

BUT LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN LIKE WATERS, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE AN EVER-FLOWING STREAM. AMOS 5:24

UMCConnection

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 01 • January 2015

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Churches take lead in fight for justice



Amy Gretch, a member of First Congregational United Church of Christ, sits on a newspaper box on 16th Street in Washington, D.C., Dec. 12, during a candlelight vigil offering a witness for justice in the wake of recent violence against African-Americans.

BY MELISSA LAUBER & ALISON BURDETT
UMCConnection Staff

OUTSIDE OF WESLEY UMC on Connecticut Avenue in Washington, a large banner reads, "Blacks Lives Matter. All Lives Matter."

It's a gesture in a continuing series of actions by local churches seeking to respond to perceived incidents of racial injustice involving police shootings that have recently taken place around the country.

As the headlines around these shootings fade, people of faith are continuing the conversation.

"The pains and wounds of decades of racial, economic and social injustice have come into play for everyone," said the Rev. Rod Miller, chair of the Baltimore-Washington Conference's Commission on Religion and Race. "The church has a unique place of trust in our society and it can be a place to hold the difficult conversations that need to be held."

Conversation to Leverage Change

On Dec. 16, more than 100 people gathered at Capitol Hill UMC to consider issues of justice and race, "which continues to be the main dividing point in this nation," said the Rev. Joseph Daniels, superintendent of the Greater Washington District. "We need to have the conversations that get at changing hearts so that systems can change. ... The church ought not tolerate

systems of oppression."

Daniels shared how, after the grand jury decided not to indict Police Officer Darren Williams in the killing of Michael Brown, he was too consumed by anger to even talk with his daughter. She wanted to know what she should tell the school children in her class the next day about the events in Ferguson, Mo.

Eventually, he calmed himself enough to answer: "Tell them to love themselves and to love each other and if they do that, it'll go a long way in getting us where we need to go."

The conversations at Capitol Hill were grounded in thoughts of recent events in Ferguson, a lack of indictment of a police officer in the choking death of Eric Garner in Staten Island, N.Y., and the police shooting of Tamir Rice, who died Nov. 22 while playing with a pellet gun in a park in Cleveland, Ohio.

"Most of the shootings take place in the margins; most of the oppression takes place in the margins," Daniels said. "How does the church come back into the margins? How do we influence private industry and government to preserve life, to change life and give life an opportunity?"

Those present divided into small groups to discuss how the church can use its influence to bring about racial justice and reconciliation, and how the church can best bring its resources to marginalized communities so that systems can change and lives preserved.

In what was hailed as "first step conversations," the remarks

See Justice, page 3

Hezekiah House creates new space for new disciples

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMCConnection Staff

REAM NO SMALL dreams. That's the message Pastor Ginger Medley preaches as she continues to strive to create a new ministry movement at Asbury UMC in Shepherdstown, W.Va.

Asbury itself is strong, said its pastor, the Rev. Rudy Bropleh. But with Hezekiah House taking center stage at the church at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings in the new Family Life Building, the church is responding to its call to minister in new ways and with new people.

It's a vision of "offering strength for today and hope for tomorrow," they said. "It's a vision that is people-focused and Spirit-led."

It's also a vision that caught the attention of Bishop Marcus Matthews when he attended and heard the story of Ashley Walizer, a student at Shepherd University. Walizer had been to church a few times in her life, but fell away, said Medley who leads worship at Hezekiah House.

According to Medley, at "Hez House" Ashley experienced grace and became a new convert to the faith. "Her mother said Ashley's light has returned.

The light in her eyes has returned," she said.

"It's a special place," the bishop said. "The story of this young woman's baptism is a powerful one that illustrates the power of meaningful ministry."

Bropleh, the senior pastor of Asbury, agreed. "She surrendered everything to God," he said. "That's the essence of church — that high moment when we turn everything over to Christ. Heaven rejoices."

"A lot of churches are program-driven," Bropleh continued. "Our church is about people. One person came to God, ripping and running; it makes

See Hez House, page 6

... well said

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

By MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

THE PHRASE “LET it go,” for those of us with kids, is all about the movie, “Frozen,” and Queen Elsa’s song about releasing her gifts and being herself. After hearing my daughter and her friends sing it 800,000 times, I’m truly ready, when it comes to this song, to “let it go.”

The sentiment, however, has its place. As we start a new year, we have the chance at the turning of the calendar page to make changes in our lives. New Year’s resolutions are often about things we are going to do and take on. We may resolve to work out more, or quit smoking, or take on tasks at our jobs or stay on top of household chores. All that added work can feel like added burdens on top of our already full schedules.

I read somewhere that instead of a longer “To Do” list, it can be even more valuable to have a “Not To Do” list — a list of things we are going to STOP doing or NOT do at all. In other words, things and patterns that God would have us put down, give up or put away.

Perhaps we are being called to “let go” of old resentments or patterns or sins or self-talk that is destructive and unhealthy for us. Take the first part of January to pray about what God is calling you to release, in order to make room for what God wants to do and to be in your lives this year.

After all, Christmas is/was about a God who intervenes in our lives and comes into our mess to save us when we could not save ourselves. If God is God and we are not, that’s some of the best news I’ve heard all year. Perhaps that means I can let go of the chains that Christ has loosed by his grace in my life. Perhaps I can accept that forgiveness comes by God’s grace, as a gift, rather than something I can earn by my works.

I’m considering adding an additional greeting to “Happy New Year” this year. I’m considering looking the person in the eye and saying, “In the name of Jesus, let it go.”

If they launch into that song from Frozen, y’all might have to restrain me, but I think it will be worth it.

... well said

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

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

THERE IS SOMETHING almost magical about the start of a new year. The transition from December into January for many is a time of jubilation, renewal and new beginning. We look at each new year as a chance to celebrate how far we have come and to set the course for where we plan to go in the 365 days ahead. We make new plans, new resolutions and new commitments that we think will lead to this year being the year that will be different from all the others. This year will finally be your year.

The only problem is, you said the same things this time last year, and the year before that, and the year before that, and nothing changed. If you want to make this year truly different, then you have to let it go.

What many times holds us back from making the new year truly new is that we drag the things from prior years with us. We drag the hurts, pains, disappointments, habits and people from last year into this year expecting things to be different. When we keep doing what we have been doing, we keep getting what we have been getting. That ultimately means that it will be a new year with the same results all over again.

The time has come for you to have a year that looks like no year that you have already lived through. This year can be the year that you have dreamed about, but only if you make the decision to let it go.

Letting go is never easy, but it is absolutely necessary. When we let go, we leave the past in the past. Letting go means not reliving our histories but making room for new experiences, new possibilities, new people and ultimately new outcomes. When we let go, we give ourselves permission to be different. We give ourselves permission to start again.

Most importantly, when we let go we give ourselves permission to be new.

So as this year starts, make it a truly new year by letting go of the past, enjoying the present and expecting a great future.

... well said



EVENTS

2014 Statistical Reports due

All churches
Jan. 23, 2015
Sample tables, instructions, compensation worksheet and other materials are all available at www.bwcumc.org; click on Statistical Reports.

Leadership Days

All regions
Various dates
The annual opportunity for church leaders, lay and clergy, to grow their faith and improve their leadership skills is held in various locations and dates. Registration required. Go to www.bwcumc.org/leadership-days/. The events will be held in:

- Western Region, Jan. 24, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Baltimore Region, Feb. 28, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Southern Region, Feb. 21, 9 a.m. – noon; and March 7
- Washington Region, March 14, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

UMM Annual Retreat

Annapolis District
Jan. 30-31
“Building Men to Lead Like Jesus” is the focus of the Annapolis District UMM’s \

Leadership Training, which will provide training for leaders who want to start a men’s ministry at their church, ignite their men’s ministry, or ensure the passion continues for men’s ministry that is changing the church and community.

ROCK

Ocean City Convention Center
Feb. 6-8, 2015
Featuring Reggie Dabbs and music by BJ Putnam and Jimmy Needham. The event is sold out except for seats for the “Adults-Only Room,” for adults 18 and over without chaperoning responsibilities.

Bishop’s Lenten Day Apart

Trinity UMC, Frederick
Feb. 17, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
The Rev. Dr. Harold Recinos will speak and lead discussion on “Awake in the Gospel: Walking the Way of the Cross.” Registration is open to all clergy. Cost is \$15. Go to www.bwcumc.org to register. Participants may receive .3 CEUs. For information, contact Joyce King at Bishopmatthewsoffice@bwcumc.org or 800-492-2525.

In Memoriam

Pastor Erma Dyson, a retired pastor on the Frederick District, died Dec. 24. Condolences may be sent to her husband, **the Rev. Richard Dyson**, at 5559 Wicomico Circle, New Market, MD 21774.

The Rev. Charles Donophan, a retired Elder, died Dec. 23. His last church was Wesley Chapel in Lothian in 1993. He retired in 1995. Condolences may be sent to his wife, Paula P. Meland-Donophan, 1 N. Charles St., Suite 2525, Baltimore, MD 21201.

The Rev. Ronald Carr, a retired Elder and the husband of retired Elder, **the Rev. Arlene Carr**, died Dec. 18 in Melbourne, Florida. His last church was Messiah UMC in Glen Burnie, from 1987 until his retirement in 1997. Condolences may be sent to his wife at 2129 W. New Haven Ave., Apt. 130, West Melbourne, FL 32904.

Louise Phelps, 97, the widow of the late **Rev. Franklin Bailey Phelps**, died Dec. 25. Condolences may be sent to her son, Paul Phelps, 5903 Bing Court, Alexandria, VA 22315.

UMConnection

Bishop Marcus Matthews	Resident Bishop
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Linda Worthington	Communications Associate
Harrison Zepp	Webmaster
Kayla Spears	Communications Associate

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Corrections: The ‘Making a Difference’ item in the December UMConnection about the church feeding the community incorrectly identified the church. West Liberty UMC in Marriottsville does this important ministry.

Also in the December issue, the name of the choir on page 8 was incorrect. It should have read National Christian Choir.

Justice: Taking steps to make it come to life in real ways

From page 1
and ideas were recorded and are being compiled for follow-up discussions and action within the district and beyond.

Clergy rally and pray

In Annapolis on Dec. 12, clergy led a “kneel-in and prayer” protest against the police shootings.
The Rev. Stephen Tillett, pastor of Asbury-Broadneck UMC and president of the Annapolis Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, told the local media that while drug use and drug selling happens in Anne Arundel County in numbers proportional to the county’s population, “African-American residents, who make up 13 percent of the area’s population, face more than 50 percent of the criminal charges. Those numbers reflect a system that has lost its moorings and that is operating in an unjust and immoral manner.”

Tillett and the clergy also called for an independent prosecutor to be empowered to preside over all grand juries where a police shooting/killing is involved.

Not a protest, but a promise

On Friday, Dec. 12, volunteers from nearly 30 churches gathered along 16th Street in Washington, D.C., to stand for justice. Hundreds of people lined the sidewalk of the street, which leads from the city’s edge to the White House.
At Foundry UMC, just blocks from the White House, dozens of members met in the church basement to prepare luminarias, filling them with sand and tea light candles.
Marching out into the cold night, the members and volunteers lined the street with their luminarias, lighting the way for justice. As traffic drove by, the church bells rang and volunteers held signs stating that they stood for justice.
After a few minutes, the cars passing by began to honk and wave in appreciation for their efforts, including public busses. One woman pulled over and rolled her down window to thank those who were standing out in the cold to help raise awareness. She had her young son in the backseat and began to tear up thinking about if her son was ever in the type of situation Young Michael Brown found himself in, in Ferguson, Mo.
Ben Roberts, director of social justice ministries for Foundry, said the General Board of Church and Society, along with other local churches who helped organize the event, contacted him to ask for his church’s participation. Roberts said the witness grew out of younger members of the church who wanted a way to be in solidarity with others around the country.
The idea for the vigil grew out of that as a way to

respond faithfully as congregations around the District, but yet to be different from a protest. To Foundry and the others, this was a way to continue to be engaged around issues of justice, especially racism, police accountability and the killing of young black men; to say

“It is humbling to think that God has entrusted us with making these words — justice and mercy, peace and love — come to life in real and authentic ways,” Iannicelli said.
In an evening of candid questions and sharing, the group engaged in conversation about how faith communities can relate to governments and the local church can begin to make a systemic difference in ensuring communities are safe and justice is offered to all.
In early December, Berry was sworn in as the first African-American sheriff in Charles County’s 356-year history. Covington is also African American.
Both men stressed the importance of having a police force and prosecutor’s office that reflects the community. About 52 percent of Charles County residents are people of color. Currently, the state attorney’s office is racially diverse. However, only about 20 percent of its police force is made up of African-American, Hispanic, and Korean officers, Berry said. He has pledged to broaden that diversity and to go after “the best and brightest” when hiring people to serve in law enforcement.
In a conversation on how many black men feel uncomfortable about being pulled over by police, Covington advised cooperating at the scene and addressing any issues at a later time.
Last Thanksgiving, he said, he was “pulled over for ‘driving-while-black” in Charles County.
“The police officer tried to tell me that ‘x-y-z’ was wrong with my car. He was trying to tell me what the law is — me — I’m the state’s attorney. I tell people what the law is in Charles County. But I knew I would not have won an argument at the side of the road at that point. You will never win an argument on the side of the road; deal with it in court,” Covington said.
The county officials and clergy broadened the conversation to what the church might do in the areas of law enforcement and public safety. Berry stressed that he believes information and perception is essential.
“People’s perceptions of us become reality,” he said. He urged pastors to invite police officers to their churches to share information, especially with children and youth about the dangers of drug use, a growing problem in Charles County.
The conversation between churches and police and legal officials, Iannicelli said, will be first of many.
“We want to have an understanding,” she said.
“That understanding will lead to trust and serve as a foundation for peace and justice in our community. ... When events unfold on the national stage, we often do best to act on the local stage and go deep.”



Two visitors from the Netherlands, a young man named Jonathan, and his grandfather, stand on the sidewalk of 16th Street as a witness for justice.

it is wrong and to say that they want it changed.
The event came together in less than a week, with an outpouring of congregations from not only 16th Street but around the District coming together to pull it off.
All who were in attendance were passionate about issues of justice. Nancy Growth, a physically handicapped member of Foundry, sat in her wheelchair on the sidewalk of 16th street because “black lives matter and disabled lives matter.” She went on to say that she was out there for Ethan Saylor, the man from Frederick with Down Syndrome who was killed by off-duty policemen because he would not leave a movie theater. “For an \$11 movie ticket, that’s now the price of a human life,” she said.
All in all, the event was a success, raising awareness in the District, as photographers and journalists from the Washington Post and elsewhere covered the event.

Church and state officials meet together

In La Plata, on Dec. 8, the Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli and pastors who live and work in Charles County met with Charles County Sheriff Troy Berry and Anthony B. Covington, State’s Attorney for Charles County, who is responsible for the enforcement of the law.

Annual Conf. resolutions due Jan. 15

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

RESOLUTIONS TO BE considered by the members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference at the May session are due to the Conference Secretary, the Rev. Mary Jo Sims, (mjsims@bwcumc.org) by Jan. 15.
Each resolution must address only one topic using the format found on the BWC website at <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2015-BWC-resolution-form-2.pdf>.
Any congregation, clergy or lay member from a church within the Baltimore-Washington Conference may submit a resolution.
Once submitted, the Conference Secretary will oversee the review the resolution to ensure its compliance with the conference rules and the Book of Discipline. If it has financial implications or amends the rules of the conference, it must be reviewed by the appropriate committee.
All resolutions will be considered by the Connectional Table at its meeting on March 7. The Table’s members will vote either concurrence or non-concurrence. This recommendation will be a tool for discernment by the annual conference members when they vote.
Following the Connectional Table meeting, the resolutions will be published on the conference website. This year, as a stewardship measure, the conference app will replace the Pre-Conference Journal booklet. The resolutions will also appear on the app.

Resolutions will be formally considered at the Annual Conference Session May 28-30. When writing resolutions, Sims suggests it is important to keep them short. “Short usually equals clarity,” she said.
Submitting General Conference Petitions
Some individuals or churches may want to ask the Baltimore-Washington Conference to send a petition to the 2016 session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. These petitions are also due to Sims by Jan. 15. Petitions to General Conference require very specific formatting, which can be found at <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Submitting-a-petition-to-the-2016-General-Conference.pdf>.
Petitions may also be submitted directly to the General Conference by UMC clergy, laity, and congregations. It is not necessary to first submit it to the BWC; that option should be used only if you want the petition to be submitted as a petition from the BWC.
Petitions from Individuals or congregations may be submitted directly to General Conference beginning April 1, 2015; the deadline is Oct. 13. Petitions should be sent to petitions@umpublishing.org.
Any questions about resolutions or petitions can be addressed to Sims at mjsims@bwcumc.org. A Q&A on the submission process can be found online at <http://bwcumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/qandaresolutions1.pdf>.

General Conference Delegates

At the May 28-30 session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, members will elect six lay and six clergy delegates to serve at the 2016 General Conference. In addition, six lay and six clergy delegates, along with four lay and four clergy alternates, will be elected to serve at the 2016 Jurisdictional Conference.
Nominations will be accepted beginning Feb. 27.
Clergy who wish to nominate themselves or someone else must submit a petition of support, provided by the secretary, bearing the name of at least 15 clergy who are members of the conference.
Lay members to annual conference may nominate themselves or others, however, the 15 signatures are not required.
A form for clergy and lay nominations, which includes space for a statement of one’s qualifications and relevant experiences, will be available on the BWC website Feb. 13. The deadline for submitting these forms is April 1.
The statements will be published in the UMConnection and on the website.
All clergy are eligible to be elected. However, the published statements will only appear for those who turned them in before April 1.
Because of the responsibilities and rigorous schedule required of the delegates, nominees are asked to carefully consider their interest in serving.
Our conference rules state that February and March be set aside as a time of discernment for determining who might be nominated to represent the Baltimore-Washington Conference.
Conference rules prohibit any campaign for the election of delegates. Detailed information about the election of General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates can be found on pages 577 – 584 of the 2014 Conference Journal.



january



A four-alarm fire, which took more than 100 firefighters seven hours to extinguish, gutted Northwood-Appold UMC on Dec. 27, 2013. The church began 2014 wondering how to rise from the ashes but confident that it would. On the Sunday morning after the fire, the church's pastor, the Rev. Cecil Gray, told his congregation that the church would rebuild and be even stronger. "Resurrection is occurring even now," he said. One member, Nick Poole, former president of the BWC's Council on Youth Ministry, said the church didn't burn. "We are still here," he said. "We're still a church without a church building."

In Washington, D.C., several United Methodist clergy signed a letter urging the National Football League and current team owner Daniel Snyder to change the name of the team. "The derogatory term 'redskin' offends many Native Americans and others in this country," the letter stated. The Revs. Ianther Mills and Adam Briddell, both

at Asbury UMC, signed the letter. "This is a gift for Mr. Snyder," said Briddell. "It's not every day that an opportunity to make change like this comes around." The Washington franchise responded by going 4-12 in 2014.

At Foundry UMC, the Rev. Frank Schaefer — who at the time was a defrocked clergy person following a high-profile trial in Pennsylvania — joined the church as a lay person just as 2013 came to an end. Schaefer's November 2013 trial was for performing the same-gender wedding of his son.

february



More than 6,000 youth and their leaders from the Conference gathered in Ocean City, Md., Jan. 30-Feb. 1, for ROCK 2014. Using the theme "Got Love," the festive three-day revival featured concerts, guest speakers and time for fellowship and reflection. The gathering also raised \$14,000 for the BWC's Imagine No Malaria campaign.

In Greenbelt, members of Mowatt UMC addressed the issue of bullying in their community by creating a bridge of caring and Christ's love. The Rev. Fay Lundin, the church's pastor, said that most of the students at nearby Eleanor Roosevelt High School have to walk over a pedestrian bridge to get back to town. One of her church members told her that students were being harassed and beaten up on the Greenbelt side of the bridge. The church took action by handing out cookies on the bridge and developing relationships with the students.

Also this month, Bishop Marcus Matthews continued his visits with laity and clergy on each of the eight districts of the Conference. On Feb. 18, he was with the Greater Washington District, and Feb. 25, with the Annapolis District. The bishop encouraged people to "be the ones we've been waiting for."

june



On June 22, exactly 179 people became members of the newest United Methodist church in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. The Mizo UMC was chartered on that day. "God is indeed good," said the Rev. Joseph Daniels, superintendent of the Greater Washington District, as he handed the church's charter to its pastor, the Rev. Biak Chhunga. The new church started as a fellowship in 2004, reaching out to immigrants from Burma and the Mizoram state of India.

Jane Grays, who was consecrated as a Deaconess during the closing ceremony of the United Methodist Women's Assembly in April, and who was commissioned by Bishop Matthews during the Annual Conference Session in May, began her ministry with the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women in Jessup. Deaconesses and Lay Missioners — the male equivalent of a Deaconess — are trained professionals approved by a process established by the UMW and are consecrated, commissioned and appointed by a bishop.

The Strawbridge Shrine celebrated its 250th anniversary in June with a festive day of food, song and worship. Robert Strawbridge preached throughout the (then) Colonies in the 1760s, from New Jersey to what is now West Virginia, riding on horseback. John Strawbridge, a direct descendent of Robert Strawbridge, was in attendance.

The Rev. Frank Schaefer, who had had his ministerial credentials taken away following a church trial for performing his son's same-gender wedding in 2007, won his appeal, held at a hotel near the Baltimore Washington International Airport, and had his credentials returned.

october



Hispanic Heritage Month was celebrated Oct. 4 with a *gran fiesta* at Hughes-El Buen Samaritano UMC in Wheaton. "If the church is to move forward, Latino ministry has to be a part," said the Rev. Eliezer Valentin-Castañon, pastor at Trinity UMC in Frederick and chair of the BWC Committee on Hispanic/Latino Ministries.

Metropolitan Memorial UMC in Washington, D.C., was packed on Oct. 5 to honor and pay tribute to the late Bishop James K. Mathews. Eunice Mathews, his widow, now 100 years old, was present to help unveil a plaque honoring the couple. At a gala

banquet just outside of Baltimore, hundreds of people honored the former racially-segregated Washington Conference on its 150th anniversary. Created in October 1864 at Sharp Street Station in Baltimore, the Washington Conference existed until it merged with the Baltimore Conference in 1965. Bishop Warner Brown Jr., a product of the Washington Conference, now resident bishop in the San Francisco Area and president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, was the keynote speaker.

The Judicial Council — the church's highest court — upheld Bishop Marcus Matthews' two rulings of law regarding the "Circles of Grace" process used by the Annual Conference Session, and if any of the resolutions on human sexuality adopted by the Conference violated the church's Book of Discipline.

The Board of Child Care welcomed its new CEO, Laurie Anne Spagnola.

march



The season of Lent began with Ash Wednesday on ashes out of the sanctuary and in to the streets, including Emmanuel UMC in Scaggsville, who distributed ashes

At the first-ever "Shift Happens" event, more than the Conference came together for a day-long gathering of worship and inspiration. Meeting at Queen's Chapel designed by and for young adults. The church's pastor said that the biggest hope for young adults is to discover adults," he said, "are more willing to build bridges with people even outside of their religion."

The Baltimore-Washington Conference also strengthened with the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area. Started in 1997, the beneficial, according to the Rev. Maidstone Mulenga,

On March 14, the Board of Child Care announced that a retiree in July after serving at the ministry since 1993

july



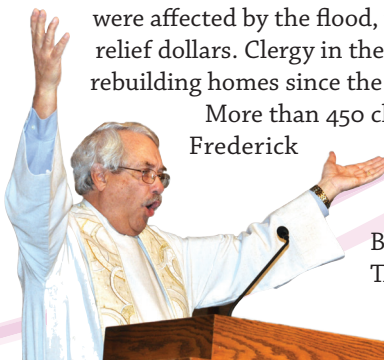
2002. The partnership will foster clergy leaders through cultural understanding of mission and the United Methodist bishop. Area, and Jack Meadors, retired, were arrested as a part of a protest at the White House. They and 43 other United Methodists joined to protest what they called unjust immigration policies enacted by the administration.

The Rev. Tony Love joined the BWC staff as the new Director. Rev. David Simpson came on board as the new Coordinator of

november



You did it. The \$2.1 million goal for Imagine No Malaria was achieved by the Rev. David Simpson, a co-chair of the campaign, announcing Bishop Matthews Nov. 18. A pledge from John Wesley UMC in Gaithersburg, over the top, Simpson said. The money raised represents more than \$200,000 from the Cumberland-Hagerstown District and about 20 clergy from the Cumberland-Hagerstown District and Md., to continue relief work for victims of the June 12 flash flood. More than 100 were affected by the flood, which meant it wasn't large enough to raise enough relief dollars. Clergy in the area, including United Methodist, have been rebuilding homes since the summer.



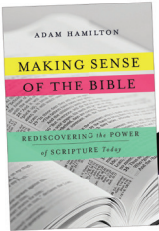
More than 450 clergy from throughout the BWC gathered in Frederick for their annual "Advent Clergy Meeting." Bishop Matthews called the meeting a time for Bible study and ample time for reflection. Birch, Dean Emeritus and Professor of Theology at Wesley Theological Seminary, spoke of the nature of Jesus as both fully hu

In the Year of Our Lord, 2014, we learned several things, including these new words: “photobomb” (to interrupt another person’s picture by inserting yourself in it); “overshare” (as in giving out too much information); and “bashtag” (a Twitter hashtag used to criticize or mock another).

In the Baltimore-Washington Conference, the year began with a Baltimore church wondering how to recover from a massive fire and ended with the celebratory news of the Conference raising \$2.1 million for Imagine No Malaria. And so, without further ado, our 2014 Year in Review, presented without one single photobomb. We apologize if this is oversharing; if so, please don’t use a bashtag when Tweeting about it.



april



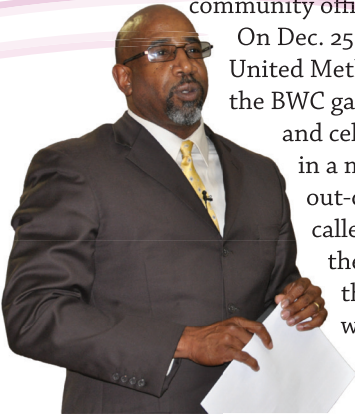
On March 5, Many BWC churches took including the Rev. Stephanie Vader of ashes in front of a nearby McDonalds. than 100 young adults from throughout hering of fellowship, workshops, apel UMC in Beltsville, the day was pastor, the Rev. B. Kevin Smalls, said over authentic relationships. “Young as with people outside of their race,

ngthened its on-going partnership 7, the partnership is mutually nga, Assistant to the Bishop. iced that its CEO, Thomas Curcio, would 1993.

Twenty-one members of the BWC travelled to South Korea to renew a partnership agreement with Methodism there. Bishop Matthews, along with Cabinet members and other staff, visited the South Conference Center in Daejeon to build upon a partnership that was started in vill focus on building up young-adult cultural exchanges and nurturing global on and ministry. shops Minerva Carcaño, Los Angeles of a demonstration July 31 in front of oined with hundreds of other people nacted and enforced by the Obama rector of Vibrant Communities, and the or of Global Initiatives.



as achieved in November, with cing the good news via e-mail to in Glen Burnie put the campaign re than 210,000 lives saved. ct came together in Clear Spring, ash flood. More than 20 families e enough to qualify for Federal hodists, have been working on BWC gathered at Trinity UMC in : Clergy Day Apart.” Bishop eting, which included worship, ne for fellowship. The Rev. Bruce ofessor Emeritus of Biblical cal Seminary, spoke on the ly human and fully divine.



sponsored by the Conference in anyone’s collective memory. Also in April, the Rev. Adam Hamilton, senior pastor at the largest United Methodist church in the United States, The Church of the Resurrection near Kansas City, spoke at Foundry UMC on his new book, “Making Sense of the Bible.” The Bible, Hamilton said, “is more complicated than we think. God speaks to us through it. In it, we find life and meaning.”

august



of depression, loneliness and isolation in today’s society. The Rev. Sarah Schliekert, pastor of Arden UMC in Martinsburg, W.Va., offered a poignant commentary after Williams death, reflecting on the suicide of her brother, the Rev. Dan Andrews. “I believe that if you are struggling today with stresses, illness and burdens that seem overwhelming, you can find help and live a life not controlled by those,” she wrote. “It may (and likely will) be hard work.” In a commentary in the August issue of this newspaper, the Rev. Joe Daniels, superintendent of the Greater Washington District, said this about the events of Ferguson, Mo.: “(This) is a stark reminder to us: those who believe that America is in post-racial era really need to take their heads out of the sand. Racism is alive and well. The militarization of the police against a segment of society which has deep history, anger and pain regarding those who wear the badge is not the answer. Never has been; never will be.”

december

Capitol Hill UMC to consider the issues of justice and race. Called together by the Rev. Joseph Daniels, Greater Washington District Superintendent, the purpose of the night was to have a conversation that “gets at changing hearts so that systems can change,” he said. “The church ought not tolerate systems of oppression.” The event mirrored several other gatherings and protests around the BWC, including a candle-light vigil on 16th Street in Washington; a “kneel-in and pray” protest in Annapolis; and a Dec. 8 meeting in LaPlata between the Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli, superintendent of the Washington East District, and law enforcement and community officials.

On Dec. 25, tens of thousands of United Methodists throughout the BWC gathered to remember and celebrate a baby born in a manger in the tiny, out-of-the-way town called Bethlehem. He’s the reason not only for the season, but for all we do in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.



In late April, several young adults from the BWC travelled to Seaville, New Jersey, to help a home damaged Hurricane Sandy. was the first adult mission trip

may



The 230th Session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference opened on May 29 at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Baltimore. Meeting with the theme, “Building Bridges: Be Love,” and with a huge banner spelling out “L-O-V-E” at the front of the ballroom, lay and clergy members from 640 United Methodist churches gathered for worship, fellowship, teaching and church business. Conference members broke new ground when they suspended the rules that called for debate and participated in “Circles of Grace,” a process that used holy conferencing to talk about the five human sexuality resolutions that came before the Conference. A question of law was raised about the process, which automatically triggered a review by the denominations’ Judicial Council.

During the Conference Session, Bishop Marcus Matthews ordained 8 Elders and 1 Deacon, and commissioned 10 candidates. Bishop Kenneth Carter (Florida Conference), who preached both the Ordination Service and Memorial Service, along with retired Bishops Joseph Yeakel and Violet Fisher, assisted in the ordinations. James Salley, associate Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement at Africa University, served as the Bible study leader, using Luke 10:25-37 as his text. Conference members unanimously adopted a \$17.3 million budget for 2015; affirmed the dangers of fossil fuels but postponed a response to the companies using them; postponed indefinitely a resolution on divesting from corporations making money from the Israel-Palestine conflict; remembered the clergy, clergy spouses and lay members who had died in the previous year; and commissioned Richmond Williams as a missionary.

september

Bishop Matthews gathered with area Scouting leaders Sept. 22 to thank them for their good works and to encourage United Methodists to become more involved in hosting and providing leadership to Scout programs. The Rev. Ken Lyons, chair of the BWC’s Scouting Committee, noted that one way Scouts define themselves is as “reverent.” Larry Coppock, UMC director of Scouting, said that in the United States, about 27,000 UMCs host Scout meetings of some kind, making us one of the larger supporters of Scouting in the country.

Six new Historic Sites were added in the Mother Conference of American Methodism, the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Perry Hall Mansion, the Robert Strawbridge Cluster, the Georgetown Cluster, Morgan College and Christian Center, Sharp Street Memorial Church, and Asbury UMC were added. The list includes the first Historic Site in Washington, D.C.

The Mid-Atlantic United Methodist Foundation celebrated a tripling in assets in the past four years. The BWC is one of three conferences in the MAUMF, which was created in 2010.



Hez House: Strength for today and hope for tomorrow

From page 1

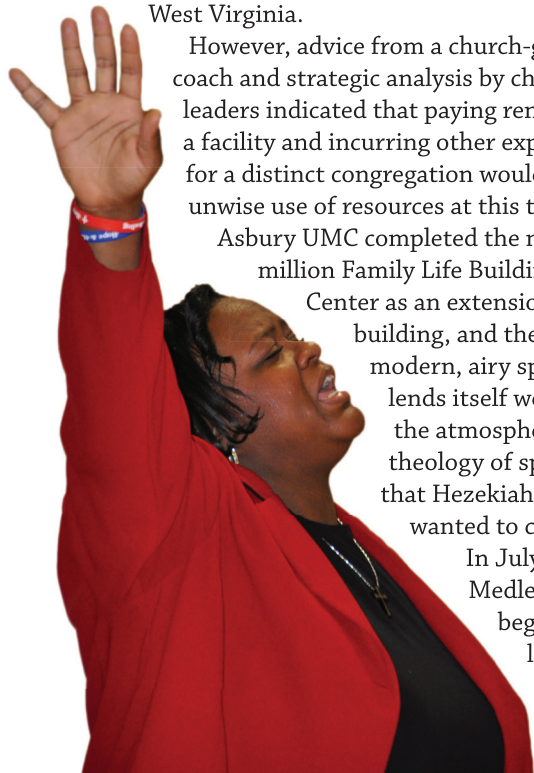
everything else, it makes it all worth it.”

Bropleh and the congregation of Asbury have been nurturing the vision for Hezekiah House for several years. In 2012, the Baltimore-Washington Conference gave its blessing to the creation of Hezekiah House, a new church start in the Charles Town/Ranson area in West Virginia.

However, advice from a church-growth coach and strategic analysis by church leaders indicated that paying rent for a facility and incurring other expenses for a distinct congregation would be an unwise use of resources at this time.

Asbury UMC completed the new \$3 million Family Life Building Center as an extension of its building, and the new modern, airy space lends itself well to the atmosphere and theology of space that Hezekiah House wanted to create.

In July, Medley (left) began leading the



Sunday high-energy contemporary worship, which now averages about 32 in attendance. The theme of all they do is “hope, help and healing.” Everything in the worship — the liturgy, the space they meet in, the greeters, the sermon, and even the wardrobe of the preacher and musicians — is centered around the idea of “Welcome Home,” Medley said. Their T-shirts also say it in Spanish: “Bien venidos a la casa.”

“It’s all about the people,” she said. “Everyone has a place here.”

Many of those who attend Hezekiah House, including most of the band, are from Shepherd University. Medley also leads small groups in nearby Charles Town, near Ranson.

Building a congregation that can be self-sustaining is not easy work. “College students often barely have money for pizza,” Bropleh said. Sometimes the new group also faces challenges from members of Asbury UMC, who are not always comfortable with the new way things are being done.

“But Hezekiah House is still an infant,” Bropleh said. “It’s six months old. When a baby is born, you don’t expect it to do a 100-meter dash.

“But overall, we’re handling things well,” Bropleh said. “We’re forward-leaning and forward-thinking. Your glory is not in yesterday; it’s in tomorrow. We’ll keep looking to tomorrow.”

Hezekiah House was named after King Hezekiah, the 13th king of Judah who ruled between 715 and 686 BCE. He repaired the Temple, enacted sweeping religious reforms in the name of Yahweh and was hailed as a great

king. The Bible, in 2 Kings 18:5, says Hezekiah “trusted in the Lord the God of Israel; so that there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah after him, or among those who were before him.”

That sense of unique and fervent faith appeals to the people at Hezekiah House. “We don’t do ‘cookie-cutter’ here,” Medley said. “But we do offer strength for today and hope for tomorrow. That’s it. That’s what Hez House is.”



Students from Shepherd University offer praise at worship.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Youth group sits front and center

PIKESVILLE – Did you see that group of young people front and center, sitting in Honors Row, at the Ravens game in M&T Stadium Dec. 14? They were from Milford Mill UMC and were special guests of the Ravens.



As reported on WBAL-TV Dec. 11, the Ravens recognized them for their outreach activities to help poor and homeless people. Though the youth group, made up of members 11-18 years-old, has a number of outreach projects through the year, the one that caught the Ravens’ attention was the Good Sam Project, which the youth do this time of year. Members packed and delivered bags of necessities for the homeless. The bags contain ingredients from snacks to shampoo. Then they delivered them in downtown Baltimore where, along with other donations of food, Christmas was a little brighter.

Throughout the year, the youth group, known as Evolution, cleans up neighborhoods, plants gardens, visits nursing homes and takes part in a 30-Hour Famine to benefit World Vision’s global poverty programs. It’s been going on for 60 years.

“I attended this group as a youth,” said Ken Myers who leads it, “and it meant a lot to me.”

Being invited by the Ravens is “pretty cool,” said Cameron Allison. “Like, they picked us out of all the churches.”

Living Nativity continues for 60 years



Cindy Murphy-Tofig portrays Mary and John Ross is Joseph in a living nativity scene at Oakdale-Emory UMC.

OLNEY – For 60 years, members of Oakdale-Emory

UMC have shivered in the parking lot of the church as they enact a living Nativity for the neighbors and those passing by.

This year’s performance was held the weekend before Christmas with three presentations Friday through Sunday evenings.

Recalling the early days when Georgia Avenue was a small country road, Paul Kolanowski, whose family has performed for four generations and who is a grandson of the performance’s founder, commented, “Seeing that shining star really made you feel like you were in the middle of Bethlehem.”

Johnny Johnson and his wife Mary coordinate the event. Today, because of technology and experience, it takes a few hours instead of an entire day to set up the scene, recruit volunteers for the cast and obtain the live animals (sheep, goats, donkey) that makes the scene come alive.

Several years ago, when her mother was ill at Christmas time, Mary Johnson told the Gazette newspaper, “It really helped me get through that Christmas.” She wanted to express her appreciation, so when the church was looking for someone to coordinate the event, she volunteered.

Chapel and window dedicated to Poe family

LAUREL – The historic Poe family was honored at First UMC in September with the Poe Chapel dedication and installation of the Good Shepherd stained glass window.

The Poe family has been part of the church community for more than 100 years and Gertrude L. Poe, a member, celebrated her 99th birthday during the event.

The Poe Chapel was built as “an intimate gathering place for spiritual events and personal reflection,” said a press release. The 6-foot square stained glass window was hand-crafted specifically for the chapel.

The Poe family moved to Laurel in 1927. “Miss (Gertrude) Poe and her sisters have been instrumental in helping to preserve the history of Methodism and in the growth of this Methodist Church in Laurel,” said Gertrude’s great niece Vicci Rodgers.

WW II veterans honored

HANOVER – St. Mark UMC celebrated their veterans at a special worship service Nov. 9. The service included the participation of retired veterans from World War II.

Otis Duffie, MSG USAF, opened the morning with prayer. Dorothy J. Green, MSG USAF, spoke of her own experience in the Air Force and recounted strides and accomplishments women have made in the military. Ron Davis, SSG USA, led a litany for Veteran’s Day.

For most in the congregation too young to remember the Normandy Invasion and Pork Chop Hill, Master of Ceremony Carl Rutledge, 1SGT USA, gave a brief history lesson. An award was presented to Ellsworth Gaither,

CPL USA, a survivor of Normandy, and to Earl Pott, CPL USA, who survived Pork Chop Hill.

The Message of Hope Choir from the Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training (MCVET) in Baltimore, sang, *a capella*, “America the Beautiful.”

The Rev. Herbert Watson received a lapel pin that deemed him to be an honorary service member.


“It was indeed a worthy and memorable celebration,” said Hillary E. Brown.

Bell ringers mix (very) young and old



The children ringers include l. to r., Ryan Toth, Ella Miller, Julie Fincham, Kendyl Polen, Madyson Fincham, Sarah Frazier and Katie Speakman, with the Sixth Dimension Bell Choir behind them.

CHARLES TOWN, W. VA. – The Asbury Youth Bell Choir, ages 2nd -5th grade) had the experts teach them recently. They sat in the front row while the Sixth Dimension Bell Choir performed a concert at the church Dec. 14. The Sixth Dimension is a regionally acclaimed bell ensemble. “The children are ready to get back to work for their performance in January,” said Kelli Polen.



2015 BWC
**SCHOLARSHIP
APPLICATION**
is open!

Scholarships available for full-time students at accredited colleges and universities. Application is open January 5 to March 5.

bwcumc.org/finance/scholarships
for more information and to apply

Heavy hearts sing an all too familiar song of lament

By MICHAEL PARKER*

// SOUTHERN TREES BEAR strange fruit; blood on the leaves and blood at the root, Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze, strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.”

These are the opening words of the song made famous by Baltimore native and jazz artist Billie Holiday. It is a song that became both prophetic and important during a time when the fabric of our nation was woven and sown together with cords of hatred, racism, injustice, pain and the consistent reminder that if your skin was anything other than white, and your gender was anything other than male, it was wrong.

Well, Billie Holiday has been dead for 55 years and no longer do we see people strung up on trees for all to watch, but I think we would all agree that the words of this song still ring true.

Our hearts are heavy because in a nation that people of color have worked tirelessly to assist in building, often times without compensation, we must contend with the numbing reality that people of color are still susceptible to the stench of racism and hatred.

While one mother rejoiced because her empty womb had been divinely filled with the atonement for sin, other mothers lament and weep because their gifts from God were taken from them in one of the most inhumane and unjustifiable ways possible.

What shatters my heart even more is that Lesley McSpadden isn’t alone this year; there are other mothers that join the chorus of weeping for their lost children. Sabrina Fulton is still in that choir. Eric Garner’s mother is in that choir. Samaria Rice, mother of 12 year old Tamir Rice, is in that choir.

And there are countless mothers whose names we will



never know that are also adding their voices to the songs of lament over the loss of their gifts from God.

For four and a half hours, Michael Brown’s lifeless body laid in the middle of today’s poplar tree, the cement, as no medics or emergency response teams were summoned to the scene. Our hearts are shattered because we understand that his death was not just felt by his family, but it was felt by all of us who descend from African roots, and many of us asked God the chilling question, “When will this stop?”

As if the sting of the judicial blade was not enough, we then had to listen to the man that Maryland elected to be our next governor say that the decision in Ferguson had nothing to do with us here in Maryland.

Nothing is further from the truth.

The same situation could (and has) happened on Maryland soil. Martin Luther King Jr., said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” and we are living in a time when nobody — Black, White, male,

female, gay, straight, young, old, rich, poor, Republican, Democrat, liberal or conservative — is safe from the pains and ills of our nation.

The breaking news broke our hearts as we heard that another child’s life would be counted as just another number and not, as we in The United Methodist Church say, a life “of sacred worth.”

The saints used to sing a song that said, “If we ever needed the Lord before, we sure do need Him now.” Here we are in the midst of troubling times, and yet, and still, there’s good news.

The good news is that God has not forgotten us. God has not forsaken us. God does not ignore us. And certainly, God still loves us with an everlasting love that renews itself with the rising of the sun every morning. God still provides every need we bring before Him. God’s grace is still on assignment to cover a multitude of sins. God’s favor still rests on us, even though the favor of the land is absent.

That love was made manifest and tangible for us years ago when Jesus, the seed of David; Jesus, the Lamb of God; Jesus, the atonement of our sin, entered the scenes of our lives, did for us what we were unable to do for ourselves and introduced us to a relationship that still remains unmatched.

It is out of this conviction that God calls us to fight for justice, build a Kingdom with which God can be pleased, and validate the existence of all humankind. As Marvin Gaye sang, “Mother, Mother, there’s too many of you crying. Brother, Brother, Brother, there’s far too many of you dying. You know we’ve got to find a way to bring some lovin’ here today! Yeah!”

*Michael Parker II is lead pastor at Ames UMC in Bel Air, Md.

Seeking just a resolution at the start of 2015

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

HAPPY 2015! HERE’S hoping it’s better and brighter than 2014, to which, I might add, I bid a fond adieu.

Last year was stressful, was it not? From racial tensions erupting after incidents in Ferguson and New York City, to the rise of ISIS and Ebola, to having airplanes suddenly drop from the sky for no apparent reason and gun violence seemingly everywhere (including a local mall), 2014 seemed to be the Year of Fear. This despite the fact that the stock market hit an all time high, unemployment is low, gas prices are WAY down, and the Ravens made the playoffs, as did the Orioles, Nationals, Lions and Tigers... but I digress.

Perhaps that’s why so many people are enamored with Pope Francis these days. This man seems to get it. This pope seems to be the real deal. His “brand” of Christianity is at once heart-warming and inspiring, AND smile-inducing and jaw-dropping. He has become a darling of the media who cover his every move and utterance with an almost child-like “did you see that?”

Take, for instance, his recent Christmas message to the Curia, the cardinals, bishops and priests who run the Vatican. In his speech, the pope outlined 15 “diseases” affecting the church. One of those ills: a lack of joy, or, as the pope put it, “funeral faces.” Symptoms of the disease, the pope said, are people who are “scowling and

unfriendly,” with a “theatrical strictness and sterile pessimism” that are brought on by (wait for it...) ... fear.

I know the Bible is chock-full of “fear not” references, but we Christians have done a pretty good job of ignoring that imperative.

Years ago, I learned this saying: If you’re a Christian and claim to have the joy of Jesus “down in my heart,” why not let your face know it?

Over the years, I’ve encountered Christians who seem to suck the joy out of everything they touch. However, I’ve also encountered joy-filled, passionate, glee-filled Christians who, in my most cynical of times cause me to wonder, “I wonder what drug they’ve been taking?”

Like you, I’ve been to worship services that would be best described as deadly. They are so somber, so sober, so bereft of life and joy and passion that you would be hard-pressed to find any reason to be a part of that group. Like you, however, I’ve also been to worship services so full of joy and life and vigor and vitality that you just don’t want to leave when it’s over. May their numbers increase!

What the pope was saying, I think, is that there are joy killers everywhere and

the next-to-last place they should be is in the church, and the LAST place they should be is among church leadership.

Once, in a church I served, I brought in huge bouquets of red, helium-filled balloons for Pentecost Sunday. I set them up near the altar, near where the choir sat. I had also encouraged everyone in the congregation to wear red, all in celebration (as in, party) of the birthday of the church.

Everything was in place, or so I thought, for a nice party during worship. Until I noticed that while I had been putting on my robe in my office, someone had moved the balloons. They were no longer up-front, but strategically placed on a side aisle of the church, almost out of sight.

So, I moved them back.

Afterwards, I got blasted by the choir director. He had moved the balloons not because they blocked the view of the congregation from seeing the choir, but because (and I quote), “Balloons don’t belong in the sanctuary.”

I know that January is the time for making New Years’ resolutions. I’m seeking just one resolution for 2015: to live with more joy (and less fear) and to express it more often.

Who’s with me?

*Erik Alsgaard is Managing Editor of the UMConnection newspaper. He really likes red balloons at Pentecost.

¿hablas español?

Dios te bendiga

BY MELISSA LAUBER AND EVELYN RIVERA
Special to UMConnection



"WELCOME."

It's a phrase Bishop Marcus Matthews and leaders of the

Baltimore-Washington Conference hope United Methodists will be learning in the coming year.

"If we are to be the church of God, welcoming all people, we must speak the language of those just outside our doors," the bishop said.

"In Montgomery County, more 5-year-olds now speak Spanish than speak English," Bishop Matthews said.

County officials reported that in 2014, Hispanic children accounted for 32 percent of all kindergartners. "What implications does this have for today's Sunday School classes and for tomorrow's church?" the bishop asked. "Throughout our conference, we increasingly need to speak Spanish if we want to talk with our neighbors."

Leo Rodriguez, the BWC director of Hispanic/Latino Ministries, and the conference Committee on Hispanic Ministries is available to assist churches that want to expand their welcome to the Hispanic community. "It is important that in reaching out, we learn more than just language. We must also learn about culture," Rodriguez said. Contact him at lrodriguez@bwcumc.org.

For this new year, we offer a brief primer to introduce you to some religious Spanish words. Let your curiosity loose. Think about sharing your church with a new accent and new people. Add some flavor. "This is a culture that appreciates the colorful," Rodriguez said. "It's about family and creating community."

To the right is a sampler. Start with one or two new words and see where God leads.

Just a note on pronunciation: In English there are five vowels and they are pronounced in 12 different ways. But in Spanish there are five vowel sounds and each is pronounced in only one way.

A = "ah" – like father or saw in English; agua, in Spanish;

E = "eh" – like bed or fed; bebe;

I = "ee" – like bee or leaf, sí;

O = "oh" – like low, know; loco;

U = "oo" – like sue, do; grupo.



Advent birth gives this parsonage family a story to tell

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

IT IS A Christmas he will always remember. In the moments surrounding his daughter's birth, Pastor Kyle Durbin was running across the church yard. He could hear his congregation singing "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." Just minutes before, on Dec. 3, he was standing in the pulpit at Centenary UMC in Shady Side at a Wednesday night worship service.



He had been monitoring his cell phone all evening but turned it off to preach. When he sat down, he turned

the phone back on and saw a myriad of text and phone messages from Joanna, his wife, who was going into labor in the parsonage next door.

The music director took over the service and Durbin dashed to her side. Harrison, 3, was helping his mother stay calm, but Kyle immediately called the fire department, two houses down the road.

Within minutes, paramedics were at the house, but it was too late to try to get to a hospital. The baby was on her way. Joanna lay down in a small hallway. It was 7:02 p.m. when Kyle left the church and at 7:16 p.m., Penelope Joy Lynn entered the world — 6 pounds, 12 ounces, healthy and happy — a Christmas miracle.

The family rode to the hospital, where mother and baby were checked out. On Friday they returned home about 20 minutes before the church Christmas play was to begin. Kyle had written the play. Both new parents went and played their parts.

Throughout it all, there has been much rejoicing.

Durbin said he couldn't help noting the similarities between the birth narratives. "But instead of shepherds, we had paramedics; instead of a stable, we had the parsonage; instead of wise men, we've had visitors from the congregation come with gifts," he said.

Harrison is thrilled with his new baby sister. He

can tell you all about the safari animals Santa brought him for Christmas. And he can also tell the story of Penelope's birth, and what a big help he was to his mother.



The congregation, which Durbin has served since July, has also been extremely helpful, he said. "We couldn't ask for more."

"Waiting on the coming of the baby takes on whole new meaning this Advent," Durbin concluded. There's been plenty of reason in his home for the Herald Angels to sing.