire for it to be perfected in love. Having either lived or served in all four regions of the BWC, I have an understanding of the hopes and dreams our diverse conference has for the UMC. With my background in psychology, conflict transformation and cross-cultural inclusion, I have developed the skills and temperament needed to advance BWC legislation and resolutions at General Conference. As a 2012 General Conference Love Your Neighbor volunteer, I was encouraged by the diversity of that coalition, but grieved by the ways in which we, as a church, excluded the "other" and lost focus on our mission. As your 2016 delegate I will serve God and you by helping the UMC focus on full-inclusion, tolerance of diversity, and vibrant disciple making for the transformation of the world.



Bryant Oskvig

**Extension Ministry, Georgetown
University**

We were confronted by the pervasive racism in our society over this past year; we continue to see economic well being accrued to the few, and there is more evidence of the damage done to our environment by human activities. In the midst of these social challenges, our congregations struggle with declining attendance, a decrease in financial resources, and aging buildings. Our Methodist heritage springs forth from times such as these, and we have the Good News of Christ to share with our world. The challenge of the General Conference is to align our resources and guide our administration for this call of our discipleship. With my history of serving congregations of varying sizes, my current ministry with young adults in a racially diverse situation and my administrative education and service, I believe that my background, education, and experiences would help support the important work of General Conference.

Chris Owens

**Southern Region Missional
Strategist, BWC**



I want to make every effort to refocus our church on the larger vision of building the kingdom of God. We have been so distracted by internal debates, threats of schism and in reversing decline that we have largely lost touch with our main objective of bringing the life and blessing of Jesus Christ to the world as his living body. I will work to bring common sense faithfulness to the issues that divide us while working for unity around the mission of God. I will encourage the General Church to do everything possible to empower congregations to missionally engage their communities with the good news of Jesus. I bring an ability to deeply listen, to think creatively and strategically, and to remain biblically grounded and centered by the Holy Spirit while productively working with people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. We are all one church.



JW (JongWoo) Park

**Central Maryland District
Superintendent**

I have been privileged to serve Christ as a local church pastor for the past 22 years and currently serve as a District Superintendent. My experience lends me an understanding from both the local church perspective as well as a perspective from the conference level.

I believe my experience in the local church and also serving on various conference and district-level committees will help me with the discernment and decision-making process at the upcoming 2016 General Conference.

Considering how inclusive the Baltimore-Washington Conference is, I would not only like to be a voice for our conference, but would also like to be a voice for the Asian-American community within our Conference.

CLERGY CANDIDATES

Charles Parker

Pastor, Metropolitan Memorial UMC, Washington, D.C.



This is a critical moment in the life of our denomination, as we discern what it means to be a global church; how to realize our aspiration to be a church of “open hearts, open minds, and open doors”; and how to engage a new generation of Christian disciples. I believe that my background as a church pastor, a conference staff person, a non-profit leader, and Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry has provided me with a broad range of experience to be part of this discernment process. I pray that we create a General Conference in which we can celebrate our diversity and engage one another in constructive, Spirit-led ways. I believe that the Holy Spirit works through that diversity to advance the Kingdom of God and to allow the communities around us to recognize the transformative power of life in Christ.



Harold Recinos

Perkins School of Theology/ SMU, Professor of Church and Society

I am deeply moved by the witness of King and Romero who in their own ways instructed the church to preach the subversive witness of the Beatitudes, to be a bruised church on the street, and a community that says Yes to justice, and No to injustice. I cannot agree more and have wondered for some time how to enact that vision of discipleship at this stage in my life. I am convinced that in Christ Crucified, God elected what established morality and the State rejected, while at once directing us to find the divine presence at the side of the forsaken. I think leading the church in its walk with the weary in the capacity of delegate will extend the reach of my social ethical ministry.

Kirkland Reynolds

Pastor, Chevy Chase UMC



The church is always discerning what the Great Commission looks like in its present age. This time is no different. I feel called to work for a church that reflects our global faith, is faithful to local and regional contexts, and fulfills our mission to make disciples for the transformation of the world. Since 2007 I have served a two-point charge, been in ministry with young people and families, and journeyed with congregations in their formative years as a cooperative parish. In 2013 I was appointed the lead pastor of Chevy Chase UMC, a congregation that is revitalizing and growing in its ministry and unity. I serve on DCOM and the BWC Discipleship Council, and have led Discipleship Academy courses. It would be an honor to serve as a young adult delegate as the UMC continues to discern the church's ministry in the present age.



Edgardo Rivera

Frederick District Superintendent

Our United Methodist Church, the church which I am committed to serve and support, is undergoing profound challenges that are calling for hard decisions to continue the path of transformation required to respond to the current realities of our ministry context. I consider it a blessing to serve in a geographical area rich in diversity. As a clergy member of our conference I seek to join others in engaging in valuable dialogue considering the many issues facing our church today in an effort to find common ground. It is my hope to honorably represent the BW Conference at the Jurisdictional Conference.

Melissa Rudolph

Pastor, North Carroll Cooperative Parish



It would be an honor to represent the Baltimore-Washington Conference as a delegate. I was raised at Asbury UMC in Charles Town, WV from the time I was an infant until I was sent to pastor my first congregation -- Kabletown UMC. When I studied abroad in Zimbabwe while an international relations student at American University, I met other United Methodists both from our conference and from there in Bulawayo. That is when I realized the international scope of our work together as the body of Christ. What I have always valued is the United Methodist Church is a global, connectional church that speaks with one voice -- the General Conference. I seek to go as a delegate with no agenda, save to obey what my covenant discipleship group at Wesley Theological Seminary referred to as “the promptings and warnings of the Holy Spirit.” That is a sacred and prayerful task.



Sarah Andrews Schliekert

Pastor, Arden UMC, Martinsburg, WV

I am passionate about advocating for the health, vibrancy and longevity of our clergy, faith communities and denomination. As a fourth generation clergy with roots in the EUB tradition, I am keenly aware that new times call for new approaches. This legacy calls my attention to practices which support and encourage clergy, including nurturing call amongst young people, and mentoring new clergy. As chair of the Frederick DCOM and as a member of BOOM, I have had many opportunities to be involved in this work already, but I look forward to broader involvement as a delegate. Having attended GC2012 as an observer, I was saddened to see the pain and brokenness embedded in not only the topics discussed, but the manner these topics were addressed. I look forward to carrying the faithfulness of previous delegations into new generations while seeking to increase our ability to lovingly join in holy conferencing.

Marlon Tilghman

Pastor, Milford Mill, Randallstown



As a delegate, I would utilize the gifts of my vocations, education, military experience and social justice advocacy to revitalize our denomination in the areas of active listening and discipleship for equality, serenity and synergy. We have a rich history but a short term memory in the areas of treating everyone like a child of God. I will advocate for social quality as is our biblical mandate to love unconditionally and holistically. My Annual Conference committee roles are probably my deepest passions. I want the ordination process to be fair, reasonable and realistic. I want us to manage our finances and resources with a liberal and conservative conscious. And let's create more partnerships and re-purpose infrastructures for better usefulness. Serving a multi-ethnic and diverse congregation has also groomed me in relationship dynamics. Combined that with testifying in Congress for fair housing, wages and education, I'm willing to serve.



Mary Kay Totty

Pastor, Dumbarton UMC, Washington, D.C.

Our beloved United Methodist Church is in the midst of tumultuous times as we discern our way forward in our rapidly changing world. In this discernment process, I will lift my voice for justice and inclusion; for scriptural theology relevant for today's world; for the value of shared leadership between clergy and laity at all levels of the church; for intergenerational ministries; for dismantling racism, sexism, and homophobia; and for a church structure which reflects our shared values of mission, equality, and advocacy. I am mindful and appreciative of our conference's rich diversity 1) geographically: having served churches in West Virginia, rural Maryland, and DC and 2) among our clergy having the honor of working closely with deacons, elders, retirees, provisional members, local pastors, and associate members. I would be honored to serve as a General and Jurisdictional Conference delegate.

Eliezer Valentin-Castañon

Pastor, TrinityUMC, Frederick



For the past 25 years I have been serving our Church and working within our church to see changes that are going to enable us to continue to change and to respond to the reality of the present time. I bring to the table my experience as a staff of two agencies of the Church, a teacher of Wesleyan theology and Methodist History, as well as a local church pastor. My desire is to help my church address the challenges of the 21st Century head on. I believe we need to challenge our community, our nation, and the world to confront its sin, and its disobedience of loving God above all things and our neighbors. We can make a difference only if we are willing to confront and challenge the world to live according to the will of God. I would like to help my church, move in that direction.



Evan Young

Annapolis District Superintendent

As the church wrestles with the broader issues facing the church and society, I want to be an instrument of grace and compassion helping the church address the treacherous issues that try to divide and separate us. I will listen deeply to all and act boldly to keep the church faithful to our mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ. As a former Chaplain with the Air Force, I desire to utilize my skill of ministering to a diverse group, to help us find appropriate faith-filled responses that reflect the love and heart of God for all creation. Undergirded by prayer and strengthened by the abiding presence of Christ, I commit myself to the highest values and principles embodied in the Baltimore Washington Conference.

LAITY CANDIDATES

Jordan Andrian

Zion UMC, Lexington Park, Washington East District



I'm seeking to represent the BWC as an effective Christian leadership by helping my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ to shape our vital Christian life, community, and witness in ways that are faithful to Jesus Christ. I believe my faith and non-biased thinking will help the BWC congregation. As the New Testament teaches and the church affirms that the task of ministry is shared by all disciples, and I'm eager to take on this call as we discuss vital and emerging topics such as Christian unity, church and society, missions, status of gender, religion and race that are affecting our membership and sustaining Christians in churches. I bring a diverse, but humble view point on emerging Christian topics to help support our mission referencing The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church as a guide to build bridges, transform, and re-vitalize the BWC while fulfilling God's purpose.



Ann Brown Birkel

Foundry UMC, Washington, D.C., Greater Washington District

I'm a cradle Methodist. My parents were dedicated members of our Mobile, Alabama church serving locally and in our Conference. They and inspiring pastors and teachers taught me devotion to the message of Jesus and demonstrated Methodist principles of relieving suffering, educating all and fighting injustice. Around the B-W Conference evidence of the denomination's historic impact on society is visible but the denomination's internal struggles are undermining effective service to God and the world. Wesley envisioned a big tent where all people were equally loved by God and all could serve. Our General Conference delegates must lead the UMC back to a focus on social justice for all. A rededication to the teachings of Jesus and his message of the gift of God's grace will enable us to re-open our hearts and our doors to all. These are keys to revitalizing the UMC's real mission in our time.

LAITY CANDIDATES



Sarah Ford

Sharp Street Memorial UMC, Baltimore, Baltimore Metropolitan District

I believe in the United Methodist Church. I am sure members would be inclined to stay United Methodist if they felt their voices are heard. I want to be a voice for laity and their concerns. I feel I can offer that voice for the laity. Small churches is what built this organization and small churches can help revive it. We need to listen to our members to stop the decline. Those sitting in the pews have some of the answers. I want to be apart of the change. I want to be a disciple who make a difference.

John C. Hines, Jr.

Mt. Zion UMC, Lothian, Annapolis District



I am very concerned about the direction that our UMC is headed at this time. Anarchy is the rule, as pastors, and even Bishops violate the discipline with impunity. Advocacy groups disrupt our meetings, and no one stops them. Our honored Council of Bishops appears to be missing in action, and we no longer receive any real leadership from them. Too often, we seem to be relying on the wisdom of man, and not that of our omnipotent Father.

If chosen as a delegate, I hope to be a positive influence to return our focus on Jesus Christ, speaking his truth, in love. Telling the world about our wonderful Savior, through whom all things are possible. A Savior who was tempted in all ways like us, but is without sin; as an example of the overcoming life we can live, relying on Jesus who lives to intercede for us.



Jen Ihlo

Dumbarton UMC, Georgetown, Greater Washington District

I hope to be elected as a GC delegate because I love the UMC and want the UMC to become a growing, thriving denomination that attracts younger and more diverse people. I am familiar with many of the issues that will likely come before the 2016 GC, including a possible new structure and matters relating to inclusion of LGBT people. I have served as a leader at every level of the church (local church, conference, jurisdiction, and general agency); I know procedure and the Book of Discipline; I am familiar with UMC polity; and I understand how GC and JC work. I have written and/or edited many BWC resolutions/policies over the years, including DEEP and Rules Committee resolutions. I have the leadership skills, ability, and experience to be an effective delegate and will work hard and faithfully to be a delegate the BWC is proud to send to GC.

Sherie Koob

Middletown UMC, Frederick District



A life-long follower of Jesus Christ and United Methodist, I have served in congregational leadership for over three decades. I have been called to Certified Lay Ministry, am training a new class of CLM's, and previously chaired the Conference Board of Church and Society. I believe in the people of the UMC, and understand many issues facing it today. I am honored to serve as a Western Region Strategist for the BWC where I work with congregations who represent not only the diversity of our Conference, but the denomination as a whole. Although my perspective may differ from some, I have come to know, love and appreciate all while finding common ground, even in controversial situations. My willingness to meet others where they are, hear their concerns, reflect God's love, and dialogue with them is a strength I will bring to the delegation, and the debates at General Conference.



Christie Latona

Emory UMC, Washington, D.C., Greater Washington District

I have participated in the body of Christ in rural, small town, suburban and urban churches. I have been a part of predominantly white, black and multicultural churches. I have been a part of the UMC as a youth, an adult, and a leader at local, regional and national levels. God has blessed me with a rich set of experiences that makes me want to give back. I believe that our people, theology and connectional system have the potential to transform the world. Since 2006--in my work as a facilitator in agencies, annual conferences, districts and churches across the US--I have borne witness to the fact that God is not done with the people of the UMC. I would love to be a part of honoring and rediscovering our roots as a powerful missional movement and to work collaboratively to remove barriers and ignite the movement once more.

Melissa Lauber

Metropolitan Memorial UMC, Washington, D.C., Greater Washington



As the BWC Director of Communications I have the honor of sharing the stories of people and churches as they manifest the love of God. Their stories have taught me the power, beauty and potential of bold and joyful faith. I believe the people of The United Methodist Church really do possess the power to transform the world. It is my hope that General Conference will draw upon the best of our traditions of vital piety and social holiness. These two forces, working in harmony, are among the church's greatest strengths. It is my prayer that the Church, through the General Conference, will embrace and employ creativity, wonder, innovation and hope as they address issues of poverty, inclusion, peace, and nurturing the dignity and wholeness of all people. The church is at a crossroad. We have the opportunity to reclaim our relevance as we live, giving glory to God.



Craig Little

Towson UMC, Towson, Baltimore Metropolitan Region

I have been a member of the Towson United Methodist Church since 2002. I have participated in the church's life as a youth leader, Sunday School teacher, Staff-Parish Relations Committee member, and Lay Representative to Annual Conference. I currently serve as lay pastor at Deer Creek UMC and Mt. Tabor UMC in Forest Hill, MD.

I have been an attorney for the past 18 years, concentrating my practice in all areas of family law. I am the Chair-Elect of the Family and Juvenile Law Section Council of the Maryland State Bar Association. I was an activist in the passage of the same sex marriage bill in Maryland.

I am committed to Jesus Christ's example of inclusive love, care and intentional hospitality with persons of every race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, faith story, physical or mental ability, economic status, or political perspective.

Delores Martin

Good Hope Union UMC, Silver Spring, Greater Washington District



I will be a dedicated delegate who will take my responsibilities seriously because of my current and previous involvement with the whole church. I have excellent management skills and believe in paying close attention to details. I am committed to all tasks that I agree to do and strive to do them well. I believe I have the personality to work with anyone whom I am tasked to work with. I have been on committees, boards and agencies from my local church, my district, my Annual Conference, Jurisdictional Conference and a General Church Board. During my entire service, I have been loyal to the mission of these organizations and to the United Methodist Church and its mission.



Charles Moore

Community UMC, Crofton, Annapolis District

After serving as a Lay Delegate to the 2012 General Conference, I have been encouraged to seek election for a second term. My 11 years of service on the BWC Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) includes 5 years as President. This has combined with 7 years of service on the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) where I currently serve as chair of The General Agency and Episcopal Matters Committee. In this role, I have the responsibility of guiding the development of the \$600 million General Apportionment Budget for the 2016-2020 Quadrennium. I have also served my local church in the role of Chair of The Ad Council, Finance Committee and Stewardship Committee. My lay ministry also includes the role of team leader for numerous Volunteer In Mission (VIM) teams to Zimbabwe where we have facilitated the building of numerous churches, parsonages, medical clinics and school classrooms.

Ken Ow

North Bethesda UMC, Greater Washington



I love the United Methodist Church and will remain committed to its beliefs and purpose. With my high energy and passion leading the way, I am driven to making the Methodist Church relevant to all who believe and will strive to "draw the circle wide!" The Church can either sit back and let the secular world dictate the direction we sway, or we can step up and let God and the Holy Spirit work through us as the spiritual and social leaders we were meant to be.

I volunteer not only at the local church and the BW Conference sharing my knowledge, ability, and skills from 37 years of Federal Service within the US Dept. of Health and Human Services at SSA, Public Health Service, and NIH, but I am the Logistics Coordinator for the Montgomery County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), and an AARP Driver Safety Instructor.



Philip H. Potter

Metropolitan Memorial UMC, Washington, D.C., Greater Washington

I am committed to finding a resolution of the denomination's divisive views on homosexuality. It is time to find an approach to overcome our continuing polarization over this issue and strive to keep our denomination together. We are much stronger together than divided. During my career over 40 years as a lawyer and lobbyist in Washington, I worked on issues so contentious that they appeared to have no solution through the government process. Resolution was often found by acting as an honest broker, listening and discerning the core beliefs and goals of each of the stakeholders and opponents, then developing an approach that respected those beliefs. Methodists are charged to live more like Jesus. Jesus is our bridge to God. To be like Jesus we must be bridges and help each other across this divide. With love we can. I also have ample time to be an active delegate.

Tom Price

Mill Creek Parish UMC, Rockville, Central Maryland District



After prayerful consideration and consultation with family and ministry partners I have decided to seek to represent our conference again at General Conference. Continuing to be part of the ROCK Retreat that has been blessed with such amazing growth. I have an optimism for our denomination's future. Witnessing the faith of so many of our young people and how the Holy Spirit has moved in many of their lives is inspiring. ROCK has also taught me that we need to seek new ways forward to turn around the numerical decline of our denomination. We need to include everyone who loves the Lord and our church, working together in love to build God's Kingdom and stop focusing on divisions. We also need to extend accountability to all levels of the church, including our leaders at all levels. We can and should do these things, and I am ready to help!

LAITY CANDIDATES



Chett Pritchett

Dumbarton UMC, Washington, D.C., Greater Washington District

The United Methodist Church is at a crossroads. Will we seek to be faithful to the task of making Disciples for the transformation of the world, or will we be burdened with worry and fear of what the future holds? In seeking to be a delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences, I endeavor to represent a Church who seeks to live out the Gospel beyond buildings by encouraging congregational development and revitalization; a Church seeking to reach new people in new places, including our growing global contexts; a Church that is willing to stand for racial, gender, and economic justice; and a Church who welcomes the leadership of persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities at every level. As a lay member of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, I commit to listening, learning, and leading in ways that are faithful to the Gospel and the mission of the Church.

Mittie Quinn

Dumbarton UMC, Washington, D.C., Greater Washington District

At General Conference 2016, members of the UMC, the second largest "mainline" protestant denomination, will have a unique opportunity to stand forth as an example of God's overwhelming grace and love in a world where there is brokenness, heartache, yearning, hate and hope. I believe that we have a responsibility, as people of God, to demonstrate and find ways to live together in the midst of our vast diversity. As a delegate to General Conference, I will draw on my experience as a lifelong Methodist, a woman of faith, a psychologist, and a parent, to find a path to healing and reconciliation for the UMC. If chosen to serve, I will faithfully attend all meetings of the delegation and enter into holy conversations with my fellow delegates to discern God's call for us. It would be an honor and privilege to represent the Baltimore Washington Conference.



Kelly Robier

Mill Creek Parish, Rockville; Central Maryland District

I'm Kelly Robier, a 20-year-old student at UMBC. Brought up in a United Methodist family tracing its roots back four generations to England, I believe in the mission of United Methodism as embodied by "open hearts, open minds, open doors." The Church now faces significant challenges not limited to this conference or even this nation. Overcoming these challenges will require long-term effort and involvement of younger generations. Inter-generational connectivity is an integral part of the United Methodist tradition. As a young adult, I'm committed to the future of United Methodism and ask that I be given the opportunity to partake in the process of consensus-building that must exist at the heart of the global Church. I have served in leadership at the Conference level as CCYM president. I've continued my volunteer service as Director of Communications for the ROCK team and as a lay member to Annual Conference.

Christopher Schlieckert

Arden United Methodist Church, Martinsburg, WV, Frederick District

As director of Manidokan Camp & Retreat Center and a clergy spouse, I offer a unique perspective on the ministry of the church because I know the challenges of leading a ministry yet sit in the pew on Sunday morning. This gives me a depth of knowledge which will allow me to help the UMC seize the opportunities before it and overcome the obstacles which threaten it. I had the privilege of serving as a delegate to NEJ2012, and as an observer and alternate at GC2012. As father of two young daughters, I want to ensure the UMC is thriving and able to meet Anna and Mary's needs as they develop their relationship with Jesus Christ and seek to transform the world. As a follower of Christ, is it important to me that all God's children are valued and heard as we seek to genuinely live in Christian community.



Douglas Schmidt

Grace UMC, Baltimore, Baltimore Metropolitan District

My calling for my church is to teach the youth class in Sunday school. Our curriculum is steeped in the life and example of Jesus. Young people, in the face of a confusing world, yearn for the righteous and forgiving path that Jesus shows them. I admire our youth so much as they wrestle with the big questions of faith. Every week, they challenge me to act upon my faith. For over two hundred years, people have been drawn to the Methodist message of faith in action. The 2016 General Conference will be crucial to reaffirm our unity and remember our Christian mission. I believe in a United Methodist Church that can change the world, inspire youth, and rediscover our heritage in making disciples of Christ. My hope is to represent our conference in building bridges and helping to chart a new era for all who seek God's grace.

Matthew Sichel

Wesley UMC, Baltimore Suburban District

I believe the United Methodist Church is at a crossroads. This General Conference may be one that charts the course of a Church that could take radically different directions than we have done in recent memory. Conferences of this import should have delegates who adequately represent the whole Conference in a faithful manner, are excited by the Gospel, and have an eye to the future of the Church as the living and breathing Body of Christ. I have spent my whole life in the United Methodist Church, and I am a Young Adult. I have seen our Conference and Church do amazing things for the Gospel of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. When Methodism is at its best, the world has been transformed for the Kingdom of God. It is this UMC that I love, and I hope to push forward for the Glory of God.



Tom Starnes

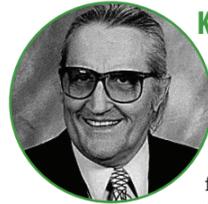
Metropolitan Memorial UMC, Washington, D.C., Greater Washington District

I am the son, brother and nephew of Baltimore-Washington Conference pastors (and the cousin of yet another pastor in the Detroit Conference), and grew up in churches all across Maryland and the District. I took a different path out of college and became a lawyer, but for the last 26 years have had the privilege of representing the Church and its people at every level, general (GCFA), jurisdictional (Counsel to the Committee on Appeals in the Beth Stroud and Frank Schaefer cases), annual conference (Chancellor) and local church. I think I know well this Conference and its people; I've forged significant relationships across the denomination; and I welcome the opportunity to bring that experience together for purposes of representing this beloved body before the General Conference in Portland in 2016.

Elizabeth Stemley

Sharp Street Memorial UMC, Baltimore Metropolitan District

As President of the Baltimore-Washington Conference Leadership Team, United Methodist Women, I bring an array of fresh skills and ideas in mission and social justice issues facing women, children and youth. I am experienced as a Master Social Worker and have twenty-two years in planning, administration, community organization and outreach. I work well within a team and I am highly focused on getting the task completed in a timely manner. Of importance is the development of creative, supportive fellowship to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church. My skills can be used to bring about a shift in the administrative work of the future church in the twenty-first century. I can listen, learn and engage in meaningful dialogue with young people about how to strengthen God's ministry in the church and the global community. I would be honored to serve as a delegate.



Ken Steward

Hughes UMC, Wheaton, Greater Washington District

May we Methodists again be faithful to our enthusiastic revival and Great Awakening heritage! Recently our worldwide membership has increased. WHY? Overseas Methodists have obeyed John Wesley's exhortations to "offer them Christ" and "hold fast both the doctrine, Spirit, and discipline with which they first set out."

This year I experienced acute kidney failure and dialysis along with the importance of knowing Christ and having the powerful transforming gift of the Holy Spirit. By applying Romans 8:28 in the hospital, I prayed over 12 hours for those helping me - custodians to surgeons. Wesley said "Nothing happens except in answer to prayer." I daily give thanks for my intercessors. It worked: I'm off dialysis. May our prayers and any needed repentance empower us to again embody our logo with a cross of Christ centered faith and a bright, bold, on-fire, witness in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Cynthia Taylor

Epworth United Methodist Chapel, Baltimore, Baltimore Metropolitan District

After prayer and reflection, I believe God blessed me with talents and experiences I need to represent the BWC. I have a heart for serving our annual conference. During the past five years as Discipleship Council Chair, my experiences have included working on the BWC vision, procedures for entities seeking a relationship with the BWC, the Rules Committee, our global partnership initiatives and the budget. I requested feedback from AC leaders and was told I "listen to all sides of a discussion" and bring a calming presence to situations. I completed the on-line course, "Exploring General Conference." As a former IRS Tax Law Specialist, I have experience reading and analyzing pages of law and regulations. I am a lay servant, organization development consultant, trained mediator, graduate of the College of Notre Dame of Maryland (M.A. in Management), and have a graduate certificate in Leadership Coaching (Georgetown University).



Richard Wilson

John Wesley UMC, Cumberland-Hagerstown District

My calling is building consensus while upholding strong Christ-based values. My church and work-related experience has shown me that honoring the gifts of each human being strengthens community. I am a hard worker and faithful to my commitments. Having recently retired from 35 years of service in the housing and community development field, I would be honored to serve on the General or Jurisdictional delegate team.

Please bring this insert with you to Annual Conference.

More information about the candidates, including their experiences on church, conference and General Church committees, can be found at www.bwcumc.org/laitycandidates2015.pdf, and www.bwcumc.org/clergycandidates2015.pdf. If you believe that you submitted an online nomination form, and your name does not appear here, please contact Harrison Zepp at hzepp@bwcumc.org.



The Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church gathers for Holy Conferencing
May 28-30
Waterfront Marriot Hotel, Baltimore

Highlights of legislation coming to 2015 BWC Session

Title: Resolution to Amend the Rules of the Session to codify the “Circles of Grace” process for consideration of certain resolutions during Annual Conference.

Rationale: During Annual Conference 2014, the BWC tried a new thing. We found a way to avoid the usual debate with only three persons on each side of an issue. Because The United Methodist Church is a denomination whose history is founded on the value of small group communication as a way to build community, and because the usual debate process does not always build community, the BWC created a process called “Circles of Grace.” This opened the door to a more broad conversation that left many wanting to continue their conversations and describing the process with words that included “grace-filled, moving, fulfilling, inclusive, spiritual, amazing, awesome, and uplifting.” The feedback received about the process was overwhelmingly positive. Accordingly, the Rules Committee recommends that the Circles of Grace process be incorporated into our Rules of the Session so that it may be used without the necessity of first deciding a motion to suspend the rules.

Submitted by: Jen Ihlo, Chair, Rules Committee

To see the text to be inserted into this section of the rules, visit <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Circles-of-Grace-Resolution.docx>

Title: Resolution on Renewable Energy

Rationale: The purpose of this resolution is to support the efforts of all governments to reduce the adverse impacts of global climate change, as required by the UMC Book of Discipline, Social Principles, ¶ 160D (2012). The resolution would require the BWC to support doubling Maryland’s Renewable Portfolio Standard. It would also require congregations in the BWC to implement 40% renewable energy usage in our own efforts to faithfully respond to global climate change.

Submitted by: The Rev. Dellyne Hinton

Resolution:

WHEREAS, global climate change is an issue of concern, interest, and action among many United Methodists; and
WHEREAS, the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state “The adverse impacts of global climate change disproportionately affect individuals and nations least responsible for the emissions. We therefore support efforts of all governments to require mandatory reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and call on individuals, congregations, businesses, industries, and communities to reduce their emissions.” (The Natural World, ¶ 160D, Global Climate Stewardship, the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church of 2009-2012); and
WHEREAS, the State of Maryland is heavily reliant on electricity from fossil fuels, such as coal and natural gas, which give off potent greenhouse gas emissions that constitute almost half of our state’s total greenhouse gas emissions; and
WHEREAS Wind and solar energy do not have adverse health effects and do not contribute to global climate change;
We resolve to support sound practices surrounding renewable energy.

For a complete copy of the resolution, visit <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Renewable-Energy-Resolution.docx>

Title: Petition to General Conference 2016 regarding Aligning UMC Investments with Resolution on Israel and Palestine

Rationale: The Book of Discipline discourages investment in companies “that directly or indirectly support the violation of human rights.” We should not profit through our investments in companies that sustain Israel’s illegal settlements, segregated roads, checkpoints, the separation wall, home demolitions and other realities of occupation in Palestinian territory.

Submitted by: Natalia Cuadra-Saez (Old Otterbein UMC, Baltimore, MD), Rev. Kenneth B. Hawes (Hughes UMC, Wheaton, MD), David Hosey (Metropolitan Memorial UMC, Washington, DC), Chett Pritchett (Dumbarton UMC, Washington, DC), Rev. Shannon Sullivan (Presbury UMC, Edgewood, MD) and endorsed by the Steering Committee of the Baltimore-Washington Chapter of the Methodist Federation for Social Action.

Rationale: The Book of Discipline discourages investment in companies “that directly or indirectly support the violation of human rights” (¶ 716, The Book of Discipline). We should not profit through our investments in companies that sustain Israel’s illegal settlements, segregated roads, checkpoints, the separation wall, home demolitions and other realities of occupation in Palestinian territory.

BE IT RESOLVED that The United Methodist Church will end our financial involvement in Israel’s occupation by:

- Divesting from companies that sustain the occupation, specifically, Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, and Hewlett Packard, with whom we have repeatedly engaged with on this issue.

- Instructing United Methodist general boards and agencies to immediately engage with other companies in their portfolios that have been identified by researchers in United Methodist general boards and agencies and annual conferences as being involved in the occupation (United Methodists’ Holy Land Task Force, “Companies of Concern,” November 2010, http://www.umhltf.org/Companies_of_Concern.html, Web, November 2010). If these companies do not change their involvement within two years, they should be removed from United Methodist portfolios.
- Requiring all United Methodist general boards and agencies to provide updates on their Web sites regarding the process of corporate engagement with and/or divestment from companies that support the Israeli occupation.
- Directing all United Methodist general boards and agencies to provide a report to the 2020 General Conference regarding their progress toward complying with this resolution.
- Calling on United Methodist general boards and agencies, annual conferences, local churches and individuals to prayerfully consider corporate involvement in Israel’s occupation when making investment decisions.
- Encouraging United Methodists to partner with Jews, Christians, Muslims and other people of conscience working for corporate accountability, human rights and an end to the occupation.

For a detailed explanation of this issue, visit <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Aligning-UMC-Investments-with-Resolution-on-Israel-and-Palestine.docx>

Title: Petition to General Conference to Amend Paragraph 806 of the UMC Book of Discipline, Regarding Employee Disability Insurance in the United Methodist Church

Rationale: This resolution recommends that the BWC send a petition to General Conference regarding Employee Disability Insurance in the UMC. The petition seeks an amendment to paragraph 806 of the UMC Book of Discipline. The rationale is included below in the Petition (using the General Conference formatting.)

Submitted by: Jackson Day, on behalf of Joint Committee on Clergy Medical Leave; and Nancy Webb, on behalf of Commission on Disability Concerns

Co-Sponsors: Board of Ordained Ministry; Board of Pensions and Health Benefits

Resolution:

Be It Resolved that the 2015 session of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference commend the attached Petition to amend by Paragraph 806, UMC Book of Discipline by adding a new paragraph, as described below;

Amend: ¶806 to add a new paragraph following paragraph 8.

It shall be responsible for ensuring that no United Methodist board, agency, or other entity shall provide to their own agency, other agencies or to annual conferences disability compensation insurance for clergy or laity which offers different levels of protection based on whether or not the diagnosis is for a mental-nervous condition.

Rationale:

Disability insurance which restricts benefits for “nervous-mental conditions” — common practice — unjustly discriminates against some employees compared to others, violates Social Principle ¶162X and is counter to the principles of Resolution 3303, Ministry in Mental Illness. GCFA is the appropriate agency to enforce non-use of UMC funds for such insurance.

For more about this resolution, visit <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Employee-Disability-Insurance.docx>

Title: Petition to General Conference for Adoption and Placement in the Book of Resolutions Regarding Non-Discrimination in Disability Compensation

Rationale: This resolution recommends that the BWC send a petition to General Conference for a new resolution to be included in the UMC Book of Resolutions. The proposed new resolution is regarding Non-Discrimination in Disability Compensation. The rationale is included below in the Petition (using the General Conference formatting.)

Submitted by: Jackson Day, on behalf of Joint Committee on Clergy Medical Leave; and Nancy Webb, on behalf of Commission on Disability Concerns.

Co-Sponsors: Board of Ordained Ministry; Board of Pensions and Health Benefits.

Suggested Title: Non-Discrimination in Disability Compensation

Long term disability insurance protects employees around the world by providing continuing compensation in lieu of salary when an accident or illness prevents an employee from continuing their service to their employer. Ideally, such insurance provides for compensation based purely on the existence of a disability that prevents continuing employment, and continues for the duration of that disability.

In many countries such insurance is often subject to a limitation for disabilities based on “mental and nervous conditions.” The primary reason offered for such a discrimination between disabilities is the comparative difficulty of validating

disabilities whose evidence relies on self-reporting. Other reasons may include the belief that mental and nervous conditions are more likely temporary in nature and therefore a time limitation, typically two years, is appropriate. The limitation therefore places the administrative needs of insurers over the wellbeing of the persons they are committed to insure. In the United States, courts have held that discrimination in disability insurance is not addressed by non-discrimination provisions of either the Americans with Disabilities Act or the Affordable Care Act. In the United States, disability insurance is generally regulated at the state level.

The United Methodist Church affirms its long standing support for persons with mental illness and their families. Jesus Christ made no distinctions in his healing ministry between persons with physical disabilities and those which we might today call mental illnesses. We call upon the General Board of Church and Society to advocate globally on behalf of non-discriminatory long-term disability insurance for workers, and to support and encourage the work of Annual Conference Boards of Church and Society in such advocacy at state and regional legislative bodies.

For more information, visit <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Non-Discrimination-in-Disability-Compensation.docx>

Title: Petition to General Conference 2016 regarding Fossil Fuel Divestment

Submitted by: Mike Koob, Lay Member to Annual Conference, Middletown UMC.

Petition:

Whereas, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBOPHB) manages more than \$20 billion in assets on behalf of United Methodist clergy, staff, agencies, churches, and other institutions; and

Whereas, The United Methodist Church has acknowledged the risks of fossil fuel dependence for the last 35 years through its Energy Policy Statement in the Book of Resolutions para. 1001; and

Whereas, the investment policy goals of The United Methodist Church, as outlined in the Book of Resolutions para. 4071, include investing in corporations, companies, institutions or funds making a positive contribution to the realization of the goals outlined in the Social Principles and the Book of Resolutions, and exclude investing in companies that violate church values; and

Whereas, the Social Principles state that climate change will bring “severe environmental, economic, and social implications,” which will “disproportionately affect individuals and nations least responsible for the emissions;” and

Whereas, despite a strong commitment to the Social Principles, none of the GBOPHB’s investment screens speak to the climate concerns named in the Natural World section of the Social Principles; and

Whereas, the GBOPHB maintains significant holdings in petroleum, coal and natural gas companies; and

Whereas, while shareholder advocacy can be effective in pressuring industries to change practices, it cannot change fossil fuel companies’ core business model, which is to produce fossil fuels; and

Whereas, fossil fuel companies are spending up to \$600 billion each year to seek additional reserves while governments worldwide spend another \$600 billion each year subsidizing fossil fuel consumption; and

Whereas, the processes and byproducts related to the extraction of petroleum, coal and natural gas are damaging to the health of people who work in these industries as well as those who live on or near extraction sites; and

Whereas, the extraction and burning of petroleum, coal and natural gas exacerbates climate change; and

Whereas, limiting the warming of the earth to 2-degrees Celsius, the internationally agreed upon limit for human survival, requires that the vast majority of the world’s fossil fuels be left in the ground; and

Whereas, avoiding the worst impacts of climate change urgently requires a transition to sustainable energy; and

Whereas, United Methodists live and serve on the front lines of disasters like Hurricane Sandy, Typhoon Haiyan, prolonged droughts, devastating floods, massive wildfires, and other extreme weather events, which will increase in frequency and severity with climate change; and

Whereas, continued investment in fossil fuel companies undermines The United Methodist Church’s ministries to the most vulnerable among us—including those who are hungry, sick and/or living in poverty; and

Whereas, continued investment in fossil fuel companies signals a grave disregard for the lives of young people;

Therefore be it resolved that the Conference Secretary, on behalf of The Baltimore-Washington Conference, submit the following three petitions to the General Conference of 2016, on behalf of the Baltimore Washington Annual Conference.

Petition # 1 for General Conference

Suggested Title: Create a Fossil Fuel Investment Screen

Be it resolved that the General Conference of The United Methodist Church petitions the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The United Methodist Church to adopt the following policy: Investments shall not knowingly be made in any company or entity whose core business activity involves the production of petroleum, coal, or natural gas. Core business activity refers to a company’s primary, or central focus of activity and is an essential element in the company’s economic success. A “core business” is one that accounts for 10% or more of a company’s revenue derived from the objectionable products and/or services.

Petition # 2 for General Conference

Suggested Title: Avoid Investment in the Production of Petroleum, Coal and Natural Gas

Discipline para 717

Be it resolved that the Book of Discipline para. 717 be amended as follows:

It shall be the policy of The United Methodist Church that all general boards and agencies, including the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, and all administrative agencies and institutions, including hospitals, homes, educational institutions, annual conferences, foundations, and local churches, shall, in the investment of money, make a conscious effort to invest in institutions, companies, corporations, or funds whose practices are consistent with the goals outlined in the Social Principles; and shall endeavor to avoid investments that appear likely, directly or indirectly, to support racial discrimination, violation of human rights, sweatshop or forced labor, gambling, or the production of petroleum, coal, natural gas, nuclear

armaments, alcoholic beverages or tobacco, or companies dealing in pornography. The boards and agencies are to give careful consideration to shareholder advocacy, including advocacy of corporate disinvestment.

Petition #3 for General Conference

Suggested Title: Investment Screen for Petroleum, Coal or Natural Gas Resolution #4071

Be it resolved that the Book of Resolutions section 4071, Socially Responsible Investing Strategies, 1. Portfolio screening, be amended .

For detailed information on this Petition, visit <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Fossil-Fuel-Divestment.docx>

Title: Petition to the 2016 General Conference of The United Methodist Church regarding human sexuality

Rationale:

The 2014 Annual Conference of the Baltimore-Washington Conference (BWC) resolved to “empower our bishop and conference representatives, current and future, to work on behalf of the Baltimore-Washington Conference toward the eventual removal of all discriminatory references and policies in the Book of Discipline and Social Principles that are based on sexual identity.” In keeping with that resolution, the BWC should send this petition to the 2016 General Conference, seeking removal of the key discriminatory language contained in the Discipline.

Submitted By:

Mittie T Quinn, BWAC Lay Member at Large; Member – Dumbarton UMC.

Resolution:

Be it resolved that the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church send a petition to the 2016 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, as follows:

Amend ¶161.F, as follows: We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. ~~The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.~~ We affirm that God’s grace is available to all

Endorsed or Supported By:

Churches/Organizations:

Capitol Hill United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Congregational Council, Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Wesley United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

St. Luke’s Mission Center, Washington D.C.

Silver Spring United Methodist Church, Silver Spring, Maryland

Clergy:

Rev. Nancy Webb, retired

Rev. T.R. Chattin

Rev. Frank Trotter, retired

Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, Senior Pastor, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Rev. Dawn Hand, Executive Pastor Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Rev. Mary Kay Totty, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.

Rev. Alisa Lasater Wailoo, Capital Hill United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Rev. Kim Capps, Emanuel United Methodist Church, Laurel, MD

Rev. Joey Heath, Associate Pastor, Silver Springs United Methodist Church, Silver Springs, MD

Rev. Dr. Charles A. Parker, The Metropolitan Church, Washington D.C.

Rev. Donna Claycomb Sokol, Pastor, Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church

Rev Rachel Cornwell, Silver Spring United Methodist Church

Rev. Rebecca Vardiman, Centenary/Zion United Methodist Churches

Rev. Kate Payton, Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church

Rev. Arthur Dan Gleckler, Hampdens United Methodist Church

Laity:

Richard W. “Rick” Shives, Zion UMC

Ben Roberts, Director of Social Justice Ministries, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Louise Franklin, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Nancy Groth, mother of transgender son, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Christian Marble, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Dan and Mariana Vock, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

James Early, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Ann Brown-Birkel, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Bill Smith, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Tracy Collins, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Chuck Lisenbee, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Jan Lawrence, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Lindi Lewis, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Wilson Rumble, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Chris Hong, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

T.C. Morrow, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Michael Tyler, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Eddie Gouge, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Daniel Gri, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

James Abbott, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Ray Goodrow, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Paul Newhouse, Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Suzanne Forsyth, Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Sam and Kathy Rawlings, Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.

Kerm Towler, Metropolitan Cooperative Parish, Washington D.C.

Mary Jo Marchant, Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.
 Edward F. Bachman, Ministerial Member of Upper NY Conference, voluntarily located to Foundry United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.
 Ellen Bachman, Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, Washington D.C.
 Shelly Williams
 Liz Feighner
 Kathy Van Arnum
 George Kahl, Grace UMC, Baltimore, MD
 Ellen McDaniel, Emmanuel United Methodist Church, Scaggsville, MD
 Daniel Fisher, Old Otterbein United Methodist Church
 Yvonne Agduyeng, Youth & Children's Minister, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.
 Kathryn Johnson, Church Council Chairperson, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.
 Ann Thompson Cook, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.
 Martha Dickey, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.
 Nancy Holland, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.
 Mary Jo McPherson, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.
 Jen Whatley, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.
 Barbara Morland, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.
 Deborah Woodcock, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.
 David Cook, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.
 Janet Smith, Dumbarton UMC, Washington D.C.

For more information, visit <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Human-Sexuality.docx>

Title: Resolution for the Baltimore-Washington Conference to submit to General Conference 2016 a Petition to Revise The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church Resolution 1027. God's Creation and the Church

Rationale: This important Resolution, that is used regularly by our Annual Conference, is due to expire in 2016. The attached petition readopts the Resolution with added user friendliness of relevant Internet links.

Submitted by: Dr. Gary Sherman.

For more information, visit <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Revise-Resolution-1027-Gods-Creation-and-the-Church1.doc>

Title: Resolution for the Baltimore-Washington Conference to submit to General Conference 2016 the following Petition to Revise The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church Social Principles ¶164. V. THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY C)

Rationale: This petition adds language to Para. 164 and adds a new paragraph. Some, by misrepresenting science, continue efforts to legislate their religious beliefs about creationism into public school biology classrooms – as they have for over a century. Science, several major court decisions, and many in religion have repudiated their actions, actions that jeopardize our freedom of religion. This strengthens an expiring Resolution.

Submitted by: Dr. Gary Sherman.

The Desired Action to General Conference 2016 shall be:

Please add two phrases to the existing paragraph, and a new paragraph (both as shown) to ¶164. V. THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY C)

This starts:

C) Church and State Relations—The United Methodist Church has for many years supported the separation of church and state. In some parts of the world this separation has guaranteed the diversity of religious expressions and the freedom to worship God according to each person's conscience. Separation of church and state means no organic union of the two, but it does permit interaction. The state should not use its authority to promote particular religious beliefs (including atheism, creationism, or requirements for or against contraception and/or abortion), nor should it require prayer or worship in the public schools, but it should leave students free to practice their own religious convictions. We accept that the state has the right and duty to require and define universal health care that is free from religious constraints. We believe that the state should not attempt to control the church, nor should the church seek to dominate the state. The rightful and vital separation of church and state, which has served the cause of religious liberty, should not be misconstrued as the abolition of all religious expression from public life.

The United Methodist Church opposes the legislation of any faith-based accounts, such as creationism, intelligent design, or Theistic Evolution into the science curriculum and/or science textbooks of our public schools. We oppose any ploy questioning scientifically accepted evolution on religious grounds, or misrepresenting science to further religious goals. We encourage science teachers to enthusiastically teach any, and only, legitimate scientific interpretations of evolution. We further encourage highlighting in the classroom many of the significant contributions arising from evolutionary theory, such as new pharmaceuticals and vaccines to cure the sick, increased agricultural yields to feed earth's growing population, etc., that are improving conditions for all God's children. Science teachers should point out that historically some in religion fight new scientific concepts such as our sun centered solar system, cosmological and biological evolution, and now climate change, while

others in religion are accepting of rigorously established scientific findings. While not questioning scientific advances themselves, we reserve the right to participate in determining how new knowledge and technologies developed through science may be ethically used.

For more information, visit <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Revise-Social-Principle-Para.-164.-V.-The-Political-Community-C-church-and-State-Relations1.doc>

Title: Resolution for the Baltimore-Washington Conference to submit to General Conference 2016 the following Petition to Revise The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church Social Principles ¶160. I. THE NATURAL WORLD F) Science and Technology

Rationale: The petition reorganizes the existing hodge-podge of the "Science and Technology" section arrived at through several band-aided revisions. The structure of this section is rearranged so that the generalized defining relationships between science and religion are in the first paragraph. The second paragraph lifts up three of the most controversial and misunderstood findings of science to define their specific relationship with religion. The third paragraph is unchanged.

Submitted by: Dr. Gary Sherman.

The Desired Action to General Conference 2016 shall be:

Change the section ¶160. I. THE NATURAL WORLD F) Science and Technology as follows:

The body of the petition to General Conference 2016 shall be:

¶160. I. THE NATURAL WORLD F) Science and Technology—Concerning relationships between the realms of religion and science/technology: 1) We recognize science as a legitimate interpretation the most rational method for humans to increase their understanding of God's natural world. 2) We accept the role of scientists to determine what is scientific. 3) We affirm the validity of the claims of science in describing the natural world. and in determining what is scientific. 4) We preclude science from making authoritative claims about theological issues and likewise, theology from making authoritative claims about scientific issues. We find that science's descriptions of cosmological, geological, and biological evolution are not in conflict with theology: 5) We recognize that responsibly and ethically applied medical, technical, agricultural, and other scientific technologies are as legitimate uses of God's natural world when such use enhances uses help sustain and enhance human life, reduce suffering, and enable and enables all of God's children to develop their God-given creative potential. without violating our ethical convictions about the relationship of humanity to the natural world: 6) We reexamine our ethical convictions as our understanding of the natural world increases. 7) We find that as science expands understanding of the natural world, our understanding of the grandeur and mysteries of God's creation and word are enhanced.

In accepting the claims of science, 1) We find that science's descriptions of biological evolution and cosmological, geological, and other creative processes are not in conflict with theology. 2) We implore immediate and judicious use of current scientific knowledge about climate change in order to avert or minimize weather induced catastrophes to God's children and other life on our planet. 3) Since the foods we now eat have been genetically modified over many centuries without documented side effects, we support the continued development and use of genetically modified foods as necessary to produce wholesome, safe and affordable food to feed the world's increasing population, even as arable land and freshwater resources diminish.

For more information, visit <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Revise-Social-Principles-Para.-160.-I.-The-Natural-World-F-Science-and-Technology1.doc>



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Asbury UMC, Jessup: no longer dead, but growing

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



DURING APPOINTMENT SEASON — which is right now — pastors often tremble when a District Superintendent calls and says, “I have a great opportunity for you.” What that often means: you’re moving, and the bishop is sending you to a church in trouble.

Gay Green-Carden received that call six years ago, only she wasn’t a pastor; she was Lay Leader of the Annapolis District.

The Rev. Chris Holmes, superintendent at the time, had worked with Green-Carden for several years. Green-Carden had spoken with Holmes, telling him that she felt God was calling her into ministry.

One day, Holmes called: “I have an opportunity for you to be a beacon for God.”

That “opportunity” was Asbury UMC in Jessup. The small church, started in 1876, was in trouble: 30 or so people were in worship; connectional giving had ceased; the doors were starting to close. Someone, however, forgot to tell Green-Carden that the church was supposed to die.

“I sell pharmaceuticals for a living, full-time,” said Green-Carden. “I sell medicine every day, all day. This was my opportunity to sell Jesus.”

When she arrived in 2009, Green-Carden found hospitable people yearning to be fed God’s word and God’s spirit. But with decreasing worship attendance and an organist they couldn’t pay, the congregation appeared all but dead.

“I saw a church with workers who wanted to be ignited

for God,” she said. “I saw that the congregation needed to have some flavor, something to move them.”

One of the first things the new pastor did was a Homecoming Weekend. Just up the street from the church is a funeral home, Green-Carden said, and that was where the event was held. Church members, however, were skeptical about holding such an event in a funeral home. But there was a method behind the madness.



Gay Green-Carden sits in the sanctuary of Asbury UMC in Jessup. Under her leadership, the church is growing.

The pastor invited members and the choir from her home church of Mt. Zion UMC in Magothy to come to the Homecoming service. The funeral home was packed.

“My goal was to show that we’re no longer dead,” said Green-Carden. “We are the living souls here.”

A Licensed Local Pastor, Green-Carden is taking Wesley Theological Seminary’s Course of Study program.

Her course work, however, has been put on temporary hold, she said, because the church is growing so fast.

When she was called by God to preach, she had never delivered a sermon. Her first one was titled “Will Work for Food.” That experience, she said, solidified her call.

“I believe that young people are hungry for the Word,” said Green-Carden, so the church places a heavy emphasis here. Every fourth Sunday of the month, youth lead worship. There’s a praise band, with drums and saxophones. There are dancers. There’s a great choir. “The fire is burning,” she said.

Today, Asbury UMC is thriving. In mid-March, more than 175 people packed the small sanctuary. The most recent new membership class had 35 people in it, said Green-Carden, and she holds these classes quarterly.

The church has also paid 100 percent of its connectional giving, or apportionments, for the past several years, and is up to date in 2015.

Asbury has partnered with a local elementary school, providing tutoring, meals, supplies and, perhaps most importantly, prayer. The church’s school partnership was one of the first such relationships in Maryland.

The emphasis on being in and part of the community doesn’t come by accident. It’s a key component of the church’s strategy for growth.

“If I had my way, there would be no walls in this church,” said Green-Carden. “Sometimes, our walls cripple us as far as getting the word out. I believe that if we continue to leverage our presence in the community, this church will only continue to grow.

“When you love people, and love God, it will draw in the people.”

Selma: A footsoldier for Civil Rights looks back, 50 years later

From page 1

were put in place to block African-Americans from their right to vote.

Lines were clearly drawn between the races, Hunter said. Local law enforcement was anti-black. “If you stayed in your so-called ‘place,’ you had fewer problems,” he said, meaning “don’t interrupt the normal course of behavior.”

Hunter’s generation, though, wasn’t one to simply stay in their place. The Civil Rights Movement, Hunter said, was already at work before he was born, long before Martin Luther King, Jr., arrived.

“King couldn’t have come to Selma if there hadn’t been an organization already at work,” Hunter said.

In 1962 or 63, Hunter attended his first Civil Rights meeting in the basement of his home church, Tabernacle Baptist Church. James Foreman and James Baldwin spoke. These meetings were the precursor to Dr. King’s coming, Hunter said. It was at that time that various marches were held throughout Selma, demonstrating for the right to vote and for integrating facilities.

1963 was also the year of the March on Washington. Hunter wanted to attend, but for lack of money to buy a \$25 round-trip bus ticket, he didn’t go.

At one of the marches, Hunter was part of a group that was rounded up and incarcerated for two weeks. He was 14 years old.

“They rounded us up and took us to the National Guard Armory in Selma,” he said. From there, they were shipped to Camp Thomasville outside Selma.

Hunter said that he and the others would have been released immediately if they had signed a statement that said, in essence, they wouldn’t march or demonstrate for five years.

“I didn’t read it fully,” Hunter said of the statement. “In essence, as young folks, signing that would have shut us down.”

At Camp Thomasville, people were segregated by gender, finger-printed and placed in cow pens. With no beds, people slept on dirt floors. The clothes they wore when they entered the facility are what they wore for two straight weeks. No baths were available and the food was watered-down mushy grits and fat-back bacon.

“Part of the strategy of the movement at that time,” Hunter said, “was to fill up all the jails in Selma. Make them pay to house us. We crowded out the jails in Selma, so they shipped us out to facilities outside the county.”

In jail, they sang Freedom Songs to keep their spirits up. After two weeks, Hunter lost 10 pounds. The group appeared for a hearing before Judge Reynolds, a die-hard segregationist, Hunter said. The smell was so bad that the judge ordered the bailiffs to spray deodorizing aerosol, but that didn’t help.

The judge, in the end, simply threw the group out of court. Most in the group were never formally charged. Access to legal council was never available.

It was that experience that shaped the future of Hunter’s professional life. After graduating High School in 1965, he left Selma and went to New York to live with his brother, John Hunter, Jr., in a small, cramped rooming apartment.

He entered Tennessee State University and then obtained his law degree from the University of Kentucky in 1973. “I wanted to fight injustice,” he said, “and to stand up for justice.”

Hunter entered the military, serving in the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps. There, he represented men — black and white — that were not receiving adequate legal counsel, he said.

“Any time I saw some unfairness,” Hunter said, “I stood up for it. Sometimes it got me in trouble.”

After serving in the military, Hunter entered private law practice in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, practicing general law. He moved to Maryland in the late 1980’s, and has been a member at Ames UMC ever since, where he teaches adult Sunday school and is a lay speaker.

Hunter participated in all three 1965 marches: Bloody Sunday, Turnaround Tuesday, and the successful march from Selma to Montgomery. That makes him a “foot soldier.”

Phillip Hunter recites one of his original poems, “Stand Up,” written in 2007. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h20v-Gw1cwo>

His memories of March 7, 1965, are still vivid. He has a certificate testifying to his participation, signed by Martin Luther King, Jr., framed and hanging in his home office.

Hunter and his marching partner were about one-third of the way back from the front, he said, and they made it across the bridge. Then the tear gas got them.

“We were being pulverized by the State Troopers,” he said.

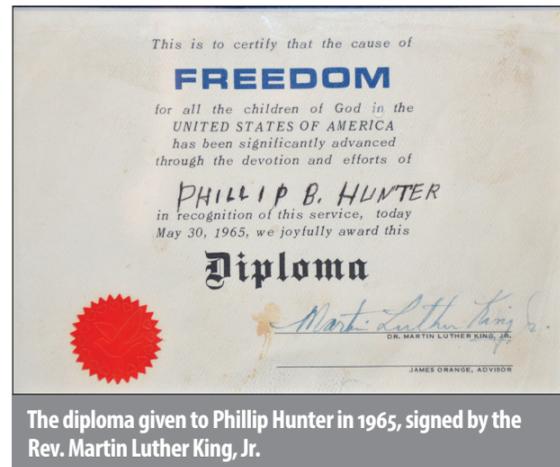
Hunter tried to get back to Brown’s Chapel by swimming across the river, but the current was too swift and Hunter only knew how to do the dog paddle.

He eventually climbed back up the river bank and got across the bridge. There was a lot of confusion, Hunter said. People were being “patched up” and sent to the hospital. Hunter, himself, was unhurt. “People were angry and retaliation was in the air,” he said. “Some of the leaders tried to calm us down; others had other ideas.”

But the purpose of the march had been achieved.

“We wanted the world to see what was happening in Selma,” he said. “(Sheriff) Jim Clark was the main actor, and he acted in a violent way that day.”

After Bloody Sunday, King put out the call for supporters of the movement to descend on Selma.



The diploma given to Phillip Hunter in 1965, signed by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Whereas Bloody Sunday had 500 marchers, Turnaround Tuesday — where King led the marchers across the bridge only to stop, kneel and pray — had five times that many participants.

The rest, as they say, is history.

On March 7, 2015, Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush visited Selma to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first march. More than 40,000 people gathered to hear speeches and make a symbolic walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

One of those people was Phillip Hunter. “I wouldn’t have missed it,” he said. “It was a great honor to shake the president’s hand and to see the respect 50 years later. God has allowed me and others to survive to see the day when President Obama could get the votes and be elected that, in 1965, we could not imagine.”

Also that day, President Obama signed into law a bill that awarded the Selma foot soldiers the Congressional Gold Medal. Hunter is grateful for the recognition.

If you look at photographs from the 1965 marches, you’ll see some young black men wearing bib overalls. “That was a sign you were part of the movement,” Hunter said. “It’s what we marched in, demonstrated in.”

Hunter said that law enforcement caught on and if you were spotted wearing bib overalls, you were targeted as being part of “that group” and you were in trouble.

Hunter, you’ll recall, wore bib overalls for the interview for this story.

On purpose.

He’s still part of the movement.



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Shower of Stoles at Grace

ON SATURDAY, MAY 2, at 6:30 p. m., Grace UMC and the St. John's United Methodist Church Reconciling Cooperative Parish will host an opening for the "Shower of Stoles" exhibit at Grace UMC, 5407 North Charles Street, in Baltimore.

The "Shower of Stoles" is an ecumenical project that has been in existence since 1995. It features stoles, which an ordained Elder would wear, made by or for a woman or man who has sensed a strong call to ordained ministry in their denomination, but who, because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered, have been denied the opportunity to answer that call due to their denomination's policies.

Accompanying each of the fifty stoles, which represent the larger collection, will be a laminated card containing the call story of the person whom the stole represents.

The exhibit will also be open Sunday, May 3, following worship. For more information call the Grace UMC office at 410-433-6650.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: KIDS HELPING KIDS



Students at the Murawe Mission School in Zimbabwe show off their e-readers, part of an effort to create a digital library.



Bob Snider, of Friendship UMC, makes music with Murewa students on a donated keyboard.

could use a keyboard, JuliAnna Lewis (age 9) and Sophia Lewis (age 7) donated their Casio. Imagine their surprise when they saw a photo of their keyboard being enjoyed by kids half way around the world (see photo above).

Connecting as United Methodists, our goal is to help build a digital library for the students of Murawe Mission School in Zimbabwe. Any donations received covers the costs of e-readers, e-books, customs and shipping fees, logistical support in the U.S. and Africa, and more. This would cost more than three times that if a single person tried to do it alone.

BY FAITH LEWIS*

YES, KIDS CAN make a difference in the lives of other kids! Every Tuesday, elementary students arrive at Mt. Harmony UMC in Owings, Md., for an afternoon that is educational, spiritual and downright fun.

They have cooked meals for the homeless, filled and decorated bags of blessing for church members and recently joined in a pen-pal exchange with students from Zimbabwe who attend a United Methodist school.

Getting all of the kids to settle into their homework each week had been a challenge — until a student from Northern High School heard about the program and offered to help.

Megan, a volunteer from the 2014 Vacation Bible School, coordinated her fellow students in the National Honor Society to serve as mentors on Tuesday.

They arrived and were paired with a kid-tastic

student. Each student received 20 minutes of one-to-one homework help. The kids who didn't have homework (what mom hasn't heard that?) practiced reading out loud to the Honor Student.

They ended their time cooking Zimbabwean recipes as part of their exploration of life in Zimbabwe.

Through a pen-pal exchange with the children at Murewa Mission School, the Maryland kids are learning about life in Africa and how we can share across the globe.

A local team of volunteers recently brought back 200 letters from the children that describe life in Africa, from a kids perspective, of course. David Bonney (Smithville UMC) said that for some of the Murawe students, it was the first letter they had ever written.

Caroline Fletcher (age 17) read some of the letters to the congregation on a recent Sunday. She is helping to ensure that every student receive a response from us.

When it was mentioned that the kids in Murewa

* The Rev. Faith Lewis is pastor of Mt Harmony-Lower Marlboro UMC.



Youth from Mt. Harmony UMC cook Zimbabwean food as part of their learning about our partner Conference in Africa.

'Are you in debt so as to embarrass yourself?'

BY SARAH SCHLIECKERT*

IN A COUPLE months, a wonderful group of new provisional and full member candidates will stand before the Executive Session as well as the Annual Conference to be received. It has been a joy to work with them along with my colleagues on the Board of Ordained Ministry. They offer so many rich gifts for ministry in our ever-changing world. I have great hope and faith in what God will be able to do in and through them.

But I have a fear.

It is a fear borne of personal experiences in my own life and in my family of pastors. It is a fear that rolls off the tongue along with the question, "Are you in debt so as to embarrass yourself in ministry?"

This question is one that every year seems to garner rolled eyes, chuckles, and even outright laughter. I suspect we have those reactions for a variety of reasons, not the least of which include the rising costs of seminary education, the slow pace of clergy compensation increases, and the challenges and required self-discipline of self-employment tax payments. We know what it is to move appointments and have significant fluctuations (in either direction) in salary. We know what it is to buy time with credit. And yes, many of us know what it is to have vast financial failures.

If we're honest, we also know that these financial pressures can and do too often impact our ministry. Yes, they can indeed embarrass us. They can lead to massive failures of ethical judgment, and in less outwardly visible ways, they constantly eat at us and spread like a virus through our lives.

When my brother Dan committed suicide last June, he was struggling under the weight of more than \$100,000 in debt. Dan had begun looking into options, including bankruptcy—a move that had given my father

a new start when he and my mother faced financial challenges early in Dad's ministry. However, bankruptcy would not have eliminated the largest portions of Dan's debt, which were his student loans and back taxes.

Both Dan and Dad



struggled at times to stay current with their self-employment tax payments. As too many of us know, it's very difficult to catch up once you fall behind.

I do not have all the answers. My husband Chris and I have learned as we have gone along, seeking out the wisdom of others and adapting as our circumstances

changed. Chris and I, and many of our colleagues and family, have begun to look for ways to provide more opportunities for pastors, especially those new to this call, to start off on or regain healthy financial footing.

I want to call us all to a renewed attention to our own financial footing, and a willingness to speak openly with each other. God cares about far more than just our giving to church. Every dime we spend is part of our stewardship of what God has given us. We need to learn from each other about what has worked. We also need to learn about how those of us who have found ourselves in financial pressure have worked out of it. We need to see the hope and wholeness at the end of it all.

Most of all, I hope that we can consider this question, "Are you in debt so as to embarrass yourself in ministry?" with seriousness, but also with a conviction that no one need be ashamed or feel alone. We need to know we are in this together and we will all work to support and encourage each other along the way. I invite you to join me in opening this conversation in robust, authentic and healing ways. If you are in a difficult financial position now, please know that it gets better. Many of us have walked the same journey, and have come out the other side. Seek out resources, but also seek out colleagues. Ask questions. If you have experience, tell your stories.

May our openness toward and support of each other be part of the hospitality and love we offer to each other.

*The Rev. Sarah Schlieckert is pastor of Arden UMC in Arden, W.Va.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

BY LEO YATES JR.

ANDREW HAD DIFFICULTY keeping friends. He was being raised in a single-parent home, living with his mother and two younger siblings. Andrew's father was very involved in his life, as well as his siblings' lives.

For the most part, his parents got along and were able to work together in child-rearing. The family, including both parents, attends most Sundays at The United Methodist Church near the family's home.

The first time the school guidance counselor called



The Agape Club at Lexington Park UMC offers a monthly meal, fellowship and more to adults with special needs.

Andrew's parents, Ronnie and Shirley, the counselor shared with them some of the difficulty Andrew was experiencing in his sixth grade class. It was suspected that Andrew had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The frequent inability to remain focused, the multiple disciplinary actions due to disruptive behaviors, and the social problems that was often accompanied by the disorder were taking its toll on Andrew and he was feeling a sense of sadness more days than not.

At first, Ronnie and Shirley were resistant to Andrew being assessed, mostly because they were fearful of the stigma that comes with having a mental disorder. It's common that shame is attached to mental illness, which may accompany the fear of being ostracized and/

or discriminated against by others, as well as being seen as having some sort of deficit or weakness. Additionally,



Donald Geller Jr. right, and his son Gregory were the founders of the Agape Club.

Andrew's parents felt his condition might be perceived as a reflection of their parenting.

Shirley casually mentioned what was going on with their United Methodist pastor one Sunday soon after the first phone call from the guidance counselor. The pastor suggested that she meet with the parents for coffee after worship. Fortunately, the pastor was educated about mental health issues and was able to help normalize for Ronnie and Shirley what the family was experiencing.

The pastor explained that there were a number of families in the church who had their own struggles with some form of mental health disorder, such as substance abuse, depression, anxiety or dementia. The pastor referred Andrew to a mental health professional in the community where he was diagnosed with ADHD as the primary diagnosis, and depression as the secondary diagnosis.

For many mental health disorders, it is often the number of symptoms (e.g. 3 out of 6 symptoms), frequency of symptoms, and the severity of symptoms that determines a diagnosis. By having a diagnosis, it can actually be a blessing in disguise because the mental health professional can offer treatment options (e.g. talk therapy, a psychiatrist consultation, support groups, etc.). Andrew was prescribed medication for his ADHD, but it was done temporarily and other accommodations

were able to be made within the class setting. The family was also educated about ADHD and depression, providing them with assurance that it's treatable and gives them a deeper understanding of these.

After the conversation with Ronnie and Shirley, the pastor was convinced that the church should have a mental health awareness Sunday, not only for families

like this couple's, but for the other families who are secretly struggling with their own mental health issues.

The pastor worked it out with the Christian Education director and, instead of having Andrew in a class of 15 Sunday school students, the class was split in half, making the environment less stimulating for Andrew.

Also, the teachers were further educated about ADHD that helped to sensitize them. A faith and mental health small group study was also planned that included guest speakers. Furthermore, informational brochures on a variety of mental health disorders and treatment options were made available in the fellowship hall where many worshippers gathered for coffee and donuts after services. In addition, the pastor planned two worship services a year that gave special attention to mental health in order to foster support and community.

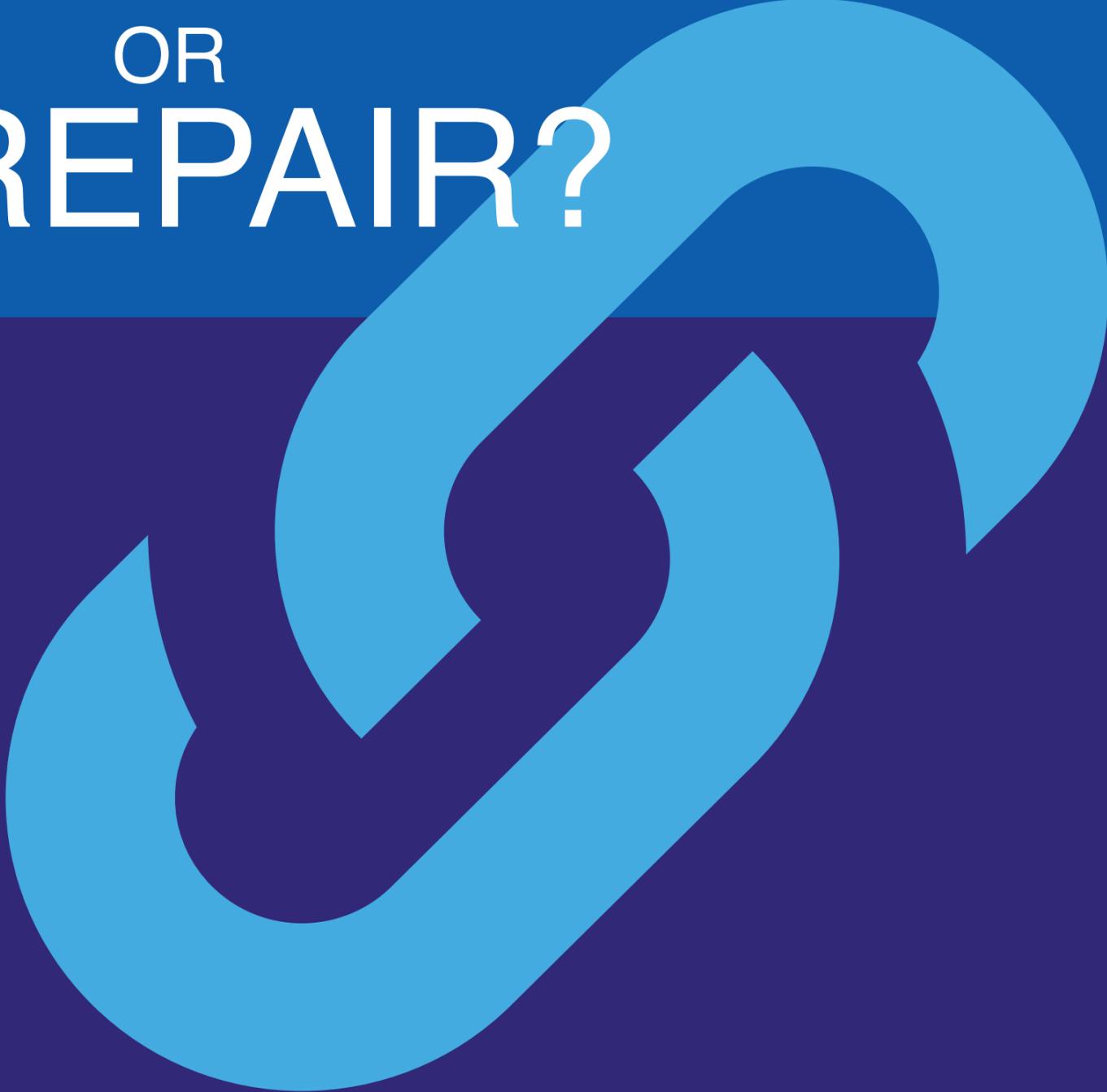
May is Mental Health Awareness Month. It's a good time to spread awareness and lessen the stigma around mental illness.

For bulletin inserts, sermon ideas, liturgy ideas and other resources, go to the Baltimore-Washington Conference Commission on Disability Concerns webpage at <http://bwcumc.org/ministries/commission-on-disability-concerns/>, and/or contact the Rev. Nancy Webb, the chairperson of the disability commission, at njwebb@verizon.net, for consultation.



The Agape Club "is about unexpected blessing."

Is it time to BUILD, TEAR DOWN OR REPAIR?



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One excellent resource, the Administrative Year in Review, orients new leaders to the administrative flow of our connectional system. New tools are being added for those in finance, trustees, staff-parish relations to help improve operational excellence as the Kingdom of God is built.

What administrative or operational questions do you have? The first 100 people to share a tool, ask a ministry question or add knowledge to an existing tool will be eligible to receive a \$100 Cokesbury gift certificate.

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