

"GLORIOUS GOD: THOU ART MINE AND I AM THINE. SO BE IT."



UMC Connection

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The 177-year-old Providence UMC in Kemptown, installs a steeple Jan. 3 on its 1872 building. Since 2011, the growing church has taken in 29 new members.

Mark Fondersmith



New district superintendents named

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

NEW CONFERENCE SUPERINTENDENTS have been appointed by Bishop Marcus Matthews to serve five districts within the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

The Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli will serve as superintendent in the Washington East District. The Rev. Edgardo Rivera was appointed to the Frederick District. The Rev. Jongwoo "J.W." Park was named superintendent of the Central Maryland District and the Rev. Laura Easto will lead the Baltimore Suburban District. The Rev. Joseph W. Daniels will serve a dual appointment, as superintendent of the Greater Washington District and continuing in his ministry as pastor of Emory Fellowship in Washington, D.C.

"These persons will bring to the table gifts and voices that reflect the rich diversity of the Baltimore-Washington Conference," Matthews said. "Each of them has demonstrated a love

of God and the church that is being lived out in their current ministries and beyond. They each, in their own ways, personify the idea of spiritual servant leaders."

Leaving the Cabinet will be its Dean, the Rev. Ianther Mills, who serves the Washington East District; the Rev. T.R. Chattin of the Frederick District; the Rev. Vivian McCarthy of the Central Maryland District; the Rev. Karin Walker of the Baltimore Suburban District and the Rev. William Chaney of the Baltimore Metropolitan District.

The Rev. Cynthia Moore, the current superintendent of the Greater Washington District, will be moving to lead the Baltimore Metropolitan area. Chaney will receive an appointment to a local church.

The appointments go into effect July 1.

The Revs. Evan Young of the Annapolis District and Conrad Link of the Cumberland-Hagerstown District will continue as superintendents.

See Cabinet, page 3

Capital campaign focus of the listening sessions

AT THE URGING of members of annual conference, and in response to the conference's vision, a comprehensive study was conducted last year to determine the feasibility of conducting a capital campaign within the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Initial ideas gathered from 369 conference leaders will be discussed at regional Listening Sessions to be held Jan. 26, 9 to 11 a.m., at Community UMC in Crofton, and 1-3 p.m. at Otterbein UMC in Hagerstown; Jan. 28, from 7 to 9 p.m. at Woodside UMC; and Jan. 29 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Loch Raven UMC.

The Listening Sessions will include discussion about financial goals for the campaign and the potential of sharing the funds raised between local churches and connectional missions and ministries.

In addition, small group conversations will be held on how the money might be best spent and levels of potential support for a capital campaign.

Comments from the Listening Sessions will be used in a discernment process to determine how to best move forward with a capital campaign. A recommendation on the campaign will be submitted to the May conference session.

Unique partnership assists Baltimore's homeless

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

IN ONE OF a series of unique partnerships that are transforming the lives of the homeless in Baltimore County, Salem UMC and its Night of Peace shelter will join with Citgo, which has agreed to pay the shelter's heating bills this year.

In a formal ceremony at the church Jan. 24, Citgo Venezuelan Heating Oil Program officials will announce that they have chosen Night of Peace Shelter as a recipient of funds that will help "improve the quality of lives of people, especially those who feel the severe backlash of poverty."

This is the eighth season Citgo has provided assistance such as this for groups around the nation.

Night of Peace, based in Salem UMC in Randallstown, is the

only private homeless shelter in Baltimore County. Twenty-eight people, many of them children, stay each night at the shelter, which is open year round.

The intention of Night of Peace, said the Rev. Colin Phillips, is to provide families with an alternative to homelessness. With a staff of eight people, Night of Peace has a very active case management component. About half of the families who stay there are placed in permanent housing, "which is significant in a county where there isn't a significant amount of affordable housing," Phillips said. The others are shepherded into transitional housing, where they are able to stay for two or three years.

"Families are crucified by homelessness," Phillips said. His church could not sit by and make only marginal gestures of support. Instead, in 2006 they launched Night of Peace with

See Shelter, page 3

In the beginning was the Word...

Ancient church mothers and fathers often greeted one another with the phrase, “Give me a word.” This greeting led to the sharing of insights and wisdom. Today we continue this tradition with this monthly column. Voice your thoughts on the word at www.facebook.com/bwcumc.

By Mandy Sayers

TO BEGIN SOMETHING requires activation energy, to call into being a new thing or a new situation, to change the status quo. It reminds me of when the Holy Spirit moves in worship and we have to rise to our feet, or when the starting gun fires and we send signals to push off blocks and go, or when a preacher has to stand up to go behind the pulpit and preach. It’s that “here we go, no turning back now” sort of feeling.

We serve a God who is very good at beginnings -- as Genesis, our book of beginnings, tells us. In the beginning, in the start of things, God acted. God’s Spirit moved over chaos waters, God’s voice said, “Let there be.”

God is the source of initial energy in our story of creation and covenant and consummation in Scripture, going before us, loving us first, wooing us into faithful response. It is instructive that our Scriptures begin, “In the beginning, God...” not “In the beginning, we...”

As Christians, our story is not one of pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps, but rather being in relationship with a God who began it all, who created, who blessed,



and who continues to bless, out of Divine generosity.

That’s the foundation that all our beginnings begin upon, knowing God has acted first, to create and love and call and redeem, and knowing that we are called to respond.

When we overcome our fear to begin those projects of love and growth that God calls us to, in mission, in service, in love and in discipleship, God will take care of the rest, for “it is God who began a good work in you, and will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6.).

By Daryl Williams

WHEN WAS THE last time you took the time to dream? I don’t mean those dreams that accidentally creep from your subconscious at night, that you wake up and can’t exactly remember, but intentional wide awake dreaming. I mean those plots, plans and visioning times that allow you to create a visual picture of your preferred future. When we were kids we all did it. But too often, life interrupts our dreams.

Life has a strange way of introducing us to reality and dimming what were once vibrant dreams leaving us with dull, routine practicality. We give up on riding the unicorn and settle for a donkey because it gets us from place to place.

Life, if you let it, will try to convince you that you have too many responsibilities, your past disqualifies you and that dreams are for other people. The truth is too much time has not passed, you do not have too many responsibilities, your past is in the past and most importantly your dreams are for you. Making your dream come true requires that you do one thing: begin.

Now that you have recaptured your dreams, you must begin. To begin means to put action to those things that you have imagined. Many times it is not aptitude or ability that stops our dreams but that we never got started on them. When you begin, you tell God that you have the faith and the dedication to go beyond visions and walk in a new reality. To really begin you must remember that any venture worth starting is worth completing. There will be hard times, disappointments and challenges, but remember with God on your side there is nothing you can’t do. Move into the new year full steam ahead. This year dream, pray, believe, begin.

CORRECTION

In the apportionment listing in the Dec. 2012 UMConnection, in several instances, the names of the associate pastors were listed rather than the names of the senior pastors, as was intended. We regret the error.

EVENTS

Church statistical reports due

Jan. 25 is the deadline for submitting the 2012 Statistical Reports. For assistance in completing this year’s statistical reports, go to www.bwcumc.org/statisticalreports. GCFA’s statistical reporting site is <http://ezra.gcfa.org>. For questions or concerns, first contact your Regional Administrator.

Leadership Days

Baltimore, Washington and Western Regions – Jan. 26
Annapolis Southern Region – March 9
Training in a variety of areas of leadership including committee responsibilities and the life of the church. The deadline for registration is Jan. 15. Registration online is \$35, by mail \$40. For information and to register go to the website at www.bwcumc.org/academy/leadership-days2013.

Listening Days for Capital Campaign

Each Region
Opportunities for church leaders, clergy and laity, to learn about a proposed Capital Campaign, are scheduled for Jan. 26, 9 to 11 a.m., at Community UMC in Crofton, and 1-3 p.m. at Otterbein UMC in Hagerstown; Jan. 28, from 7 to 9 p.m. at Woodside UMC; and Jan. 29 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Loch Raven UMC.

Clergy Lenten Day Apart

Queens Chapel UMC, Beltsville
Feb. 12, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Bishop Marcus Matthews will host a day apart for clergy with keynote speaker Dr. Marvin McMickle, president of the Colgate Rochester Crozier Divinity School. For more information and to register, visit www.bwcumc.org/events/bishops_lenten_day_apart_clergy.

Legislative Advocacy Days

Asbury UMC, Annapolis
Feb. 14, 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Bishop Marcus Matthews will be the speaker. Issues include domestic violence and abuse, fair hiring for returning citizens, and human trafficking. For registration and information, contact Beth Reilly at bwc-advocacy@earthlink.net. Deadline to register is Jan. 30.

Preconference Session

Martin’s West in Woodlawn
May 4, 2013, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
An important information session will be held to address issues coming before the annual conference session, scheduled for May 29-31. The laity session and executive session for clergy will be held in the afternoon. A \$15 fee covers lunch. Online registration is slated to open Feb. 13.

CELEBRATE

Disability Awareness Sunday

February 3

Celebrate it on Sunday, February 3, 2013 (or another convenient Sunday)

For consultation needs, contact Rev. Nancy Webb at: njwebb@verizon.net.

Visit the Commission for Disabilities Concerns’ webpage for worship ideas by going to www.bwcumc.org/resources/resources_disability_awareness_sunday

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West River celebrates 60 years of ministry

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

For 60 years, West River has stood as a Methodist campground on 45 acres along the Chesapeake Bay, just 20 miles south of Annapolis. While the facility is important, it is the stories, lived year-in and year-out, in this sacred spot that have given West River its identity and created “a legacy of lives changed.”

On Jan. 5, many of the people whose lives were affected by experiences at the camp gathered to share their stories.

There were tales of camp pranks, colorful chefs who prepared the food and the “hoppers” who served it; accounts of sailing adventures, camp songs, bonfires, nets put up to keep out the sea nettles and much more. But all agreed, West River is a place where limits and boundaries are put aside, so that one week at a time each summer, God can be present in amazing ways.

One woman remembered teaching deaf-blind campers to do archery and to celebrate the Fourth of July with sparklers. Andy Thornton reflected on a girl who came to a camp designed for children whose parents were incarcerated. That experience cracked a hard façade she had built to protect herself and it began a process that reshaped the girl’s life. Ray Jenkins told about how leading sailing at West River affected him in such powerful ways that he and his wife have felt compelled to return each year for 32 years; and Tom Lain, who once served as director of the camp, found himself in tears as he reflected on the camp’s impact.

The stories poured forth. “West River is a treasure,” said Sandy Ferguson the director of connectional ministries for the Baltimore-Washington Conference. It is a very special sanctuary for all of our churches, where people – especially children and youth – can get away for fun, learning and mountaintop spiritual experiences. While we celebrate its history tonight, I’m more excited about its future. Great things unfold here.”

West River is one of the Baltimore-Washington Conferences’ three campgrounds, along with Camp Harmison in Berkeley Springs and Camp Manidokan near Harper’s Ferry. Each year, more than 350 volunteer leaders, a thousand summer campers and a thousand people who attend retreats make use of the facilities.

But like most local churches, West River is also facing challenges competing for people’s time and attention.



In 1963, and for the past 60 years, “boys and rowboats have always been a perfect combination,” at West River Camp, south of Annapolis, said Chip Day at a recent anniversary celebration for the camp.

Courtesy of Chris Warrington

A decreasing number of campers brings increasing financial challenges, said Thornton, the BWC’s director of camping and retreat ministries.

In celebrating the past and anticipating the future, Thornton challenged the people of the Baltimore-Washington Conference to give money that might provide camperships to needy children.

Building on Bishop Matthew’s challenge that each person bring one person to Christ and to the church, Thornton suggested each United Methodist bring one person to camp.

“This is a place filled with stories,” Bishop Marcus Matthews told those gathered at the 60th anniversary banquet. He thanked Thornton for his 26 years of ministry nurturing and equipping young people to be ministers of Christ. The bishop promised to support the

campers and to send his three grandchildren this coming summer.

In another gesture to support the camp’s future, the Rev. Karin Walker, superintendent of the Baltimore Suburban District, presented West River and the other conference camps with automated external defibrillators (AEDs), lifesaving equipment bought by funds collected from the district’s churches.

Hunts Memorial UMC was a significant donor, giving a large gift in memory of Mickey Lippy, a Maryland State Police officer who died in a Medevac helicopter crash four years ago. His mother Wilma joined Walker in expressing her hope that this gift would be an appropriate legacy for her son, saving the lives of others.

At the banquet Cliff Hubbard of Hiss UMC was presented with the Dick Lord Sailing Award.

Cabinet: Appointments reflect the diversity of the church

From page 1

The five new superintendents together represent 101 years of ministry.

Easto, who has served as a superintendent before in the former Baltimore North District, is currently the pastor of Westminster UMC. She has also served at Marvin Chapel, Calvary UMC in Frederick, Providence UMC in Kemptown, Milford Mill UMC in Randallstown, and University UMC in College Park.

Park has pastored Trinity UMC in Odenton, Emmarts

UMC in Woodlawn and Fairhaven Parish in Gaithersburg. Daniels has served Emory Fellowship, a United Methodist congregation in Washington, since 1993.

Rivera served churches in the Eastern and Central Pennsylvania annual conferences. He came to the Baltimore-Washington Conference in 2007, served a tour as a chaplain in Iraq and became a conference Guide and leader of area Hispanic ministries.

Iannicelli is now serving as a Conference Guide with

the Annapolis Southern region. She has pastored Mt. Zion UMC in Mechanicsville, Centenary in Shady Side and Community-Trinity Cooperative Parish in Crofton.

The appointments break new ground. Park is the first Korean American and Rivera is the first Hispanic to serve on the Cabinet.

Portraits and profiles of the superintendents and their ministries are on pages 4 and 5.

Shelter: Night of Peace works to settle people in housing

From page 1

a handful of people from Salem and Epworth UMCs, intent on providing creative ways of reaching out to people in need.

This led them to form partnerships to create a number of innovative outreach efforts. The shelter, for example, recently received a grant from the Ronald McDonald House to provide a recreational therapist to assist children in working out stresses through structured play.

They also have a partnership with the state of Maryland’s nutrition programs for children and receive reimbursements that enable them to put an emphasis on healthy eating.

Night of Peace is a Community Impact Partner of the United Way and gets funding through the Combined Federal Campaign, along with receiving financial assistance from the Weinberg Foundation and the Baltimore Women’s Giving Circle.



Former residents of Night of Peace shelter.

In addition, Salem partners with several United Methodist and other churches to create “quite a lively place, where hospitality is at the root of everything,” Phillips said.

“The Citgo gift will be enormously valuable,” he added. “The cost of heating oil is very high. This is a great thing.”

As pastor of Salem and founder of the shelter, Phillips is proud of the many community partnerships the shelter has created.

“Very often, as a church, we hide behind the walls of a building and talk a good game. But we don’t challenge ourselves or our congregations,” Phillips said. “Night of Peace allows us to really open up our hearts and open up our doors so that the church becomes a living, breathing place, and a sanctuary for people who feel disconnected.”

Profiles of ministry

*Five new spiritual leaders will sit around
the conference Cabinet table*

Joseph W. Daniels Jr.

TO GREATER WASHINGTON DISTRICT AND EMORY UMC

EVERYTHING – ABSOLUTELY everything good – the Rev. Joe Daniels will tell you, is centered in the grace of God.

He has been appointed to serve as the superintendent of the Greater Washington District while continuing as lead pastor at Emory UMC in Washington, D.C. Daniels learned much about grace while serving for the past 20 years in his appointment at Emory.

The lesson started on one of Daniels' first days at the church where he was assigned as a part-time DS hire; at a church that had been threatened with closure and sale. The members gathered for prayer and then he asked, "What's your vision?"

Mrs. Norma Vinson rose and stated simply, "I want to see my church revived!" Her words awakened a call within him that has led Daniels to become a nationally sought speaker, teacher and consultant in the areas of congregation and community revitalization. The heart of this ministry is communicated in Daniels' two books: "Begging for REAL Church" and "The Power of REAL: Changing Lives, Changing Churches, Changing Communities." REAL, Daniels explained, is an acronym for Relevant, Enthusiastic, Authentic and Loving. "Nothing happens without the grace of God. But when God is present and when people are responsive to God's call, astounding things can and will happen," he said.

Emory has grown to having more than 400 in worship each Sunday, but more importantly those worshippers are engaged in transforming their community. The members started a 501(c)3, the Emory Beacon of Light, and helped found the Washington Interfaith Network. These activities have made it a model for how congregations can engage in community development in cities and the denomination. Plans are now underway to create the \$36 million Beacon Center, which brings together business, government, community and church leaders to build and provide 110 units of permanent supportive, transitional and affordable rental housing.

"When people are responsive to God's call, astounding things can and will happen."

The new dual appointment is a natural extension of Daniels' trusting God to reveal new models for effective ministry that allow people to become more faithful followers and learners of Christ.

As a leader, Daniels has always sought to break barriers and build bridges: from leading meetings at the White House, starting a Shalom Zone in rural Zimbabwe, meeting with millionaires who can fund ministry and praying with teenage drug addicts who are lost on the streets of D.C. But first and foremost, he's a family man, married for 27 years to his wife Madelyn, and father to a grown daughter and son.

Being a pastor to the Greater Washington District will draw on his many gifts. "Too often, the church has become a kind of Christian social club. We've stopped preaching, teaching and reaching out to the human condition. We've stopped preaching sermons to the people who aren't in our pews yet," he said. "I am humbled and honored for this opportunity to walk with the pastors and laity of Greater Washington to lead our churches to be living witnesses of transformation."

Rebecca Iannicelli

TO WASHINGTON EAST DISTRICT

THE CROSS AND the resurrection are at the heart of the ministry of the Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli, who has been appointed as superintendent of the Washington East District.

An ordained pastor serving full-time since 2005 and before that as a student pastor, she also served as a prosecuting attorney and as a captain in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Corps. Iannicelli believes, like acclaimed author Howard Gardner, that "a leader first and foremost embodies a story."

Her own faith story unfolds in the district she has been assigned to serve. "I didn't grow up a churchy person," she said. "Church usually wasn't a part of our lives." But in her early 30s, she was facing some chal-

God left her with three words: "Go and tell."

lenging and emotional times. One day, when she was driving, her 4-year-old son pointed out the car window and asked, "Why don't we go to that church, mommy?"

The church was Oxon Hill UMC. The congregation and the Rev. Sandy Taylor

welcomed her in a way she knew it was where she was supposed to be.

Two days later, sitting at her kitchen table in the early morning, "I had an experience of an outpouring of love that I just knew was from God," she said. "The love and forgiveness from Christ transformed my life."

In that experience, God left her with three words: "Go and tell." Those words turned out to be an apostolic calling that led her, eventually, into ordained ministry, and now into a ministry where she hopes to help pastors set a strong foundation to live out the *missio dei* in their own lives and communities.

But for Iannicelli, while "God leaving words in my heart," was transformative, so too is living every moment of every day saying thank you to God. "While that moment was powerful," she said, "what's been equally important is to live every day surrendering my life to God."

She will work as a Guide in the Annapolis Southern Region until July 1, very intentionally to try to bring this missional ethos to her work. She emphasized our "sentness" as disciples of Christ when she served as a pastor at Community-Trinity Cooperative Parish in Crofton, Centenary UMC in Shady Side and Mt. Zion in Mechanicsville.

During her time in ministry, she has learned that "it's not the church that needs a mission; but rather, it's God's mission that needs a church," she said. "God has a mission to reconcile the world through Christ. We, as the church, are God's chosen vehicle to live that out as we bring Christ's redeeming love to the brokenness we encounter."

Currently, Iannicelli is finishing up doctoral work at Drew Theological School in New Jersey. She and her husband, Steve, have three children, a son at the Naval Academy, and two daughters, ages 13 and almost 12. She enjoys gardening, camping, reading, hiking and getting away each year with her family for a time in northwestern Michigan.

She also considers herself a continual learner and is "excited about coming alongside churches and getting to know their stories, listening and helping them to discern what God is calling them to do in their context," she said. "I have a great sense of hope and anticipation."





Edgardo Rivera

TO FREDERICK DISTRICT

THE REV. EDGARDO Rivera’s mother, Luz, taught him to pray. He whispers these words each day – sometimes more than once: “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

This thought will guide Rivera as he serves as the new superintendent of the Frederick District.

Our work as Christians, our mission is to bring the Kingdom of heaven to life on earth, he said. Born in Puerto Rico, Rivera claims Spanish as the language of his heart, so for him, this kingdom resembles “the Great Fiesta.”

He reflects on the words of theologian Justo Gonzales and the Hispanic Creed: “We anticipate the Reign of God – the day of the Great Fiesta when all the colors of creation will form a harmonious rainbow, when all peoples will join in the joyful banquet, when all tongues of the universe will sing the same song.”

This is Rivera’s prayer as he celebrates being the first Latino to be on the Cabinet. It is, he said, a wonderful honor and a challenge to be a leader in a church that is welcoming all people to God’s table. It’s also exciting for him to be assigned to Frederick, which he and his family call home.

The Frederick area is poised for growth, he said. He’s excited about how local churches can be relevant in their communities, engaging people in meaningful ways. It’s not about bringing people into a building, said Rivera. “It’s about engaging with people and engaging them with God. It’s about relationship.”

As a chaplain in the Maryland Air National Guard, who returned a few years ago from a year’s tour in Iraq, Rivera is convinced that relationship is at the heart of all ministry. In war, in peace, abroad, at-home, in joy and in need it’s about caring for one another as we submit ourselves to God, he said.

Rivera is also a firm believer that “the Holy Spirit is in the midst of everything.”

It was the Holy Spirit, he believes, that opened the doors in his life that allowed him to leave a banking career and enter the ministry. The Holy Spirit also led him and his wife Evelyn from Harrisburg, Pa., to this conference to lead Hispanic ministries.

It was especially the Holy Spirit, he said emotionally, that acted when he was a teenager in Puerto Rico at an outing with his youth group. Evelyn turned to him and said emphatically, “God is going to take you places you would never expect.”

“She reminds me,” he said. “to see God’s faithfulness, God’s promises.”

Evelyn is currently a seminarian, working as an associate pastor at Hughes UMC in Wheaton.

When Rivera’s not working he enjoys music, visiting museums and other cultural pursuits, and holding good conversations with his two sons, Eduardo and Emilio, over a good cup of coffee. He’s also a runner and is thinking about inviting United Methodists in the Frederick District to join him in a half-marathon next year.

Bringing God’s promises of spiritual growth and wholeness to life in Frederick is something Rivera is looking forward to. “That’s what faith is all about, believing that what God has promised will happen.” It’s certainty and I’m certain God is going to open great opportunities in the next four years.

“Our mission is to bring the Kingdom of heaven to life on earth.”

Laura Easto

TO BALTIMORE SUBURBAN DISTRICT

IF THE REV. Laura Easto’s ministry is known for one trait it might be “empowering people to live their faith out loud.” As the new superintendent of the Baltimore Suburban District, she hopes that daring to live boldly in relationship with Christ, each day, will serve the church well.

This idea of relationship is a pivotal one for Easto. “Everything rests on where we’re going, how we’re going and who we’re taking with us,” she said. “Ultimately, it’s about building relationships with God and one another. How do you understand your relationship with God? How do you live that out with your neighbor?”

Over the years, Easto said, she has grown in her relationship with Christ so that her spiritual life and practices are now inseparable with who she is on a daily basis. She imagines Christ walking alongside her. “It’s companionship I wouldn’t know how to do without,” she said.

Easto entered the ministry in 1984, pastoring Marvin Chapel in Mt. Airy, Calvary UMC in Frederick, Providence UMC in Kemptown, Milford Mill UMC in Randallstown, and University UMC in College Park. She also served as superintendent of the former Baltimore North District in 2007, and most recently, as pastor of Westminster UMC.

At Westminster, a passion for caring for the homeless and under-housed was awakened in her. “Justice is not an abstract concept for me,” she said. Working with the church’s feeding program, she would eat meals with the guests who came for food. In the sharing of bread and stories, relationship was built, she said.

Combining justice and relationship in unique ways that serve God also shows up in other aspects of Easto’s ministry at local, conference, jurisdictional and general levels of the denomination. From Bishop Joseph Yeakel, who ordained her, she learned that United Methodists are a people of two books -- the Bible and the Discipline. “I have come to learn that the Discipline really is not a rule book,” Easto said. “It is a book of covenant. It connects us.”

As a superintendent, Easto wants each of the district’s churches to know “there is a reason you sit at the corner you sit at. There is a reason you are where you are,” she said. “We need to rediscover our vision, reach out and try new things, deepen our relationship with Christ and open wider the doors.”

As a leader, she wants to help pastors and laity accomplish this by helping them to find their passion and pursue it. “Nothing is worse for a pastor than having their passion be allowed to shrivel and die,” Easto said.

When she’s not working, Easto’s passions revolve around her husband, David, and her two young adult children. She also enjoys reading, quilting, and is developing an expertise as a wood turner.

This winter, she’ll be taking a Sabbath leave to reenergize that part of herself that listens closely and attentively to God. As a God-inspired person, Easto is constantly aware of God’s presence all around her. But this Sabbath time is giving her time and opportunities to be “hyper-aware,” as she looks creatively to the future and “new opportunities to respond to God’s exciting, life-affirming love.”

“We need to rediscover our vision ... and deepen our relationship with Christ.”

J.W. Park

TO CENTRAL MARYLAND DISTRICT

SALM 146 IS a passage that accompanies the Rev. Jongwoo “J.W.” Park throughout his days. It begins and ends with praising God and in between stresses providing justice for the oppressed, feeding the hungry, setting prisoners free, opening the eyes of the blind, watching over strangers and upholding the vulnerable. It especially reminds us to rely on God only, not human beings.

The psalm has guided him as pastor of Trinity UMC in Odenton, Dorguth Memorial UMC in Baltimore, Emmarts UMC in Woodlawn and Fairhaven UMC in Gaithersburg, He’s hoping it will also inspire his leadership as superintendent of the Central Maryland District.

Park comes to the Cabinet as a bit of a trailblazer, the first Asian-American pastor to serve in such a leadership position in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

His experiences as a Korean-American have shaped his identity, but Park does not see himself pigeon-holed as a pastor to just Asian United Methodists. In fact, since being ordained in 1992, he has not served a predominantly Korean congregation.

“I am a pastor to all people,” said Park, who sees celebrating diversity, transcending cultures and crossing boundaries as some of the cutting edges of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Park was raised in affluence in Seoul, Korea, the son of a three-star general in the Korean Army, who served on the presidential Cabinet.

When he and his wife arrived in the United States in 1986, “even the smell of the air was different.”

Going from the large metropolitan area of Seoul to Oklahoma, where he was to get a master’s degree in business administration, was an even greater transition.

But more changes were in store. When he experienced a call to ministry and dropped his studies to enter seminary, his disappointed parents cut him off financially. Park found himself going to school and working, first as a roofer and then as a night watchman, to make ends meet.

Struggling financially deepened his reliance on God. “God provided for us,” he said. Park is certain his reliance on God will shape his leadership of the Central Maryland District, where he is convinced God is at work doing remarkable things.

“I am not a micromanager,” he said. “I want to be an encourager, an enabler and help people to function and perform at their best. It’s important that there is freedom, excellence and creativity among our churches and pastors.”

Park will be receiving a special kind of support in this task from his wife, the Rev. HiRho Park, who serves as director of clergy lifelong learning with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in Nashville.

While the pair are able, as a clergy couple, to empathize with one another, they also take care to not talk about church all the time. Instead, he focuses on his daughter, Felicia, now a young adult, on his dog Mandoo (which means dumpling in Korean), on playing golf and listening to music. “I’m energized by meeting people. I’m recharged,” said Park, who anticipates his time as superintendent will open him to all kinds of encounters as he continues to live out the words of Psalm 146. “Praise the Lord, O my soul.”

“It’s important there’s freedom, excellence & creativity among churches.”

United Methodists take stance against gun violence

By SHAUN LANE
UMConnection Staff

AS PEOPLE AROUND the world paused last month to remember those who lost their lives to gun violence in Newtown, Conn., and elsewhere, the Baltimore-Washington Conference joined with other denominations to push for stricter laws that would prevent certain people from acquiring assault weapons.

In light of the most recent tragedies, the National Council of Churches, together with the United Methodist Church and other interfaith partners in the Faiths United Against Gun Violence coalition, called on churches to observe a Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath weekend. Although an approximate number is not yet available for 2012, it's estimated that 30,000 lives were lost to gun violence in 2011.

A National Institute of Justice survey in 1994 found that civilians owned 192 million guns. Two years later, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms reported that about 242 million firearms were owned by civilians or available for sale. That number rose to about 259 million in 2000 and about 294 million in 2007. The latest year's statistics are not yet available.

"The tragedies in Newtown, Conn., Aurora, Colo., and Portland, Ore., have reminded our nation and our world once more that the proliferation of semi-automatic and other assault weapons is a threat to the life, health and safety of our nation," said Bishop Marcus Matthews, the episcopal leader of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. "We must take a stance against gun violence, while also addressing the pervasive role of addiction and mental illness in crime."

Bishop Matthews also challenges every United Methodist church in the conference to partner with a school

in its community to assist in providing any guidance that a child might need when faced with the threat or lure of gun violence. Fred Crider, a retired clergy of the conference, he said, was so moved in the days following the school shooting that he issued a plea, calling on his brothers and sisters in Christ to lead the cry for change.

"I have wept with grief and wrestled with powerful emotions and swirling thoughts, and have concluded that our nation as a whole and each one of us as individual Christians and American citizens, must do something now," said Crider, who has written to various Congressional members from Maryland to urge them to

can make schools safer.

State Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. said he would be receptive to a stronger state gun control law and has already spoken with O'Malley about the possibility of a gun package. House Speaker Michael E. Busch said his chamber will also look closely at gun control legislation.

West Virginia U.S. Senator Joe Manchin III, who is pro-gun rights, told the New York Times that "everything should be on the table" as gun control is debated in the coming weeks and months.

"It is time to admit that the vast availability of assault



School shootings, gang activity, armed robberies, desperate calls for attention, young children discovering weapons they can't handle and simple arguments that escalate too far. Gun violence takes the lives of thousands in the United States each year. Below is a list of gun violence prevention Web sites to help equip individuals, small groups and churches with resources to advocate for the prevention of gun violence.

United Methodist Board of Discipleship:
http://www.gbod.org/site/c.nhLRJ2PMKsG/b.7996335/k.9554/School_Violence.htm

National Council of Churches: <http://www.nccusa.org>

The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence:
<http://www.bradycampaign.org/toomanyvictimsresources-for-gun-violence-victims-and-survivors/>

People Improving Communities through Organizing (P.I.C.O.): <http://www.piconetwork.org/>

States United to Prevent Gun Violence: <http://supgv.org/resources>

pass an assault weapons ban. "This has got to change. If there was ever a time to feel outrage, is it not now?"

On the state level, Governor Martin O'Malley said he will likely introduce a gun control package in the upcoming legislative session; he reiterated his opposition to assault weapons like the one used in the Newtown massacre. O'Malley said he has directed staff to look at three areas for possible legislation: limiting the type of guns that are allowed in Maryland, restricting access to guns by the mentally ill, and looking at ways that the state

weapons poses a threat to the welfare of our people and that a 'culture of violence' is beginning to rival 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' as enduring values of this nation," Matthews said.

"Now is the time to hear the call to a new sanity. Now is the time to commit ourselves to following the model of living that Jesus represents. He is the one who leads us along the path of life and hope."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



(Left to right) Wilfred Cropper, President of the Methodist Men, Bishop Marcus Matthews, Rev. Jay Blake, Pastor of Ames UMC, Bel Air

UMM honor bishop and Africa University

BEL AIR - The Ames United Methodist Men celebrated its Annual Men's Day on Sunday, Nov.18 with Bishop Marcus Matthews as the featured preacher. The men presented a check for \$500 to the bishop for Africa University. Bishop Matthews is Vice President of Africa University's Board of Directors.

Retired pastor feeds the hungry

LAUREL – Emmanuel UMC has helped provide more than 25,000 pounds of food this past year for the Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services (LARS) food bank, thanks in part to retired UMC pastor, the Rev. Ed DeLong.

LARS served 2,100 individuals and families this past year, and demand has increased 20 percent in recent years, according to its director for emergency services, Leah Paley. In addition to food, the organization assists

with utility bills, housing and employment.

When demand for food began to exceed supply, DeLong set to work contacting new sources for food. Every two weeks, "volunteers pick up approximately 700 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables and deliver them to LARS," he said."The food goes out almost as soon as it comes in."

In addition to the Food Bank, DeLong contacted local schools to hold food drives, and arranged pickups at the five schools.

"All told, DeLong and his team of church volunteers have brought an additional 25,090 pounds of food to LARS' food pantry this year," Paley said.

It wouldn't have been possible, DeLong said, without the effort of more than 40 volunteers who have helped to pick up, deliver and restock food for the LARS' food pantry.

Volunteers help trustees 'raise the roof'

GAMBER – In late summer, the trustees of Calvary UMC realized they needed a new roof on the church – but didn't have enough funds to make it happen, said Carolyn Hill, chair of the trustees.

So after a review of resources, both financial and physical, they decided to take matters into their own hands by reaching out to others. They contacted Camp Hope, a mission where youth upgrade homes for people in need, and two additional churches, Sandy Mount UMC and Trinity Lutheran in Westminster. Boy Scouts also pitched in. Wantz Construction in Finksburg helped the church obtain materials.

A group of almost 50 people worked from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday and completed the finishing touches Sunday.

Brian Mount, a trustee and construction worker trained the uninitiated. "There was a lot of camaraderie, tons of volunteering and people just giving up their time," he said. "It was three days, and we're done. It couldn't have turned out better."

BRIEFS

The Rev. Bill Brown, pastor of Wesley Freedom UMC, had never run in his life, but after training himself, he completed the 26.2 mile Marine Corp Marathon on Oct. 28. He set a goal to raise \$5,000 to benefit the ALS Association. By the end of the race he'd raised \$6,700. Running is now in his blood. He ran a 10k marathon on Thanksgiving in Texas and will be running in other events this spring.

The Rev. Dorothea Stroman, pastor of Clinton UMC, recently published "The First Man," a work of Christian fiction. In Westminster, the Rev. William Boyers has published Kindle and Nook sequels about the fictional Rev. Hugh Derrick who solves crimes as he serves a fictional church in Olney.

Compiled by Linda Worthington. Send news items to lworthington@bwcumc.org.

Pastor’s father experiences miracle of healing

By FRANKIE ALLEN REVELL

IT WAS IN 2008 that I first noticed my father’s memory declining. All of my father’s older siblings suffered from Alzheimer’s Disease so I began to prepare myself for what lay ahead.

I shared my concern about my father’s health with many of my friends and colleagues who offered encouragement and prayer. I told them that I did not doubt God’s ability to heal my father. It was Scott Kisker, professor of church history at Wesley Theological Seminary, who told me, “We are God’s children and we do have the right to ask God for miracles.”

Despite working with the medical community, my father began a slow and steady decline over the next few years. The symptoms were typical. He stopped driving, he began to wander, he became increasingly confused at times, not recognizing my mother, myself, or his home. Eventually we were no longer able to leave him alone and caring for him became a 24-hour-a-day job.

Mid to late stage Alzheimer’s Disease was the diagnosis as determined by extensive testing at the Johns Hopkins Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center in Baltimore in August, 2012.

Understanding my plight, my congregation, Cokesbury Memorial UMC in Abingdon, graciously granted me time off to deal with my father’s affairs. As more people learned of my father’s situation they continued to offer their prayers and encouragement as well. My prayer was that I would be able to find a good facility that could meet my father’s needs and where my mother would be well cared for.

My father continued to decline rapidly as I searched for the proper facility that could meet his rapidly changing needs. His conversation was nonsensical, he had virtually no attention span, his short-term memory was nearly gone, and he was in a constant state of confusion.

Everybody took notice of his decline, everybody knew the story – my father was fading fast. Nobody in the medical community disputed that he was now solidly in the mid stages of the disease and quickly progressing into the later stages. Myself, my mother, Cindy and my wife Kerry were the primary caregivers and we were now incapable of meeting his needs due to his rapid decline.

I struggled to find the proper facility for my father – nowhere accepted his insurance and I could not find a place where they felt that they could provide the unique level of care that he needed. I was very distraught and felt like I had been abandoned by God. I once prayed to God and lamented that I thought Job got off the hook



Rev. Frankie Revell, left, and his father play music together. The pair are united by much love & a miracle.

too easily.

I nearly lost my mind and my faith.

God eventually led us to the right facility and the day came when my father was admitted. Although his health had declined I was confident that God had answered my prayer by sending us a wonderful facility and staff to care for my father’s needs. Given the progression of the disease I was sure that my father would never live outside of the facility again.

The staff and doctors worked with my father and further tweaked medications. To everybody’s surprise, over the next few weeks he began to show gradual improvement. His talent and skill in playing the banjo began to improve. I uploaded videos to Facebook of my father and me entertaining the other residents in the facility. My friends were amazed.

Soon I was informed that the staff’s goal was to enable my father to return to his home. After further prayer, fasting and discernment, we decided to give it a shot. We brought my father home the week of Thanksgiving. He

and I played a gig the following week. Our friends and family were amazed at his recovery.

The doctors continue to be amazed at my father’s improvement. Since bringing him home we continue to follow up with professionals in the medical community who state that my father has shown significant cognitive improvement beyond what medication alone could accomplish.

To some this might seem to be too good to be true but my congregation, friends, relatives and colleagues in ministry know that this testimony is sure and true. The word “miracle” is not to be used lightly. However, I do not hesitate to refer to my father’s recovery as a miracle. This miracle is a living and visible sign of the resurrection of Christ in our midst and is a testimony that is to be celebrated by us all.

Rev. Frankie Allen Revell is pastor at Cokesbury Memorial UMC in Abingdon.

Evolution Weekend event to prompt conversation

By WENDEL THOMPSON

A NUMBER OF BOOKS I’ve read recently focus on this world versus the next world summed up with the admonition that Jesus did not come to show us how to get into heaven; he came to show us how to get heaven into us.

“Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” is a frequent refrain in these books. Another reason to focus on the earth and the universe is to ask what they might tell us about the one who created them and how does this knowledge relate to the faith we have in That One?

This question won’t leave me alone. So I seek conversation with others, One such opportunity for these kinds of conversations will be Feb. 10 at 5:30 p.m. at the Baltimore Washington Conference Mission Center in Fulton. (Visit www.evolutionweekendmd.com.)

A live feed from darkwoodbrew.org will feature a discussion with a scientist and a theologian on the subject, “Evolving Universe, Evolving Faith,” led by Dr. Eric Elnes, senior pastor of Country Wide Community Church in Omaha, Neb.

Discussion will follow the one-hour feed. The evening is sponsored by Wesley-Nexus, a group of Washington area people interested in the interplay of science, religion and faith (see www.wesnexus.org). Questions about the event can be sent to EvolutionWeekendMD@gmail.com.

The scientist for this program is Dr. Grace Wolf-Chase, an astronomer with the Adler Planetarium. Bruce Booher, an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America minister from Plano, Ill., and MIT physics/astronomy



graduate.

The program is planned for Evolution Weekend (formerly Evolution Sunday), a weekend in which the mystery of science and faith are celebrated for the way in which they can lead us into deeper relationship with God and with each other.

Strengthening those relationships can be difficult in light of traditions that would have us believe the evolutionary view of creation contradicts the biblical view of creation.

For example, one of the historical debates that illustrates this divide is the issue of whether or not Adam

had a belly button. Traditional views would say he did not as he was created *de novo*, without being born from a mother. The evolutionary viewpoint would say he did have a belly button as he was born from a mother. My personal reconciliation of these views is that Adam was the first of the *homo sapiens* who, in his self consciousness, began questioning where he came from and who created him; he began to listen to the voice of God.

Although I believe there is no inherent conflict between science and theology, I have not found it easy to incorporate the findings of science into my faith.

A current struggle I have is how to see God’s activity in the world. The fact that the animals were not created *de novo* but developed over long periods of time with slow incremental changes suggests that God takes time in creating. Is the frequent answer of “no” or “wait” to our prayers for God’s intervention another example of this slow process? My experiences of “no or wait” make it harder to sense God’s presence. Should we even be praying for God’s intervention or should we be praying for the abundant life despite what may happen?

Let the conversation continue.

Wendel Thompson is a member of Bethany UMC in Ellicott City.

University’s ministry provides catalyst for faith

By CHRISTINE KUMAR
UMConnection Correspondent

THE REV. RACHEL Birkhahn-Rommelfanger believes that men and women between the ages of 18 and 25 want to make a difference in the world, and the church can be a catalyst for fulfilling this desire.

According to Rommelfanger, part-time campus minister at the University of Maryland in College Park, faith formation and personal development happen during the young adult years where they are trying to figure out where they fit in the world. During these fragile years, she said, campus ministers can help with their spiritual development.

“In a place driven by competition for grades, grants and tenure; the church can come in as a voice that reminds us to rest, to look beyond,” said Rommelfanger. “Campus ministry is a space of hospitality or where you find a counselor or meal that you need. Campus ministers allow the church to stand in solidarity with students, staff and faculty of the university, and helps to show people that God is there.”

The Christian Post reports that young adults between the ages of 18-22 have left the church in droves and 25 percent of them do not attend church during the college transition period. Twenty seven percent of the young adults simply want to take a break from church. USA today reports that many young people don’t feel engaged and welcomed at church.

Rommelfanger, 27, wants to change the disturbing statistics. She finds creative ways to help students recognize God’s presence in their lives. Last year, she held a special worship service for the students where they ate fair trade chocolate and prayed about it. As they ate the chocolate, the students reflected on where it came from and the working conditions of the workers.

“The students were challenged to consider how they might make more fair trade purchases, or get involved with fair trade work on campus,” said Rommelfanger.

Some of the service projects that Rommelfanger and her students were involved in were helping Emmanuel UMC in Beltsville during the conferencewide initiative, “Change the World” by helping pack 20,000 meals for the less fortunate; singing Christmas songs for the elderly



“The church can come in as a voice that reminds us to rest, to look beyond.”



at nursing homes; and 30 students walked for autism at the mall in Washington, D.C.

Rommelfanger’s passion for ministry is deep rooted because of her spiritual foundation from a young age. Her mother, The Rev. Betty Jo Birkhahn-Rommelfanger, serves as a pastor for the North Illinois Annual Conference and her father was a social worker before retirement.

She grew up attending two churches – Wheadon UMC in Evanston, which was the fourth reconciling congregation in the U.S. at that time, and Ravenswood Fellowship UMC in Chicago, which is a multicultural church where most of the congregants are Japanese American. At Ravenswood, Rommelfanger served on the worship committee, church council, preached, read in worship and was engaged with the youth group. She fondly remembers a couple at Wheadon who took care of her and nurtured her back to health when she was sick. “It was a loving community,” she said.

Rommelfanger graduated from American University in Washington, D.C., in 2009 and while attending school, she worked at a rape crisis center as a community educator for children. During seminary, she worked at the National Council of Churches in the ECO Justice Office and at the Lewis Center for Church Leadership. She

also served on the Board of Directors for the Commission on Religion and Race in Washington, D.C., and was appointed to the Connectional Table at the Baltimore-Washington Conference. She is also engaged in the reconciling movement at the University of Maryland.

Since Rommelfanger likes the Arts, she ushers at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., during her free time. She also lives in D.C. This young adult pastor is looking forward to continuing to serve God by conducting a Wednesday night worship service and a contemplative prayer group at the University of Maryland, which students with no religious background can attend and even walk the labyrinth. “They are seeking something divine and are skeptical of organized religion,” she said. She is looking forward to doing more service projects with the students this year.

The Rev. Mark Schaefer, campus minister at American University, is leading a task force, based on a call at last year’s annual conference, to explore the role of campus ministries in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Sandy Ferguson, the conference Director of Connectional Ministries is part of the task force. “We certainly have a need and place for campus ministry within this conference,” she said. “It is vital.”

In Timonium, Ethiopians broaden view of hospitality

By SHAUN LANE
UMConnection Staff

THE CONGREGATION OF Timonium UMC and the Ethiopian community in Baltimore County never really had any strong ties. But a series of recent overtures has brought the two together in ways that are transforming ideas about worship, culture and hospitality.

It all began when the Ethiopians were looking for a place to worship, said the Rev. Frances Daily, the church’s pastor. The congregation extended an offer.

What was intended to be a simple act of hospitality has turned into a unique mix of church goers. Ethiopian teens and youth often worship with the youth at Timonium, while the Ethiopian adults also worship in their native language each Sunday afternoon.

In this Q&A, Dailey talks about how two groups became one.

Q: How did the relationship with the Ethiopian community start?

A: They chose our zip code as central for their people coming from all over Baltimore County. About 20 churches were sent a letter asking if we would rent worship space to them. I responded to get more information and then took what I learned to the Trustees.

Q: How has the partnership with the Ethiopian community evolved from your church simply leasing space to two cultures merging to find common ground?

A: As soon as the Ethiopian congregation began worshipping here in the spring of 2011, we began a



dialogue about how their children and youth did not find their worship relevant. Their pastor wanted to see how our congregation could resource their young people. When our church launched a new alternative worship service targeting young people in particular – called The Walk – the pastor and I met to decide if it was possible for their worship hour to coincide with our new service so that their teenagers could attend The Walk. It was obvious that they also needed childcare and Sunday School for the younger children. So, within only a few months of our launching The Walk, we began a new Sunday School for all children at that service time, a large nursery of mostly their young ones, and began to overlap worship at the same time.

Q: How have your church members, your adults and children, benefited from this?

A: We were not at all diverse before they arrived, even though our community is very diverse. This marriage

has brought in a rich diversity. Their young people are very spiritual and biblically literate. They are remarkable witnesses and their testimony is such a blessing. Our worship numbers have grown and 11 of their youth will be confirmed into our congregation this year.

Q: How do you think the Ethiopians have benefited from this?

A: They are so grateful for the shared ministry, and especially the way we serve their young people and children. They love the space we provide and value the partnership. Instead of resisting involvement their children can’t wait to be here each week.

Q: Can you name some of the worship experiences that your church and the Ethiopians shared?

A: We shared a Baptism service – 12 of their youth were baptized by immersion, we had a presentation of Bibles to third graders and recently we had all of our children, as well as the Ethiopian children, present a Christmas Eve worship.

Q: What is the biggest challenge you’ve had to overcome?

A: The greatest challenge is the language barrier with the Ethiopian adults. But we don’t let that stop us.

If you wish to visit Timonium UMC and see how these two cultures, especially the youth, have merged and share worship experiences, you can attend The Walk – Timonium UMC’s alternative worship in which children of both cultures sing with the band, and then go to Sunday School. They meet every week from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.