



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 25, Issue 6 • June 2014

ANNUAL CONFERENCE COVERAGE

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Bridge-builders gather at AC 2014



Bishop Marcus Matthews ordains Kelly Linette Grimes during the Baltimore-Washington Conference session May 31.

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

BENEATH BANNERS OF area bridges that spelled out the word “LOVE,” lay and clergy members of 640 churches came together for worship, learning, fellowship and holy conferencing at the 230th session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, May 29-31 at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Baltimore.

Bridge to a Global Church

For the first time in many years, a United Methodist missionary was commissioned at the annual session. Bishop Marcus Matthews, the area's presiding episcopal leader, commissioned Richmond Williams, who worked on the staff of Bel Air UMC, to serve as a Baltimore-Washington Conference-supported missionary in Zimbabwe.

This focus on “the world as our parish” surfaced in many other parts of the conference. During worship and Bible study sessions, the choir from the United Methodist-sponsored Africa University in Zimbabwe performed; Dr. James H. Salley, the Associate Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa University, led the Bible study on the story of the Good Samaritan; members celebrated raising \$1,960,562 so far in gifts and pledges for the BWC's \$2.1 million Imagine No Malaria campaign; and a task force, which will report to the 2015 annual conference, was created to

study a campaign to raise funds for Africa University.

In addition, Bishop Ryang Soo Han and his wife, along with eight other pastors from the South Conference of the Korean Methodist Church, visited as part of a cultural exchange in the BWC's partnership with that church; and it was announced that a new conference staff position, Global Initiatives Coordinator, was created, to be filled by the Rev. David Simpson.

Called to Do a New Thing

Closer to home, conference members broke new ground when they suspended the rules that called for debate and participated in “Circles of Grace,” using holy conferencing in small groups to explore five resolutions on human sexuality.

Bishop Matthews praised conference members for “staying open to the Holy Spirit” as they talked, listened and prayed together in a spirit of discernment.

During the opening worship service, the bishop honored those bridge-builders on whose shoulders church leaders now stand and called on the 1,500 clergy and lay members “to build bridges for those who will come after us -- bridges of understanding, bridges of hope, for others to experience for themselves some measure of God's deep and abiding grace.”

Continuing to build this bridge requires us to do a new thing, the bishop said. “Whenever Jesus truly shows up in our lives, the

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BWC does Holy Conferencing in a new way

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

ON MAY 30, 855 members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference gathered in small groups in the ballroom at the Waterfront Marriott Hotel to participate in holy conferencing as they attempted to discern God's will on issues of human sexuality – issues that for decades have deeply divided the church.

“My opinion matters!!!” Donovan Parris, a youth lay member from the Greater Washington District wrote in the evaluation of the process.

It was that sentiment that led Bishop Marcus Matthews and the Sessions Committee to deviate from the more traditional debate format, Robert's Rules of Order, which allow only six people to speak for two minutes each on any resolution, limited conversation and created a sense of winners and losers, the bishop said. The “Circles of Grace,” as they were called, allowed everyone to be heard.

Thus, Friday evening, the ballroom was rearranged into 110 circles of 10 chairs each. Each circle had a pre-assigned facilitator, three questions and a toy bridge that was passed from person to person in an

invitational method of conversation.

To hear one another, members had to lean into the circle as they discussed the five resolutions. The resolutions included: eliminating discrimination of gays and lesbians in West Virginia; doing away with trials for clergy who perform same-gender marriages; becoming an inclusive conference; removing discriminatory language from the Book of Discipline; and agreeing to disagree on the church's response to LGBT people.

Following the discussion, balloting was done. The

See Holy Conferencing, page 5

... well said

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

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

OUR 13-YEAR-OLD SON, Nathan, is growing like a weed, growing like kudzu, growing like the plant in “Little Shop of Horrors.” He wears a size 11 shoe. I can’t keep up with his need for bigger clothes and I usually discover he needs them at the time he has to have them: It’s the day he leaves for a campout and he needs hiking boots but the Jolly Green Giant doesn’t live anywhere close for us to borrow his.

Nathan loves growing. He loves hugging me by putting his long man-child arms around my shoulders. But growing doesn’t always feel so good at the time. The Epistles are filled with exhortations to grow as disciples of Jesus, to move from the milk of spiritual infancy to the meat of maturity, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, to put away our childish ways, and to grow up in every way into Christ. The “growing pains” associated with this process can be quite difficult.

Growing in Christ sometimes feels good only when we look back on it, when we look in the rear view mirror and see how far we’ve come by faith. The means of grace that helps us grow don’t always seem like much — the disciplines of Bible study and serving others and partaking of the Eucharist and praying, for example. Growth can be such a pain sometimes. Even our own founder says he “went very unwillingly [to a Bible study] on Aldersgate Street” on the night that his heart was “strangely warmed.”

However, our call is to grow into Christ and to become a spiritually mature disciple of Jesus. This means a certain amount of “dying to self.” It means putting God’s agenda before our own and learning to love people we might not otherwise choose to talk to, much less to love.

In this season of vacations and rest, as we harvest strawberries and tomatoes and other good summer growing things, let us pray that we ourselves might also be growing, as individuals and families and as churches, not for the sake of our own selves, but for the sake of the One who gives the growth.

... 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, New Hope Fellowship UMC, Upper Marlboro



EVERY CHILD HAS heard these words: “Look how much you have grown.” It usually comes from a well intentioned adult who has not seen the child in some time and is amazed at the transformation. Last time you saw them they were six inches shorter, and 20 pounds lighter. This time, they are looking you almost eye to eye and taking them out to lunch involves checking your bank balance to make sure you can cover the bill.

We ask them questions like, “How did you get so big?” and “When are you going to stop growing?” Those are questions that we can all take to heart.

When we look back on our faith journey, it is also a story of growth. We can look back and ask, “How did my faith get so big?”

When we first give our lives to God we are like little kids, but then we grow and grow and grow. The faith that started out as a mustard seed begins to grow bit by bit.

Then one day, growing becomes a choice. We have to decide to grow. We decide that we are going to study the Word more, so that we keep growing. We decide that we are going to pray more, so that we keep growing. We decide that we are going to try meditation, fasting, sacrificial giving and acts of service, all so that we can keep growing.

Like kids, we never want to stop growing. We want to be as big in faith as we can possibly be. While your physical stature was determined by genetics, your faith stature is only determined by your desire. You truly can grow to be as big as you want to be in God. You can choose to grow into the faith that moves mountains. You can choose to grow into the faith that keeps going in bad times. Choosing to grow means choosing to keep doing the things that made you grow at first, even when you don’t feel like it.

Once you start growing in God you never want to stop. You want to be as big and as strong as you can be. So this summer while you vacation, travel and get some rest, but also choose to keep growing. You never know how big you will get.

... well said

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EVENTS

Register for Summer Camp

West River, Manidokan
Now through summer

Get registrations in for summer camp experiences. See www.funfriendsfaith.org for details on programs and schedules. Campership applications are available for churches to apply for summer camp assistance.

Peace with Justice Sunday

All churches
June 15

Special Sunday with offering. Half of the offering stays within the annual conference to empower peacemakers to promote cooperation through the love of Christ. Order resources at <http://shop.umc.org/category/search/2014-special-sundays-resources/363>.

Training for youth and young adult leaders

Board of Church & Society
July 23-25

A three day seminar, “In Focus,” is a familiarization event about UM seminars on national and international affairs. Deadline to register is July 3. For information and to register, contact Aimee Hong at ahong@umc-gbcs.org, or (202) 488-5649; or Dave Johnson at djohnson@umc-gbcs.org, or call (202) 488-5644.

Mission u

Bethesda Marriott
Aug. 8-10

The Roma of Europe, people with disabilities, and balancing inner and

outer dimensions of the Christian life are the classes of the 2014 Mission u. The event is sponsored by the Board of Global Ministries and United Methodist Women. Cost varies depending on room accommodations and ranges from \$160 to \$385. A youth session is also available. For registration information, contact Darlynn McCrae at darmccrae@yahoo.com.

Early Childhood Educators Conference

Wesley Freedom UMC, Sykesville
August 14, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Childcare providers in local churches may obtain the necessary certification for their MSDE Credentials. The keynote address, “Reflect, Not Deflect,” will be given by the Rev. Michelle Holmes Chaney. Eighteen workshops are available. Cost is \$55, includes workshops and lunch. Register at www.bwcumc.org/. For information, contact Pam Bowen at pbowen@bwcumc.org.

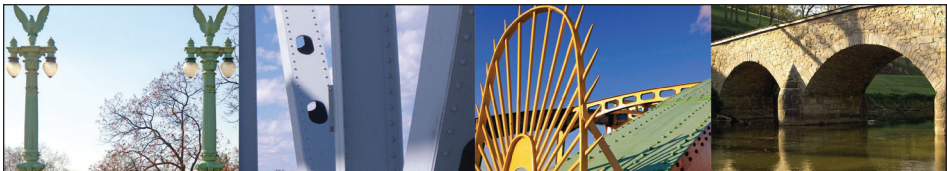
ROCK in September

Towson UMC, Towson
Sept. 12, 7 p.m.

Preston Centuolo, the keynote speaker at ROCK 2014, and the band “Urban Street Level,” will come together with the youth of the Baltimore-Washington Conference Friday, Sept. 12, at 7 p.m. at Towson UMC, to raise money for the rebuilding of Northwood-Appold UMC. Northwood-Appold was destroyed in a fire last December. Registration, which opens soon, is \$20.

*Photos in this issue were taken by
Tony Richards Photography.
e-mail: tony@tonyrichardsphoto.com*

CORRECTION: In the clergy retirees story in the May 14 UMConnection, we regret omitting the retirement of Limja Huh Gim, who served 11 years. Also note that Elza M. Hurst served 9 years, not 17, as was listed; and Stella S. Tay served 16 years, not 9 as listed. She was mentioned in the story. With this additional information, the total years of service to the conference increases to 781 years.



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Bishop Marcus Matthews
Maidstone Mulenga

Resident Bishop
Assistant to the Bishop

Melissa Lauber
Erik Alsgaard
Alison Burdett
Linda Worthington
Harrison Zepp
Kayla Spears

Director of Communications
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11711 East Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759-2594.



A little birdie told us...a few Tweets from AC'14

Megan Blizzard @megblizz · May 31

You have to have a vision for the world and the church that does not now exist! #bwcumc14

Jenny Cannon @jdcanno · May 31

Beginning to wonder if genuine holy conferencing & parliamentary procedure are incompatible #bwcumc14

Beth Ludlum @bethludlum · May 31

There was just a motion to adjourn at the end of the session...unless Jesus returns first. #speechlessBishop #bwcumc14

Donna Claycomb Sokol @DonnaSokol · May 31

Some have a great story to tell & never tell it. Some people don't have a story to tell but are willing to tell it. Ken Carter #bwcumc14

chettpritchett @chettpritchett · May 29

Bishop Matthews is preaching personal AND social holiness! #bwcumc14

Kirkland Reynolds @kirkrey · May 29

You don't need a green light or permission to do what God calls you to do. #bwcumc14

John Wunderlich @JMW3 · May 29

The church (and people) don't need family churches but church families. That preaches! #bwcumc14

Julie Wilson @UMdeaconJulie · May 29

When you build bridges, do it in love #baltimoremayor #bwcumc14

John Wunderlich @JMW3 · May 29

Praise is praise in any language!!! #bwcumc14

chettpritchett @chettpritchett · May 29

I think Mary Jo just said I'm in the Conference bar! WOO HOO! #bwcumc14 #badmethodist

LE @ArtsHumana · May 31

Heading back from #bwcumc14 Much to think about! Good to see healthy tensions addressed in safe space. Let's keep the dialogue going

Heath Wilson @hwilsonvt · May 31

Got home and what pops in my head but: I need you, you need me...you know the rest #bwcumc14

Adam Briddell @asburyadam · May 31

"may we delight in the mission of God.may we be filled with hope, in the promise that is the empty tomb." #bwcumc14 #bishopcarter

Kyle Durbin @KyleDurbin · May 31

God calls us to love people. God never called us to love our structures. #bwcumc14

Prodigal Worship @prodigalworship · May 31

The church of 2014 is not biblical, Wesleyan or sustainable Bishop Carter #bwcumc14

Elizabeth Jackson @rainingrabbits · May 31

I believe it is possible to lack unanimity but not be divided; something even better than agreeing to disagree. #bwcumc14

Kirkland Reynolds @kirkrey · May 31

When you leaned in last night it looked like everyone was praying. We did some tremendous work last night. -Bishop Matthews #bwcumc14

Barry Hidey @ohbarry · May 31

How will the "winners" continue to welcome those who cannot support the new direction of our conference? Is there a bridge for us? #bwcumc14

Laurie Tingley @RevLPTingley · May 31

Find your language, find your voice, tell your story; the story of Jesus pulling you out of the ditch #bwcumc14

Sarah Schlieckert @InHzService · May 31

Desperately wish I had a toy train to use on those bridges. #bwcumc14

LE @ArtsHumana · May 31

Fave quote from #bwcumc14: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want go far, go together." African #proverb

Laurie Tingley @RevLPTingley · May 31

The sound of holy conferencing?the hum of hundreds of voices/the heartbeat of the body of Christ #bwcumc14

Joey Heath @HeathJoey · May 30

Voices heard, votes cast, may may your healing spirit, Holy Spirit be with us now #bwcumc14

Shannon Sullivan @sha_sullivan · May 30

Scared is the opposite of sacred #bwcumc14- a little spelling makes all the difference. Let's make #umc a sacred place not a space of fear

Kevin Wright @kevinkwright · May 30

Disagreement doesn't necessitate divorce. Our love for Christ and each other is stronger than our need to be "right" #umctogether #bwcumc14

Rachel Cornwell @rachcornwell · May 30

Last year's arrearages are 3X our missionary support #bwcumc14 #wecandobetter

Keith Schukraft @IBeKeith · May 30

Commissioning a missionary. Now that's God stuff. #bwcumc14

Donna Claycomb Sokol @DonnaSokol · May 30

"You are our gift to the world." Lovely words spoken at the commissioning of a missionary. #bwcumc14

Logan Alley @logank17 · May 29

It's getting all praise-y up in here #bwcumc14 thanks to Africa U choir!

Daryl L. Williams @revdaryl · May 29

If you struggle to go to your church because it is boring I invite you to do something about it. -Bishop Marcus Matthews. #bwcumc14

Ordinands called upon to create a new vision for the church

BY LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff

IN THE CELEBRATION, ceremony and solemnity of the Ordination and Commissioning Service, family and friends filled the ballroom of the Baltimore Water-front Marriott Hotel May 31 for the ordination of their loved ones, 19 in all, including 10 candidates commissioned, eight ordained as Elders and one as a Deacon.

“The church has commissioned people for leadership and service,” said Bishop Matthews. “Throughout history, the church has ordained people to care for ministries of word, sacrament, order and service.”

The service recognized both those members entering the ordained ministry track, called provisional members, and those ordained as full members.

As is the norm for the Baltimore-Washington conference, the 19 newly commissioned and ordained candidates of the 2014 Class is a diverse group. The two Deacons, Kathleen Grace Charters (commissioned) and Samuel William Marullo (ordained), have both entered the ministry later in life. The class is evenly divided between men and women with six women among the provisional members and four in the full member group.

Myung-Ha Baek, an Asian-American, made the decision to follow his ordained wife, the Rev. Eunjoong Joo, and was commissioned during the service. He, like several others, has been serving a church as a local pastor.

Three African-Americans were commissioned and two were ordained. Among them are a clergy couple: Selena Marie Johnson became a provisional member and her husband, Paul Wesley Johnson, was ordained an Elder.

Jason Nathaniel Shank was happy to be ordained. “Growing up in a church family, I received the call at age 5,” he said, “and I’ve wanted to follow in my father’s footsteps

for so long.” His father is the Rev. David A. Shank, pastor of Linthicum Heights. His brother, David C. Shank, is a provisional Elder serving Grace-St. Johns in Baltimore.

Bishop Eugene Sutton, of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, DC and the Eastern Shore, brought greetings and assisted in the service. He spoke of beliefs and traditions common to both the Episcopalians and United Methodists. “We look to the day when we will have unity, not to be unified, but we will be one,” he said.

Bishop Kenneth Carter from the Florida Conference

Carter spoke of his own ministry and said, “The common thread over 31 years of ministry is that God had a vision, a dream of this world to alleviate human suffering (‘wipe away every tear from their lives’); this is the incarnation.

“You are sent out by Bishop Matthews to be a living reminder of the incarnation. When you move into the neighborhood, God moves into the neighborhood. When you cross a boundary to touch someone unclean, Jesus is touching someone unclean.



(L-R) Bishops Joseph H. Yeakel, Marcus Matthews, Kenneth Carter and Violet Fisher at Ordination.

preached on “A Future with Hope,” following the Scripture in Revelation 21:1-5. Quoting John in the passage who said, “See I’m making all things new,” Carter told the candidates, “You have to have a vision of something that does not now exist. If you get obsessed with what the church looks like now, you are likely to become demoralized, frustrated, and cynical.”

did, walking down the aisles to the front of the podium, where the district superintendents met them, prayed with them and promised to be in touch.

The choir from First UMC in Hyattsville provided special music during the service.

A listing of the ordinands can be found at www.bwcumc.org/news/ordinands.

Missionary commissioned as BWC’s ‘gift to the world’

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

AMID THE ENTHUSIASM of student partners from Connexions in Baltimore speaking out and dancing for justice, the spoken word poetry of the Rev. Wanda Duckett, vignette reports on a variety of ministries, and the commissioning of Richmond Williams, who will now serve as a United Methodist missionary at Africa University in Zimbabwe, the Baltimore-Washington Conference told its ministry story at the annual session May 30.

“This is a story of people in love with God and living out that love with their hearts, hands and voices. It’s a story of the church alive in the world. The conference connects us in ways that create wonderful opportunities for shared ministries,” said Sandra Ferguson, the BWC’s director of connectional ministries.

In a service that recognized the call to missionary service, Bishop Marcus Matthews commissioned Williams, who worked on the staff of Bel Air UMC, to be a missionary, serving as a professor at Africa University in Zimbabwe. He will be supported by BWC churches that choose to enter into a covenant relationship with him. As part of the service, conference members promised, “We call and support you. You are our gift to the world.”

Churches that wish to support Williams or enter into a covenant relationship with him, can contact the Board of Global Ministries (<http://www.umcmmission.org>) and reference his missionary support code #3021955.

During the report, ministry highlights were noted. The Rev. Cecil Mudede, chair of the conference Board of Global Ministries, reported that the BWC recently received an award for contributing the highest amount of funding for missionary support in the Northeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church. Together, our churches gave \$220,196.

Andy Thornton, director of camping and retreat ministries, told how, in 2013, the BWC provided camping experiences to 1,099 campers and sacred space for 12,000 people from 344 groups to meet for retreats.

Last year, Bishop Matthews called on the churches to form partnerships with local schools in their communities. During the ministries report, members watched a video lifting up the specific ministries of several congregations.

Olivia Schwartz, of the Committee on Native American Ministries, shared about the culture of Native Americans in history and how the Methodist Church robbed Native Americans of their land under the principle of Manifest Destiny. She called on those present to repent for this past oppression and to more fully welcome Native Americans today into the life of the church.

And the Rev. Wanda Duckett of Mt. Zion UMC in Baltimore used spoken word poetry to challenge those present into deeper ministry with their communities. (See the sidebar for a copy of her poem.)

Prior to the ministry presentation, members heard from the Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, the new general secretary of the General Board of Church and Society, headquartered in Washington.

Henry-Crowe encouraged those present to reject fear, which plays into our deepest anxieties, and to begin creatively living out the 61 principles outlined in the United Methodist Social Principles. “We are charged with addressing the root causes of a broken world,” she said.

Citing such ills as mass incarceration, human trafficking, violence and mental illness, Henry-Crowe said, “the world needs us to be the very best we can be. These issues are painful, but the work is joyful.”

We Are the Ones

By Rev. Wanda Duckett

We are the ones.
Sometimes too deep in the verse to rehearse what it means
Steeped in meditation of the text as it streams through our memory
Let’s see, “What comes next?”
Oh yes, “Love your neighbor.”
That’ll preach....
But it still doesn’t reach the wounds or the bruises
Until each one chooses to put neighbor back in the hood.
These words.
We say them...we pray them,
We even use them to slay them...on Sundays
But still the world is waiting and we are the ones.

On both sides of the tracks the enemy attacks
and the world hungers and bleeds
So many with needs that call us outside
Our blood stained glass as we ask
Who is our neighbor?
But we are the ones!

On our way to the New Jerusalem, we are the ones
Who must draw lines in the sand spelling out love
Loud and clear for all the world to hear.
We are the ones who build bridges that place us everywhere God needs us.
Let us be Scripture as the world reads us
Not a blueprint of the law that only orders our steps to commit the
verse to memory.
But committed and fitted for a mission commissioned by Calvary.
The world is waiting and we are the ones.

We are those neighbors whose doors are open wide
As we decide whether to live or to die,
to succeed or just try,
Caged birds are singing, while we are clinging to memory
Never doubt the power within us to make a difference.
We are the ones. What are we waiting for?
We are the ones...open wide every door!
We are the ones...We can’t hear them from our shrines
Can’t see them through closed blinds
Can’t love them with closed minds.
Eternal life? Let’s get this right.
The world is waiting and we are the ones.

\$17.3 million budget to fund ministry passed unanimously

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

FOR THE SECOND year in a row, the Baltimore-Washington Conference unanimously adopted a budget. Without debate on the floor nor amendment, conference members approved a \$17.3 million ministry spending plan for 2015.

The Rev. Ann Laprade, chair of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, presented the budget, noting that the increase for 2015 was held to 3.1 percent.

“In order to build bridges and be love, it takes funding,” she said.

The 2015 budget contains two significant areas of focus, Laprade said: new church starts and grants for new ministry.

“We’re planning on working with 12 new church starts

in 2015,” she said, with funding increasing by \$240,000. Grants for new ministries will increase by \$113,000, or 27 percent over 2014 funding.

The 2015 budget, Laprade said, assumes a growth in the apportionment base for the first time in three years. At \$86.8 million, the apportionment base will grow 0.8 percent. This is the dollar amount reported by local churches upon which the apportionments are figured.

The 2015 budget sets the collection rate at 92 percent, with the Benevolence Factor remaining steady at 17.75 percent. The Benevolence Factor is a percentage used by the conference to calculate apportionments for local churches, based on local church spending.

The result for 2015, Laprade said, is that churches are expected to contribute 10.8 percent of projected operating income in 2015 to apportionments. “We’re approaching our goal of 10 percent,” said Laprade, “and this is something to celebrate.”

Churches throughout the BWC contributed \$13.9 million in apportionment askings in 2013, a collection rate of 89.8 percent. She noted that December 2013 was noticeably lean, with contributions down \$300,000 from previous years.

Total income from all sources in 2013 was just over \$17 million, down \$1.1 million from 2012. However, expenses were lower by \$500,000 in 2013, and were on budget, Laprade said.

“CFA is aware of one-time activities that negatively impacted the 2013 budget,” she said, adding that the Council is working with those churches that experienced these one-time events.

The good news, though, Laprade said, is that the number of churches giving 100 percent remains strong. “Ninety percent of our local churches have given 100 percent in at least one of the past two years,” she said.

In approving the budget, conference members granted a 2 percent raise for conference staff; increased missions funding by 3 percent; approved the addition of a Global Partnership Coordinator; allowed the campus ministry at the University of Maryland to move to a full-time position; increased the clergy moving line item by \$65,000; and increased legal expenses by \$23,000.

Laprade also reported that the bishop and the Cabinet are taking steps to work with congregations who are behind in the payments of pension and health benefits. “Our focus is on growing stewardship capacity with detailed plans and expectations for each congregation,” she said.

In a separate vote, BWC members also approved an increase in the minimum salary for full-time clergy, setting this at \$40,760, and raised the housing allowance by 1.7 percent, or \$332, to \$19,866.

“CFA has passion and they are an inspiration,” Laprade said in thanking members of the Council.

Conference members took time to celebrate paying 100 percent of General Church apportionments and 100 percent payment of Africa University askings. In so doing, BWC is one of 27 conferences in the church to pay 100 percent.

Charlie Moore, a member of Community UMC in Crofton, was honored by Dr. James Salley of Africa University with the giving of the Kariba pin for his service on the endowment campaign for the school. The only way to receive such a pin is to contribute to Africa University and to be recognized by their board of trustees. A fellow recipient of the pin must “pin” the person receiving the pin for the first time.

The complete 2015 budget is online at <http://www.bwcumc.org/sites/default/files/BudgetPublication.pdf>.



Tony Richards

Holy Conferencing: New model for discussions

From page 1

results were announced the following morning. All five resolutions passed, with about 60 to 65 percent of the 855 members voting in favor of the resolutions. The balloting on eliminating discrimination in West Virginia was 806 in favor and 49 opposed.

For many of the members, the process of holy conferencing meant more than the results of the vote. “I was hesitant, but I have never been so in love with the church,” one person wrote. “Usually this discussion brings up ‘black and white’ opinions. This conversation brought out the many colors of thought that go into spiritual discernment,” said another.

Others just said thank you, noting that “the Spirit surprises me every time.” One member wrote, “For the first time in 10 years, someone other than God heard my thoughts.”

Not all of the evaluations were positive. About 40 people expressed reservations about not carrying out

the more traditional debate in the larger plenary setting. One person wrote, “This left me in despair.”

Parris, the youth from Greater Washington, wrote, “I do not like seeing people so angry at their ‘neighbor,’ but nodding politely as if they agree.... Stop not loving everyone as you love God.... I want no part of this government if I have to vote on loving.”

As the conference drew to a close the next morning, two rulings of law were requested. The first, from the Rev. Stephen Ricketts of Providence-Fort Washington UMC, questioned if the vote on the resolutions was legal and in compliance with the 2012 Book of Discipline since there was no chance to offer amendments. The second was requested by Matthew Sichel of Wesley UMC in Hampstead. He asked if the “Resolution to Agree to Disagree on Issues Pertaining to Gender and Sexual Minorities” is in compliance with paragraph 2702.1(b) of the Book of Discipline and Judicial Council Decisions

1111, 1115, 1120, 1218.

Bishop Matthews has 30 days to make a ruling, which will be published on the conference website, www.bwcumc.org.

When the voting was completed, members decided together upon one word that summarized their collective response to the circle experience and wrote it on their toy bridge talking stick. Love, respect, hope and grace were the most common responses. (See the sidebar, below, for other “words that bridge.”)

The toy bridges, reflecting the theme of the conference of “Building Bridges: Be Love,” were then linked as one across the front of the stage.

As the session came to a close, Bishop Matthews asked those assembled to “stay open to the mystery. ... There is always more love to be shared,” he said. “There is always more of God.”

Circles of Grace – Words that Bridge

Acceptance • Agape • Authentic • Awesomely epic • Both/and • Challenge • Christ • Compassion • Conflicted • Connecting • Connecting-love • Courageous love • Daring • Discernment • Diversity • Emmanuel • Empowered • Engaging • Faith • Grace • Graciousness • Healing • Heard • Heartfelt • Holy • Holy openness • Honest • Hope • Hopeful • Inclusion • Inclusive • Integrity • Journey • Justice • Leadership • Listen • Love • Love all • Love-hope • Loving • Mercy • Openness • Peaceful • Progress • Puzzle • Quilt • Respect • Respectful • Reverent wrestling • Safe-place • Shalom • Solidarity • Support • Tears • Trust • Trust respect • Unbound • Understanding • United • Unity • Valuable • Voice • We

Saints remembered who ‘traveled with us on the journey’

BY LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff

AT THE “SERVICE of the Saints,” May 30, Bishop Joseph Yeakel, retired, called to worship the families and friends of those clergy, clergy spouses and lay members who have died since



At the Memorial Service, candles are lit to honor loved ones.

the last annual conference. During the service he lit a candle for his wife, Lois, who died this spring.

The seven-member Eden Korean Women’s choir sang at the beginning and end of the service.

Bishop Yeakel read Scripture from Revelation 21:1-6 before Bishop Kenneth Carter from the Florida Conference preached on “The Other Side of the River.” He used as his text Luke 3:21-22.

Carter was elected to the episcopacy in 2012. His older daughter lives in the area and is a member of a United Methodist church in Maryland. Carter is the author of eight books, most recently “Pray for Me: The

Power in Praying for Others.”

Carter said that baptism, whether in a river immersion, done by a bishop at annual conference as his first daughter was, or renewed at the River Jordan, “is a set-apart immersion into this life of death and resurrection of Jesus.” Baptism began in the Exodus, when the Hebrews on the journey went through the Red Sea, he said. It is a set-apart immersion into this life of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Like Moses, some of us avoided this call to ministry, Carter said, referring to the clergy being remembered.



Cabinet Dean JW Park, left, helps a family remember.

“But somewhere along the way we waded into those waters and Jesus came with us. We knew we were not alone.”

“In your journey it must have seemed like a huge leap of faith to cross those waters,” he said. “Sometimes your journeys must have seemed like a wilderness – new parsonages, new people, new communities, learning to live one day at a time. ... But there were also times when you could say, ‘I’m doing what God created me to do,’



Bishop Joesph Yeakel, left, honors the memory of his wife.

and that God’s story was your story.

“As we remember these men and women today, we can see their faces, hear their laughter. We call this the connection,” he said.

“Perhaps you, like me, now have more friends on the other side of the river than on this side. Along this journey they blessed us. ... They stood in the river of life with us. If we listen, they are singing to us. We sing back, ‘Yes, we’ll gather at the river, gather with the saints at the river that flows from the throne of God.’”

“We remember with thanksgiving and celebrate the life of ...” said the Rev. Mary Jo Sims, as she solemnly read one by one the name of each bishop, bishop’s spouse, clergy, clergy spouse, or lay person who had died since annual conference last year. A family member or friend lit a candle and placed it on the altar while the congregation sang prayers.

Following the recessional, “Shall We Gather at the River,” the guests were invited to a luncheon.

Conference votes to study divestment, clarify rules

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

OPTING FOR ADDITIONAL study, Baltimore-Washington Conference members affirmed the dangers of fossil fuels but postponed a response to companies using them. The Rev. Jackson Day proposed the conference establish a task force to explore the impact of divestment on conference funds and examine alternatives to divestment that still seek to work for justice.

This task force will report back to the 2015 annual conference session with its findings and recommendations. Members also postponed indefinitely a resolutions on divesting from Motorola, Caterpillar and Hewlett Packard – three corporations making money from the Israel-Palestine conflict.

With little debate, the members also reduced

and more clearly defined the membership of the Connectional Table, which reviews and discusses Conference ministry objectives, strategies and practices. As part of perfecting the resolution, eight non-leaders, who are not involved in church leadership, were added to the Table to serve as “13th disciples” and provide fresh perspectives.

Jen Ihlo, chair of the conference Rules Committee, walked members through changes to the Rules of the Session and the policies that guide the election of 2016 General Conference delegates and episcopal nominees. These resolutions on rules passed with only slight changes.

Conference members also adopted resolutions that: outline how an outside group can partner with the Baltimore-Washington Conference; allow for the payment of moving expenses to local pastors; and renewed the BWC’s covenant with the Board of Child Care.

The conference Committee on DisAbility Concerns,

under the leadership of the Rev. Nancy Webb, brought forth two resolutions that ask the BWC to study how the church might be stigmatizing people with mental illness. It calls for the creation of General Conference resolutions or other ways to address any conflicts with the United Methodist Social Principles that might be sent to General Conference in 2016. Both passed.

Conference members also affirmed the passage of the \$10.10 minimum wage that will go into effect incrementally in Maryland by 2018 and renewed their commitment to push for a living wage for all people.

According to Board of Church and Society Chairperson Sherie Koob, for a family of one adult and two children, an hourly living wage is reported to be \$32.95 in D.C.; \$28.23 in Maryland and \$20.89 in West Virginia.

For those interested in learning more, Koob recommended viewing the Living Wage Calculator at <http://livingwage.mit.edu>.



"Lift every voice and sing."

150th Anniversary of the former Washington Conference
October 18 – 1 p.m. – Martin's West in Woodlawn

Remember. Rejoice. Renew.

*Celebrating 150 years of the former
Washington Conference*



Visit http://www.bwcumc.org/events/remember_rejoice_renew for more details

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Bishop Yeakel encourages retirees at luncheon



Bishops Joseph H. Yeakel and Marcus Matthews

FULTON – The conference Mission Center was packed May 13 when most of the 33 retirees and family members gathered for the annual luncheon to recognize the past service of those retiring.

Retired Bishop Joseph H. Yeakel spoke of his own retirement years and urged those coming into retirement to continue being active and engaged in the work of the church. He also spoke out in strong support for Bishop Talbert, who Yeakel said has been criticized for offering a blessing at a same-gender wedding.

District Superintendent Laura Easto reminded Bishop Yeakel as she thanked him, "You are a man who stands up. You told us two books we need to stand on: the Bible and the Book of Discipline."

Bishop Yeakel announced that he would soon be moving to Ohio to be nearer his daughter – a loss that will be keenly felt by the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Each of the eight district superintendents called the retirees in their care to come forward. They also told a unique anecdote about the person being honored.

People, prayers and beads come together

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Members of the Prayer Ministry of Asbury UMC were on the streets of D.C. to participate in their own unique way in the May 1 National Day of Prayer.

At 8 a.m., they opened the doors of the church, set up tables at both the K and 11th Street entrances and armed themselves with literature, "I Prayed" stickers and ready hearts for the people coming by. Prayer Ministry team members made personal contact with nearly 300 individuals, received 102 prayer requests, prayed for 10 persons at Franklin Park (two blocks away),

prayed for and gave out 50 free lunches to homeless neighbors in the 11th Street Park and distributed 284 "One Voice United in Prayer" guides.

New this year was the use of prayer beads, a practice the group learned during a spring study, according to Evelyn Brewster. At the close of the day, young adult member, Ingrid Simmons, said, "Something good happens to my soul when I pray for others. I have prayed and been prayed for. It's been a good day."

MFSA gives award at annual conference

BALTIMORE – As is its custom, the Methodist Federation for Social Action presented its annual "God's Foolish One" award during the MFSA-BWARM meal May 30 at annual conference. The award is to honor the man or woman who has upheld justice, even sometimes foolishly. The recipient is kept secret until its presentation.

This year, the Rev. Maynard Moore received the honor. He was introduced by the Rev. Adam Briddell, who said, "The world has a way of trying to marginalize those on the margins, as with Jesus – Jesus and Maynard."

"I'm glad to be in the company of Jesus, and the others who have received this award. This is an honor," Moore said.

New deaconess consecrated

LOUISVILLE, KY – Among the 26 deaconesses from 18 conferences consecrated during the closing plenary worship at the United Methodist Women's Assembly April 27, was Jane Grays from the Baltimore-Washington Conference.



Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli (R) recognizes Deaconess Jane Grays.

Deaconesses are women called by God to lay vocations in a lifetime relationship in The United Methodist Church. "This class of deaconesses reflects the strength and unity found in the diversity of those who are called

to ministries of love, justice and service," said Becky Louter, executive of the UMW's Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner program. Home Missioners are men in a similar capacity and commitment.

Grays will work in prison ministries and with Sharon Leatherman in conference Global Ministries. She joins three other deaconesses in the conference: Shelly Owens, Carolyn Anderson and Gertrude Daly.

Church adds large new addition

SHEPHERDSTOWN, W. VA. – In some places, The United Methodist Church is declining. However, Asbury UMC dedicated a large new addition April 26. With 200 in attendance, District Superintendent Edgardo Rivera, spoke at the ceremony that officially opened Asbury's Multipurpose Center.

The new one-story building has a multi-media center, a multi-purpose room that can seat 500 or be used as a gymnasium, classrooms, nurseries and a commercial kitchen. Asbury's Mighty Men of God choir and the award winning Shepherdstown Middle School Jazz Band performed at the celebration.

The facilities are an investment in the community, said Ginger Medley. The church uses its current and expanded facility to offer parenting classes and computer literacy classes for adults, Scouting programs, the School Sharpener (an after school program for elementary and middle school students), and hardship assistance.

Caucuses cancel Atlanta meeting

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Love Your Neighbor Coalition, composed of 10 caucuses of The United Methodist Church, has cancelled plans to meet in Atlanta, Ga., in mid-2015. LYN told the Atlanta mayor, Kasim Reed, and the Georgia Institute of Technology, which was to host the event, that it could not meet there, in spite of it being the ideal location, "due to the racially offensive practices of the Atlanta Braves organization toward Native Americans." The event was expected to bring 700 participants to Atlanta.

Especially offensive was the continuous use of the caricature of "Chief Noc-A-Homa" and the tomahawk symbol and "tomahawk chop" that "offer up racist and demeaning images and stereotypes of our Native American citizens and friends," LYN stated.

Bible study encourages BWC to create ‘bridge of dreams’

By Linda Worthington
UMConnection Staff

THE AFRICA UNIVERSITY choir sang, drummed and danced the people in to Bible study each morning of annual conference to listen with hearts and minds to James “Jim” Salley bring new understanding to the Scripture of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37.

Salley, a South Carolinian, is associate Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa University in Zimbabwe since 1992, the major fundraiser for the United Methodist pan-African university. He brought to the study stories of his experiences while traveling for AU.

Using the conference metaphor of “bridges,” Salley said Africa University has a “bridge of dreams” dedicated in 1994.

The scriptural story is also about a bridge, as it brings together two sides, the wounded man on one side, the priest and Levite passing to the other side, and the Samaritan from the other side crossing the road.

Salley told of one day “passing by on the other side,” like the priest and Levite, a blind man sitting against a wall on a street; he had \$200 in his pocket. As he turned around to go back to the man, he saw a small boy come by and put a coin in the man’s hand. The experience has

never left him. “I have the responsibility to assist where I’m able,” he said, “and I lied in ignoring him.”

“The word of the day is mercy,” Salley said in Saturday’s study, and quoted DS Conrad Link who had said, “Mercy is a forgotten word.” Mercy is a bridge, Salley said.

The Samaritan ministered to the hopeless wounded man lying in the ditch by the road. “If you find yourself in a ditch, call on Jesus,” Salley said. Love has mercy, God has mercy.

Another experience Salley shared was on the long flight from Zimbabwe to the U.S., via Rome, when a young man had a seizure. A doctor onboard did everything he could to assist the man on the floor 12



James Salley (L), tells how a BWC member paid for a student to travel home to visit her children.

Photos by Tony Richards

feet from Salley’s seat. And everyone, of many religions, prayed. Forty-five minutes from landing in Rome, the man suddenly “got up and sat on the floor.”

He was taken to a hospital, with no logical reason for his blackout. And sometime later, he contacted Salley. That man, Dan Umba Kwalanga, is working now in Davao City, Philippines, for the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries.

“Wherever you are in life, God is with you. God will never leave you. God has plans to get you (out of the ditch) on the road to living,” Salley said.

The Africa University choir sang throughout the study, and as they left the ballroom, they kneeled and greeted folks singing “I’ll meet you in the morning, in the sweet by and by.”



The Africa University Choir performs during Bible study and worship at the annual conference session in Baltimore.

When ‘Thank you’ says a thousand other words ...

By Melissa Lauber
UMConnection Staff

BISHOP MARCUS MATTHEWS says thank you. All the time. I was a little surprised and flustered when he asked me to deliver the thank you’s on Saturday morning at annual conference. But I shouldn’t have been. There’s rarely a meeting or event that passes when the bishop doesn’t feel compelled to thank the leaders that enable the ministry to unfold.

But standing at the podium, looking out at the hundreds of faces, I realized how very thankful I am to be able to participate in the life of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. The view from the stage, and from behind the camera, gives you a balcony perspective of the vast complex diversity of our conference, and a glimpse into the small and astoundingly beautiful details of God’s people.

This year, I was especially surprised when I turned

around Wednesday and saw my Sunday School teacher from St. Paul’s UMC in Delaware, who taught me about God more than 35 years ago. Ken Horne is now the lay member to annual conference from Linden-Linthicum UMC in Clarksville.

He was the teacher who made Christ real in the lives of hundreds of youth. He was cool, but more important, he was authentic; he loved and lived the Bible, and just seeing his face made me remember the simple and essential truth that I am a beloved child of God and the whole point of this life’s adventure is to live so God can use me.

It was a bright and special moment finding him at annual conference, but throughout the ballroom and around its periphery, thousands of stories like that one, of people making connections and reconnections of faith, are lived out at annual conference. That’s a cause for thanksgiving.

This year, I was also thankful for the holy conferencing that broke out Friday evening during the conversation on human sexuality. I know that we are meant to embrace the spiritual discipline of holy conferencing during all of our meeting time. But watching people who I know have reason to hold each other suspect hold each other in prayer, and really deeply listen to those they had never before really trusted, created a space where the Holy Spirit felt absolutely present and vibrant. Hope filled in the spaces between our divisions.

Hope also struck my heart when Sandy Ferguson, the director of connexional ministries, stood at the podium and cried, moved by the lives and message of the students from Connexions High School in Baltimore and by the potential United Methodists have to be partners and shape the lives of students throughout our area. I knew what was in her script, but in her tears, “Be Love” were the only words she could say.

For the fact that annual conference can sometimes be a place where tears and holy silence can be accepted and

take precedence over the words, I give thanks.

I also give thanks for the earnest way people care about all the small stuff of annual conference. There must be a million details to be overseen and cared for, and most of these details, if they’re attended to correctly, are overlooked and taken for granted by participants. But I love how the conference staff sometimes loses sleep in the weeks prior to conference because they care so deeply that all goes well.

I am, of course, especially thankful to the Communications team for their ministry. Five months before the session is called to order they are using their gifts in ministry to make sure information is shared. And at the session, after everyone’s attention shifts to rest and other things, they work to make sure the story is well told. Their gifts and abilities are remarkable and I thank God daily that I get to work with them and that God has brought them all to this ministry in this time of the church’s life.

There are a few things that I’m less than grateful for. I regret the cost of meals and lodging, the fact that not everyone takes the time to read and consider the materials they’re called to act upon, that many of our churches have not made a pledge to save the lives of children dying from malaria and that we don’t get to do something more mission-focused in our time together.

With his many expressions of thanks, Bishop Matthews may be creating a culture of gratitude in our conference.

He may be onto something. Neuroscientists are now reporting that daily expressions or acknowledgments of gratitude increase people’s sense of happiness and wellbeing. How might it change the church? I’m not certain.

But it does bring to mind Meister Eckhart, who once said, “If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.” I have so many prayers for the Baltimore-Washington Conference; but today, in the aftermath of our 230th session, a simple and heart-felt thank you feels right. Thank you and amen.



Overview: ‘God can do some amazing things with us’

From page 1

territory of God’s Kingdom becomes enlarged; our human consciousness becomes expanded; and all of our former narrow and limited ways of thinking are put to the test.”

The bishop celebrated those engaged in ministries in their churches and communities. “One of the premises of our covenant with God is that the minute we make ourselves fully available to God, God can then do some amazing and miraculous things with us,” he said.

Honoring Ministry

At the conclusion of the conference, Matthews, along with Bishops Violet Fisher, Joseph H. Yeakel and Kenneth Carter laid hands on and prayed for eight Elders and one Deacon who were ordained as clergy members, and nine provisional Elders and one provisional Deacon who were commissioned.

Carter, the bishop of the Florida Area, preached at the ordination service and at the Memorial Service,



Bishop Kenneth Carter preaches.

which honored the saints of the church who had died in the previous year. Included in those whose lives were celebrated was Lois Yeakel, the wife of Bishop Yeakel.

In other observances, the ministries of 33 retirees, representing 781 years of service, were celebrated and the new appointments of 116 pastors were noted.



Monet Pullium and Tyrone Buie dance for justice.

The 192 years of ministry of Calvary UMC in Churchville were also lifted up in prayer and a candle was lit on the altar as members voted to discontinue the church under paragraph 213 in the Book of Discipline.

Funding Ministry

For the second year in a row, conference members unanimously adopted a budget with no debate or amendments. The \$17.3 million budget represents a 3.1 percent increase in spending on mission and ministry.

Members also voted to increase the minimum salary for full-time clergy to \$40,760 and raise the housing allowance to \$19,866.

The Rev. Ann Laprade, chair of the Council on Finance and Administration, led the conference in a celebration of paying 100 percent of General Church apportionments. BWC also has paid 100 percent of the askings that support Africa University, and is one of only

27 conferences to do so.

Engaging in Holy Conferencing

During the session, 15 resolutions were considered. Those dealing with clarifying conference rules all passed, as did resolutions on the minimum wage and working toward a living wage, and studying the denomination’s policies and practices with mentally ill clergy.

Opting for additional study, members affirmed the



Members gather in ‘circles of grace’ for holy conferencing on issues of human sexuality.

dangers of fossil fuels but postponed a response to companies using them. A task force will be formed to explore the potential impact of divestment. A resolutions on three corporations that benefit from the Israel/Palestine conflict was deferred indefinitely.

Five resolutions on human sexuality were discussed in small groups and voted on by paper ballot. These



(L-R) Bishop Matthews, Rev. Mary Jo Sims & Delores Martin.

resolutions: ask that the BWC be an inclusive conference; call for the church to agree to disagree on polity affecting LGBT people; encourage the banning of clergy trials for same-gender weddings; encourage removing discriminatory language from the Book of Discipline; and speak out against laws discriminating against gays and lesbians in West Virginia.

Two questions of law were requested of Bishop Matthews on whether the suspension of rules, which did not allow for the making of amendments to the resolutions on human sexuality was legal, and if the resolution on “Agree to Disagree on Issues Pertaining to Gender and Sexual Minorities” was in compliance with the Book of Discipline and Judicial Council Decisions 1111, 1115, 1120 and 1218.

During the three-day session, conference members heard from several distinguished guests including Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake; the

Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Secretary of the denomination’s Board of Church and Society; the Rev. Jeffrey S. Allen, Executive Director of the West Virginia Council of Churches; the Rev. Albert Mosley, president of Gammon Theological Seminary; the Rev. Robert Martin, dean of Wesley Theological Seminary; Historic Black College Fund student Nicole Pleasant; and the Rt. Rev. Eugene Taylor Sutton, the Episcopal bishop of the Diocese of Maryland.

In Other Actions

Members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference:

- Accepted an award for contributing the highest amount of funding for missionary support in the Northeastern Jurisdiction.
- Collected 1,928 care kits with supplies for area homeless shelters.
- Heard reports from the eight superintendents that highlighted ministries in their districts.
- Saw a dramatic presentation by students from



Richmond Williams is commissioned as a missionary.

Connexions, a performing arts school in Baltimore, one of the many schools now partnering with area United Methodist churches.

- Heard from Conference Lay Leader Delores Martin on the importance of training and mobilizing laity to be the hands and feet of Christ.
- Participated in training sessions the day before conference began on such topics as Volunteers in Mission, grant writing and stewardship.
- Contributed \$51,358 to an offering for Imagine No Malaria and \$6,892 to an offering for Africa University.

The 2015 session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference will convene Thursday, May 28, at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Baltimore.



United Methodist Women don red stoles as a witness to their ministry to women and children.

Photos by Tony Richards