



UMC *Connection*

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Becoming fully alive in Christ and making a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world • www.bwcumc.org • Volume 26, Issue 6 • June 2015

ANNUAL CONFERENCE COVERAGE

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United Methodists 'Dare to Believe'



Bishop Matthews, center left, and other leaders open the 231st Session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference with Holy Communion.

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

MEETING LESS THAN a mile from where the Methodist Church began in 1784, and just a few miles from where riots broke out in late April 2015, United Methodists of the Baltimore-Washington Conference started and ended their Annual Conference Session with one thought: being Christ's presence in the City of Baltimore.

More than 1,200 clergy, laity and guests gathered at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel in Baltimore. They heard and saw riveting reports of how the church has responded following the riots that devastated the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood of southwest Baltimore, and took action to approve a special offering June 7 throughout the BWC to raise money for refurbishing the five churches in the neighborhood.

Conference members participated in a prayer march in Sandtown-Winchester May 27, at the start of the Session. Dozens of people, wearing bright red T-shirts that read "Putting Our Beliefs Into Action" gathered at Ames UMC and moved to what is called "ground zero" of the riots: the intersection of Pennsylvania and North avenues, where the CVS burned on national TV. There, they prayed, sang and were joined by neighborhood residents in comforting a family whose row house had caught on fire while they were there.

Bishop Marcus Matthews, presiding over his seventh Conference

Session, started the three-day gathering by inviting members to stand and pray for the City of Baltimore in whatever way they were comfortable. Later, Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake greeted the assembly, thanking United Methodists for opening their doors on the day after the unrest and for still being there in ministry and mission long after the TV cameras had left.

Conference members heard a report from the laity and clergy who serve in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood, including a stirring biblical interpretive tone poem by the Rev. Michael Parker. Parker, who lives in the neighborhood but who pastors Ames UMC in Bel Air, was commissioned a Probationary Elder by Matthews on May 30. He was joined by 12 other candidates in that category, along with two who were commissioned as Deacon. Seven people were ordained Elder by the bishop, one person was ordained a Deacon, and two others had their orders recognized.

Following the service of Commissioning and Ordination, Bishop Matthews led those newly commissioned and ordained, along with dozens of other clergy all dressed in white albs with flowing red stoles, and processed outside the hotel to pray for the city.

In between the Baltimore City bookends, BWC members witnessed powerful worship, Bible teaching and moments where the Holy Spirit was touchable.

One such moment happened during the Circles of Grace process, which occurred Thursday night. Conference members gathered in

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BWC provides a witness to create a stronger Baltimore

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

ON FRIDAY NIGHT of the Annual Conference Session, members took time to hear from laity and clergy who have been on the ground in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood of Baltimore. That area was hit with violence and unrest on April 27 as protests over the death of Freddie Gray turned ugly.

The Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District, told members

that the people speaking that night were going to tell "the true story" of what was "really going on" in the neighborhood, both on the night of the riots and in the church's response.

The Rev. Rodney Hudson, pastor of Ames Memorial UMC, said that his church, like Nehemiah, is rebuilding one brick at a time. That's because, he said, there are many cracks in the walls around his church; walls that were supposed to be there to protect but which have now been breached.

"Tragically," he said, "Freddie died because the walls that should have protected him crushed him. His

death is an indictment on the system that creates incentives for Sandtown to remain broken."

Hudson noted the old African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," is especially true and needed in the Sandtown neighborhood. "It takes a village to rebuild the walls of Sandtown," he said.

Frances Muldrow, a lay member of St. Luke's UMC, has been a life-long resident of Sandtown. She told conference members that the block she lives on has been "under occupation" in the last several weeks because "my front door faces the Western District

See Baltimore, page 6

... well said

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

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

TRUST IS VERY hard for me, let me just say that up front.

So many times when I was an attorney, my client would say, “I’m trusting God with this hearing/trial/deposition,” and I would respond, “Oh sure, but please tell me you brought the contract with you? I mean, there’s trust...and then there’s TRUST.”

In my ministry, I’m coming to learn every day that trusting God is one of my most important responsibilities as both a Christian and a pastor. Trusting God reminds me I’m not God, and trusting God keeps me from being an anxious, reactive presence in the face of trouble. Trusting God allows me to say things like, “I wonder what God is planning to do next? I wonder how I will be a part of that?” rather than, “We’re doomed and I think God wants me to work at a miniature golf course instead of pastoring.”

Trusting God can start just as an experiment and, like all spiritual disciplines, can become a habit if practiced regularly. Trusting God may not come “naturally” but, in my own experience, as God coaxes me into opening my fists of control and trusting, I find God to be both faithful and strong in my weakness. I’m trying to learn to trust God throughout the whole process and not just when I don’t feel I have a choice.

Annual Conference is a lovely reminder that the distinctive features of our polity are about trust. We trust God in each other, so we are connectional and we have holy conferencing. We trust God in our bishop, so we have episcopacy. We trust God working in the world, so we have an itinerant system, so we can follow where the Holy Spirit would lead us.

God can work up some amazing things with Christians who trust God, and who trust that God works through each other. Christians who trust God are just the folks to go march in Sandtown, or march into hospitals or schools with their crazy love and their world-changing hope.

Trust me. Or better yet, trust God.

... well said



JOIN THE CONVERSATION



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

// YOU CAN’T TRUST anyone.” These are the unfortunate words that so many people have come to live by. Many of us have been so disappointed by trusting people that we create an impenetrable shell to protect us from the cold cruel world.

But even people who say they don’t trust anyone, trust someone. You trust the waiter in the restaurant to bring your food. You trust the other drivers on the road to follow the rules of the road. Every day we have hundreds of times that we put our trust in strangers without even thinking about it because we simply have to trust each other in order to survive in this world.

The reason people say they don’t trust anyone is simple – someone they trusted let them down. Maybe it was a spouse that said they would be faithful who broke fidelity. Perhaps it was an employer who promised you forever, then cutbacks changed forever into two-weeks-notice. When we make the decision to not trust, it is always because something happened that shook our confidence and made us turn inward in order to never be hurt again.

God created us to be in this together. To be in it together we have to learn to trust one another. Trusting one another means believing the best, even after seeing the worst. The tough part of trust is knowing that it could all go wrong and trusting anyway. Some would call that stupid; I would call it love.

Trust is at the core of love. You can’t truly love someone you don’t trust, and you can’t truly be loved by someone who does not trust you. Trust is not always about not being hurt or disappointed, sometimes it is about loving someone enough to be hurt and disappointed and then doing it all over again. That is the type of love that God shows us every time he trusts us with a new day, new possibilities and new horizons even though we have on many occasions broken his heart and disappointed him with our actions.

There comes a time when you have to trust like God so you can love like God. It won’t always be easy, but trust me, it’s always worth it.

... well said

EVENTS

Mission U

July 31 – Aug 2
Marriott Hotel, Bethesda

This year’s Mission u, sponsored by the BWC’s Board of Church and Society and the United Methodist Women, will include studies on Latin America, the church and people with disabilities, and Created for Happiness: Understanding Your Life in God. The dean this year is the Rev. Frankie Revell. Learn more at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/what-we-do/transformational-education/mission-u. For registration information, contact Darlynn McCrae at darmccrae@yahoo.com.

Early Childhood Conference

Tuesday, Aug. 11
St. Matthews UMC, Bowie

Registration is open for the Early Childhood Conference. The theme will be “God Rocks Our World.” Sponsored by the Christian Educators Fellowship, the conference will assist child care workers in church centers to obtain their MSDE credit hours needed to maintain certification. Each person attending will receive 6 clock hours, plus 2 PAUs for attending. There are 16 different workshops offered three times during the day. The event, open to 400 people, usually sells out by around the end of June. Cost is \$55 per person. The registration landing page is on the BWC web calendar for August 11. Register at <https://www.signup4.net/Public/ap.aspx?EID=CHIL84E&TID=VdDCTIE82CVAWq2LO2OSEA%3d%3d>

It's not church as usual!

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FIONA HAWORTH	DR. ALBERT MOSLEY

SHIFT

A Young Adult Conference

July 24-26

Facebook.com/shiftbwc

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Newly elected delegates reflect the diversity of the BWC

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

A HUSBAND AND WIFE were both elected to the 2016 General and Jurisdictional Conference delegation by members of the 2015 BWC Annual Conference Session. The Rev. Sarah Andrews Schliekert, pastor of Arden UMC in Martinsburg, W.Va., and her husband, Christopher, were elected. For Sarah, this will be her first time attending a conference as an elected delegate; Chris was elected as a Jurisdictional delegate in 2012.

In all, six female and six male laity and clergy were elected to General Conference. Five female and one male laity were elected to Jurisdictional Conference, and two female and four male clergy were elected.

The alternates elected to Jurisdictional Conference were evenly split between male and female.

The 2016 General Conference meets May 10-20 in Portland, Ore. Its primary task is to perfect the Books of Discipline and Resolutions. It is the only body that can speak officially for the denomination.

The 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference meets July 13-15 in Lancaster, Pa. Its primary task is to elect and assign bishops.

Elected as **delegates to General Conference:**

- **Clergy:** the Revs. Terri Rae Chattin, pastor, Sykesville Parish (chair of the delegation); Joe Daniels, Greater Washington District Superintendent, pastor, Emory Fellowship, Washington, D.C.; Charlie Parker, pastor Metropolitan Memorial UMC, Washington, D.C.; Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Baltimore Metropolitan District Superintendent; JW Park, Central Maryland District Superintendent; and Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, pastor, Foundry UMC.
- **Laity:** Delores Martin, Good Hope Union UMC, Silver Spring; Jen Ihlo, Dumbarton UMC,



The 2016 General and Jurisdictional Conference delegation is led by the Rev. TR Chattin, front row, fifth from left.

Georgetown; Charles Moore, Community UMC, Crofton; Cynthia Taylor, Epworth UM Chapel, Baltimore; Tom Price, Mill Creek Parish UMC, Rockville; and Ken Ow, North Bethesda UMC.

Elected as **delegates to the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference** (those elected to General Conference automatically serve as NEJ delegates; the first two people elected to Jurisdictional Conference also serve as alternates to General Conference):

- **Laity:** Kelly Robier, Mill Creek Parish, Rockville (alt.); Melissa Lauber, Metropolitan Memorial UMC, Washington, D.C. (alt.); Christopher Schliekert, Arden UMC, Martinsburg, W.Va.; Jordan Andrian, Zion UMC, Lexington Park; Sherie Koob, Middletown UMC; and Sarah Ford, Sharp Street Memorial UMC, Baltimore.
- **Clergy:** the Revs. Conrad Link, Cumberland-Hagerstown District Superintendent (alt.);

Joan Carter-Rimbach, First UMC, Hyattsville (alt.); Edgardo Rivera, Frederick District Superintendent; Evan Young, Annapolis District Superintendent; Sarah Andrews Schliekert, Arden UMC, Martinsburg, W.Va.; and Tony Love, Director of Vibrant Communities, BWC.

Elected as **alternates to the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference:**

- **Laity:** Mitty Quinn, Dumbarton UMC, Washington, D.C.; Richard Wilson, John Wesley UMC, Hagerstown; Christie Latona, Emory UMC, Washington, D.C.; and Matthew Sichel, Wesley UMC, Hampstead.
- **Clergy:** the Revs. Jason Jordan-Griffin, St. John UMC, Pumphrey; Mary Kay Totty, Dumbarton UMC, Washington, D.C.; Melissa Rudolph, North Carroll Cooperative Parish; and Marlon Tilghman, Milford Mill UMC, Randallstown.

Conference adopts \$17.2 million budget for ministry

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

AS MEMBERS OF the Baltimore-Washington Conference celebrated a strong financial year in 2014, they also took a hard look at the 2016 budget.

In 2014, the 641 churches in the conference contributed 90.8 percent of their apportionments, which, according to the Rev. Ann LaPrade, chair of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, was the highest in the BWC in the last 10 years. LaPrade, pastor at Potomac UMC, thanked conference members for their sacrificial giving and hard work.

Nearly 82 percent of local churches contributed 100 percent apportionment payments in 2014, she said. This came, she noted, on top of meeting the \$2.1 million goal for Imagine No Malaria, including raising more than \$1.5 million in 2014.

The 2016 budget, adopted overwhelmingly for the third year in a row, is expected to raise \$14.3 million in apportionment income. That money funds ministry

throughout the conference and around the world. In addition, non-apportioned income from items such as event registrations and grants, is budgeted to bring in \$2.8 million. The collection rate for 2016 remains the same as 2015, at 92 percent.

Expenses for 2016 are budgeted to be even with income. LaPrade told members that reduced staff wages and benefits have been achieved, saving \$277,000. New Ministry and New Church Start grants have been reduced by \$250,000, and a separate budget line has been created for the ROCK youth event, which is self-funded.

CFA followed-up on a request from the 2014 Session to recommend, or not, a potential conferencewide effort to support the Africa University Endowment Campaign. After a working group investigated the possibility, CFA decided not to recommend this path.

Instead, CFA proposed that any and all love offerings given to Bishop Marcus Matthews in honor of his retirement in 2016 be donated to Africa University. Matthews has personally requested that this be done.

“Africa University is a passion for Bishop Matthews,” said Charlie Moore, a member of CFA. “He chairs the university’s Development Committee and he is known as one of the greatest contributors to A.U. in the denomination.”

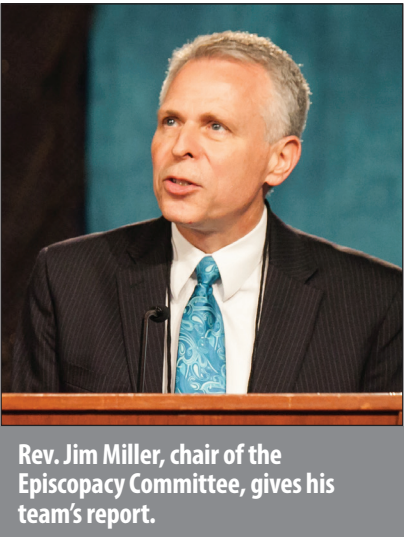
Speaking as a member of the Episcopal Transition Team, Moore said that the bishop’s request for “no gifts” left them in a bind. As a result, over the next year, to honor the bishop, a love offering will be created that will help establish a health and sports center at Africa University.

“We invite each and every church, over the next year, to take up an offering,” Moore said, “and help tell the story of the love affair between Bishop Matthews and Africa University.”

The Commission on Equitable Compensation’s recommendation was approved. This sets the minimum salary for full-time clergy at \$41,473, or an increase of 1.75 percent. Housing allowances for clergy remained unchanged at \$19,866.

The Rev. Jackson Day, chair of the BWC’s Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, announced the good news to conference members that there would be no increase in health insurance premiums in 2016. He noted that out-of-pocket maximums will be reduced for both individuals and families.

Two special offerings were taken during the Annual Conference Session. One offering, taken at the opening worship service, received \$11,645.55, which will be split evenly between the Susanna Wesley House in Baltimore, and efforts to refurbish five churches in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood of Baltimore. The second offering, taken at the Ordination and Commissioning service, received \$5,196.87. This money is earmarked for Africa University in honor of Bishop Matthews.



Rev. Jim Miller, chair of the Episcopacy Committee, gives his team’s report.



GCFA’s Moses Kumar (L) presents financial leaders with a plaque honoring the BWC’s 100 percent apportionment payment.

Hearing God’s call, 23 are commissioned and ordained

BY LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff

AS THE BALL room at the Marriott Waterfront Hotel sang “O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing” May 30, this year’s ordination class of 25 men and women processed in. Fifteen were being commissioned, eight ordained and two recognized from other denominations. It was a diverse group with black, white, Asian and Hispanic candidates, some in their 20s, some in their 40s, 10 men and 15 women.

“Give us courage to dare to believe that you who have called us, will equip us and companion us as we serve in your church,” prayed the congregation during the opening prayer, led by Michael Cantley, who would



Andre Briscoe is commissioned as a Provisional Elder.

shortly after be commissioned a provisional member. Matthew 14:22-36 was the text for Bishop L. Jonathan Holston’s sermon, “What’s Love Got to Do With It?” Holston serves as bishop of the South Carolina Conference.

“Following God’s call is not always easy,” Holston said. “We wonder why God has chosen us. We wonder if we have the stamina or the gift for the work God calls us to do. God’s call is not for the faint of heart.”

There may be evil, weeping, challenges, persecution, non-supporters along the way, he said, as he told of Paul’s call as read in the Scripture.

“What does love have to do with your church, with your ministry, with your community?” he asked. “Don’t be so heavenly bound you’re no heavenly good. We are

not perfect people.” Referencing Paul’s writings, Holston said that love is more powerful than hate, it transforms the world and gives hope.

“What matters is that you truly love, that you become the hope, change, and love you seek for the world,” Holston said.

“What’s love got to do with it?” the bishop asked. “Everything,” he said, answering his own question. “God wants us to be worthy of love, of being loved and loving others.”

He gave the candidates some guidelines for their future ministries as he closed:

- “Love from the center of who you are. Don’t fake it. Run for dear life from evil, and hold on for dear life to good.”
- “Don’t burn out. Keep yourselves fueled and aflame.”
- “Bless your enemies ... Make friends with nobodies, don’t be the great somebody.”
- “Don’t insist on getting even, that’s not for you to do. ‘I’ll do the judging,’ God says. ‘I’ll take care of it.’”

The 25 persons waiting for the services of commissioning, ordination and recognition, were well blessed, as Bishops Matthews and Holston were joined by retired Bishop Violet Fisher and BWC Lay Leader, Delores Martin, for the service of laying on of hands.

Holston and Fisher read the liturgy and Matthews said private words to each person kneeling before him.

The service began with the examination and commissioning of provisional candidates, those who have completed their studies, begun serving in churches, and will now go on a three-year period of learning “on-the-ground.”

Commissioned as Provisional Deacons:

Enger Muteteke
Leo Yates

Commissioned as Provisional Elders:

Giovanni Arroyo
Andre Briscoe
Michael Cantley
Sherri Comer-Cox
Lemuel Dominguez
Kyle Durbin
Elizabeth LaMaster



The bishop leads the ordinands out into the world to pray.

Laura Norvell
Michael Parker
Jessica Statesman
Dawn Stewart
Carissa Surber
Beth Williams

Ordination follows the completion of studies and the provisional time, and each candidate must have an appointment.

Ordained as Full Member Deacon

Angela Maves

Ordained as Full Member Elders

Sheridan Allmond
Kathy Altman
Cynthia Caldwell
Andrew Greenwood
Elizabeth Jackson
Dana Werts
George Winkfield

Two Elders were recognized. “After due examination of your call and ministry in another part of Christ’s holy Church, we now welcome you to the communion,” Matthews said to the Revs. Johnsie Whitfield Cogman and Meredith Anne Wilkens-Arnold.

Before dismissal, Matthews issued an altar call to the laity “to hear God’s call to ordained ministry.” People from throughout the ballroom came forward for prayer and to speak with Elders and district superintendents.

We are called to dare in our mission to be water-walkers

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

THE UNITED METHODISTS of the Baltimore-Washington Conference are on a mission from God to be “water-walkers,” the Rev. Laurie Haller said in a two-part morning Bible study at the annual conference session.

Haller, a senior pastor at First UMC in Birmingham, Michigan, outlined this call to water-walking in her exploration of Matthew 14:22:36, in which Jesus walks on the water and calls Peter to join him.

With stories of her own walking on the water on the pilgrim’s path at Lindisfarne in Scotland, Haller shared how “Water-walkers dare to believe by having the courage to get out of the boat.”

“Jesus calls each one of us as individuals to dare to believe that we, too, can do far more than we think we can. It’s the same with our churches,” Haller said. “We have the ability to be the ears, eyes, hands, feet, voice and heart of God by embodying Christ’s love in all that we do. There is so much untapped possibility in each of you and in each one of your churches and it’s waiting to be unlocked.”

Too often, Haller said, individuals, churches and even the denomination, suffer from “baby elephant syndrome.” In India and Africa, she explained, elephants are born wanting to roam. But they are initially confined by being tied securely to trees. They learn quite early in life that they cannot break free of the rope, so they stop trying. The tragedy of baby elephant syndrome is that adult elephants are fully capable of breaking free from their bonds, but because they believe they can’t they remain stuck right where they are.

Do you have baby elephant syndrome, Haller asked. Does your local church?

“If you and I want to experience God’s power, we have to dare to believe, break the rope and take the first step. As

the old saying goes, ‘If you want to walk on water, you’ve got to get out of the boat,’” she said.

Peter does just that, boldly stepping out into the waves. But then he realized the enormity of the risk he’s taking and begins to sink.

Jesus reached out and saved him, saying, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

“I think Christian history has done a great disservice to Peter because of how we interpret Jesus’ response here,” Haller said. We often think Jesus is rebuking Peter. “We naively assume that the answer to all of life’s difficulties is to just have more faith.” It’s as if we believe an extra dose of faith will fix us, our families, friends and churches.

But Matthew wants to tell us it’s not our faith or our power that gets thing done for God, Haller said. Rather, it is Christ’s faith and Christ’s power. “It’s Jesus’ strong hand that pulls us through, for without him we can’t do a blessed thing.”

Jesus isn’t rebuking Peter, he’s encouraging him; and Peter is learning to have faith.

Where do you dare to believe? Haller asked. For some, she maintained, the risk is getting out of the boat and walking on water. For others, she suggested, the risk might be remaining *in* the boat.

Since ancient times, the boat has been a symbol for the church; it is the vessel for salvation.

“If our local churches are boats, and if The United Methodist Church is a boat, then do we dare to believe by walking away from the boat or by staying in the boat?” Haller asked. “It takes a lot of courage to stay in a boat that’s

taking on water, doesn’t it.” She thanked the Baltimore-Washington Conference for “daring to believe that by getting out of the boat and by welcoming others into the boat, you are the embodied grace of Jesus.”

She also challenged them, as the most diverse conference in the denomination, to continue to model a firm commitment to stay in the boat together, and to dare to believe that taking risks and leaving the boat will transform not only Baltimore, but the entire world.

There is one word that is repeated three times in Matthew 14, she said: “immediately.”

“Friends, there is no time to waste and no time to wait,” Haller said. “There is an urgency about becoming water-walkers. Now is the time to dare to believe.”



The Rev. Laurie Haller, from Birmingham, Mich., leads a morning Bible study.

Clergy families recall their loved ones’ lives, contributions

BY LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff

BISHOP L. JONATHAN Holston of the South Carolina Conference brought a message of hope and challenge to the families and friends of lay members, clergy and clergy spouses who had died in the past



Bishop Holston participates in the Memorial Service.

year at the Service of the Saints May 29.

Despite the somberness of the occasion, there were many times of singing, praying and light heartedness, as well as poignancy and remembrance of times past.

Preaching on “An Offer You Cannot Refuse,” Holston preached on Matthew 6:12-23, the calling of the disciples from their fishing boat.

“Those remembered gave themselves to God and to ministry in ways which we pay homage to today,” the bishop said. “We’ve all been in a place with a fork in the road. It’s a place of discovery, where we find hope and resurrection. In that pathway are curves and ridges that

challenge, but you have everything you need to meet the challenges of a fork in the road. All you have to do is grasp who you are.

“Your loved ones’ lives are calling you... to follow Christ,” he said. “We’re here today because your loved ones accepted that call. We’ve come to be God’s people.”

Jesus had an amazing way of choosing his disciples, the bishop said.

“He went down to the edge of the lake and chose fishermen, working people who knew the land, people of the earth. He chose the best. Jesus made an offer they could not refuse.”

Jesus came to turn our comfortable lives upside down for radical renewal, he continued. “We’re here today because we accepted that call. We’ve come to be God’s people; like he could use fishermen, he could use you,” Holston said.

“Never forget who you are and whose you are,” Holston said in closing. “You are children of the king.”



The Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, right, assists a family member in lighting a candle of remembrance.



Hugs and tears were evident during the Memorial Service.

Following the message, the Rev. Mary Jo Sims, Conference Secretary, read each name of those mourned, saying “We remember with thanksgiving and celebration their lives.” A bell was rung after each name, their image was projected, and family members or friends came forward to light a candle. The Rev. JW Park, Dean of the Cabinet, presided at the candle lighting.

Thirty clergy names were read and 17 clergy spouses. Three bishops’ names were also read, and several lay members of conference.

Members of the audience were instructed to stand in place for each person important to them as the name was read.

After the last name was read and the candle lighting ended, Bishop Matthews invited anyone who had a loved one who died this past year to stand. He then offered the benediction for all: “Into your hands, we commend their spirits. Receive your loved ones into everlasting glory.”

From bikes to malaria, BWC hosts vast array of ministries

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

SMALL GROUPS OF determined people, on fire for mission and ministry, can change just about anything,” said Director of Connectional Ministries Sandra Ferguson. “Ministry is not about accomplishment, it’s about affecting people’s lives in ways that make a difference. It’s about daring to believe the church can transform the world.”

During the Connectional Ministries report May 29, Ferguson, along with Annika and Asher Rudolph, of North Carroll Cooperative Parish, and Donovan Parris, president of the Conference Council of Youth Ministries, highlighted several of the BWC’s ministries.

They included: a local church’s efforts to refurbish bikes that transform lives around the world; initiatives that open up and grow multicultural perspectives; vibrant outreach that brings young adults into leadership in the Church; training to help ex-offenders find their way successfully back into the community; and opening up churches so that all people find their place at God’s table.

Another young voice on the stage was Markus McKinney, a junior at Rust College who thanked the conference for paying 100 percent of their apportionment to support the Black College Fund.

Ferguson and Bishop Matthews also presented the Denman Evangelism Award to the Rev. Dae Sung Park, pastor of a new church start in Ellicott City, and Ron Deter, a member of New Covenant UMC in Cumberland.

Park was honored for his intense work and dedication creating the new Henry Appenzeller Museum in Seochon, Korea, and his leadership in the celebration of the 130th anniversary of Methodist missionaries arriving in Seoul. He is a pastor who exemplifies both the local and global nature of the church, reaching across continents and culture to bring the Gospel to life for his parishioners and for those across the world, Ferguson said.

Deter, a United Methodist for the past 31 years, has been close to death on eight occasions and suffered through many long treatments and recoveries. But rather than be discouraged, he used his trials as an opportunity to share his testimony of God’s love with more than 1,000 people. He has served in every facet of the church’s life, from the highest positions of leadership to serving the pancakes at church breakfasts. He calls himself “a receiver of God’s miracles.”

During the hour-long presentation, Associate Council Director Cheryl Cook and Raimon Jackson shared how the conference is addressing the challenges of bringing young adults into the church and creating a culture of service and discipleship.

This July 24-26, the Young Adult Commission will be building upon last year’s experiences by holding a weekend conference, called Shift. The event, designed specifically for young adults, will be held at Queen’s Chapel UMC in Beltsville, Cook said.

- In other reports:
- + The Rev. Rod Miller announced a new Board of Religion and Race Initiative, which includes workshops on Intercultural Competency and Intercultural Communications. It will be offered this year to churches and other groups.
 - + The Rev. Sonia King outlined some of the impact made by the Healing Communities Training, which the conference offers to local churches interested in working with those returning from incarceration. In the U.S., King said, “more African-American males are currently incarcerated than were enslaved in 1850.”
 - + Becki Price shared how the ROCK retreat, which draws 5,000 BWC youth to Ocean City each year, now offers an adults-only room. In 2015, ROCK participants raised \$1,300 to help Northwood-Appold UMC rebuild after a fire. ROCK 2016 will be held Feb. 5-7;

+ Cindy Brown shared how reading an article in the UMConnection in 2004 led the congregation at Otterbein UMC in Hagerstown to begin Bikes for the World. To date, the ministry has “collected 2,607 bicycles (plus parts and accessories), 94 portable sewing machines and \$6,200 in monetary contributions,” Brown reported.

During a separate report on Global Ministries, the Rev. David Simpson, who co-chairs the conference’s Imagine No Malaria Campaign with his wife, Sylvia, reported that by Christmas last year, the conference had received at least \$2.1 million in pledges and commitments to eradicate malaria in Africa. The BWC is now in the fulfillment stage of its campaign. To date, Simpson reported, \$1.65 million, or 78 percent, of the \$2.1 million goal has been collected.

In addition, noted the Rev. Maidstone Mulenga, who heads the global initiatives, the conference continues to grow in its partnerships

with the Black Soil District in Russia; the South Conference in South Korea, and the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area.

Area young adult clergy will be visiting Korea this summer for a cultural exchange; BWC leaders will assist at a clergy school at Africa University this July; and, in October, the conference will begin a new covenant relationship with churches in Vieques, Puerto Rico.



Young adult Raimon Jackson speaks during the Ministries report.

Baltimore: Conference members hear the ‘real story’

From page 1

Police Station.”

One of the greatest needs in her neighborhood, she



Rev. Michael Parker leads a prayer walk through Baltimore.

said, is for the faith-based community to provide safe havens, youth programs and after school programs for the youth. “There are enough churches in our community to open their doors for needed programs,” she said.

The Rev. Twanda Prioleau, who serves at John Wesley UMC on W. North Ave., began her talk by thanking God for the connection of the church in action.

Following the unrest, Prioleau took time to walk through her community and engage people in ways she’d never done before.

“I saw people who were confused, people who had lost hope, and people who were frustrated and angry,” she said. “It was during that time that I realized that I did

not have all the answers.”

It has only been in the last few weeks, she confessed, that she’s been at peace with the idea of not knowing all the answers. “However,” she said, “I realized that we are closer to the answers when we are intentional about who we invite to the table for conversation.”

To rousing cheers and loud applause, Prioleau said that the table needs to be open to “those whom we sometimes consider to be ‘the other:’ the drug addict, the prostitute, the down and out, the cast out, the broken-hearted, the abused mother, the drunk father, the runaway girl, that wayward son.”

The Rev. Eric King, pastor of Metropolitan UMC, said he had learned one thing about United Methodists in this whole situation: “We are great at developing any kind of kit for any situation.”



BWC leaders pray for Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake.

King’s church has seen thousands of pounds of food delivered and given out in the neighborhood, along with hundreds of layette kits, health kits and school kits, most given through the ministry of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

“Methodists had been better known for ‘sending’ kits, but many do not ‘come along’ with the kit,” said King. “But during the height of the struggle, Methodists showed up strong in Sandtown. Black and white, young and old, came to the ‘Hood’ to do some ‘Good’.”

The evening ended with Michael Parker, a candidate for probationary Elder, bringing a powerful biblical interpretation piece, titled “His Words.” An essay Parker had to write for seminary just days after the riots broke out, the piece was met with several standing ovations and shouts of “amen” and “preach it!”

The presentation was videotaped by Good News Television and is available at <http://ow.ly/NJ9jB>.

Baltimore City Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake thanked the BWC for its ministry and prayers when she visited the Session Thursday afternoon. The mayor said United Methodists “know how to show up and do what’s needed.”

Conference leaders unveiled a website, <https://events.rethinkchurch.org/stronger-baltimore>, where volunteers could register for one of 16 different projects to help rebuild churches in Baltimore. United Methodist Volunteer in Missions are being sought for this work.

The opening worship offering brought in \$11,645.55, one-half of which will go to help Baltimore city churches. Members also approved a special, conference-wide offering on June 7, with proceeds going to help rebuild the churches.

Ferguson honored for 29 years of justice and mission work

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

WHEN BISHOP MARCUS Matthews, then a newly appointed pastor to Epworth Chapel UMC in Baltimore, drove past his new appointment, he had been told about the woman there who ran the youth and Christian education programs. She would, it was suggested, be a good partner in ministry.

When he arrived, he met Sandy Ferguson and the two started a friendship and a way of serving God together that has spanned more than three decades.

On May 29, he paid honor to Ferguson, who on July 1 will retire as Director of Connectional Ministries for the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

She is “a magnificent witness to Christ, doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God in ways that have brought the Gospel to life in settings at home and around the globe.” She is also, the bishop said, someone who has given him a steady supply of beautiful neckties.

Bishops Peggy Johnson, Joseph H. Yeakel and Felton Edwin May also paid tribute to Ferguson. So did President Barack Obama, Governor Larry Hogan, and leaders from throughout the denomination – praising her heart for hands-on mission and her tireless work for justice.

In a heart-felt note, Bishop May wrote: “If there were an Office in our Denomination with the title of ‘Mother Superior,’ I would campaign for it to be bestowed upon you. You and the colleagues who have followed your leadership have been the reflectors of your Holy Boldness.”

As the steward of the conference vision, Ferguson

set the focus and pace of ministry, not just in the Baltimore-Washington Conference but throughout the denomination, Bishop Yeakel said. She “led with grace and a spirit of empowerment.”

During her 44 years of ministry, which included 29 years on the conference staff, Ferguson was elected to serve as a delegate to seven General Conferences, served on the denomination’s Connectional Table and the General Boards of Discipleship, Global Ministries and Church and Society.

She helped to shape the global nature of Methodism, visiting 20 countries. At home, she oversaw 32 areas of ministry.

To friends, she described her ministry as one which allowed her to meet and share her faith with an incredibly diverse array of people. She was, for example, “able to dance with Archbishop Desmond Tutu and then turn around and dance with prostitutes in the Cumberland-Hagerstown District – knowing joy throughout it all.”

While coordinating the mission response to Hurricane Katrina several years ago, Ferguson led a group of African-American pastors on a Volunteer in Mission trip. The group re-formed for her celebration, leading the Conference in a lively spiritual. Ferguson joined them, too, in a dance.



Sandy Ferguson, left, and Bishop Marcus Matthews share a tender moment during the celebration of Ferguson’s ministry.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

God’s Foolish One award given

The 150 people attending the MFSA-BWARM dinner at Annual Conference May 29 recognized two important people who have fought for justice all their lives.

The Rev. Maynard Moore introduced Sandra Ferguson and gave a long list of her accomplishments as she retires as the conference’s Director of Connectional Ministries.

Moore also introduced this year’s recipient of the annual God’s Foolish One award. The selection of the awardee is carefully guarded so it remains a surprise until the moment in the evening’s program.

“Our awardee this year ... is a person whose life of service to the church and community has truly been impactful beyond all normal circumstances,” Moore said.

He then named Sharon Leatherman as the recipient. “It’s been a wonderful journey,” Leatherman said in response. “My efforts as an advocate have always been for women and children.”

In other Conference action:

- The Rev. Daryl Williams was elected the BWC’s statistician and Cynthia Taylor was named Conference Secretary.
- Rev. JW Park was selected to continue in his role as Dean of the Cabinet for the coming year.
- Two new Hispanic faith communities were started: one in College park and the other in Middle River.
- The Cabinet named 56 pastors to new appointments beginning in July.



Rev. JW Park is named Dean of the Cabinet for another year.



A little birdie told us...a few Tweets from AC '15

Daryl L. Williams @revdaryl · May 29

Reports in iambic pentameter. Only at annual conference. #bwcumc15

Selena Johnson @selenamjohnson · May 29

Wow! Hearing from Russian conference reminds me God doesn't only speak English. #bwcumc15

BWARM @BWARMtweets · May 29

#bwcumc15 go Communications! Have you checked out the toolbox yet?

Alison Burdett @HakunaMatata_UM · May 29

Thank you Cheryl & Raimon (and Daniel) for your work with the YAC! We are the future of the church and your efforts R appreciated! #bwcumc15

Alan Hemming @alan_hemming · May 29

With having the most diverse population in the connectional we have the opportunity to show what the real church can look like #bwcumc15

Shannon Sullivan @sha_sullivan · May 29

A ramp to the altar area like Trinity UMC in Frederick has is so important- need 2 figure something like that out 4 #PresburyUMC #bwcumc15

CHRIS OWENS @ChrisOwens74 · May 29

On behalf of my son Jacob who has Down syndrome, thank you BWC for being in ministry with people who have disabilities. #bwcumc15

Jenny Cannon @jdcanno · May 29

Any one else keep instinctively putting the voting machine up to your ear like a phone? #callmemaybe #bwcumc15

Katie Bishop @katiebishop · May 29

Every year, the memorial service stirs my soul as we celebrate and recognize legacy...#bwcumc15

Paul W. Johnson @pwjohnson10 · May 29

What are you going to do with your one and only life? #bwcumc15

Alex @AlexAtAmerican · May 28

Had a very positive small group discussion. Feeling optimistic about tomorrow's petition results! #GodLovesAll #bwcumc15

T.C. Morrow @tcmorrow8 · May 28

We need to keep praying and working for change here in Baltimore & around our country. #BlackLivesMatter #bwcumc15

Kirk VanGilder @KVG_DC · May 27

@bwcumc Thanks for getting captions on the live stream for #bwcumc15! Modeling accessibility for the connection. #umc #dreamumc

Erik Alsgaard @ealsgaard · May 28

#bwcumc15 Simon Peter wins favorite disciple with 663 votes. I think he may have a future in the church.

John Wesley's Horse @WesleysHorse · May 27

Whoops, accidentally walked into the Lay Session. I misheard someone and thought it was the Hay Session. #bwcumc15 #stillhungry

Kevin Wright @kevinkwright · May 28

"Friends, don't tell me what we can't do if we let God work through us." Bishop Marcus Matthews #bwcumc15

LE @ArtsHumana · May 28

"It's a Perfecting Storm!" This dramatic #arts performance by our young ppl at #bwcumc15 is giving me life! #artsEd #ministry

Elizabeth Jackson @rainingrabbits · May 27

Crazy. Good. Grateful for so many who have helped me reach this point in my journey. God is surprising, faithful and so good. #bwcumc15

Claire Matheny @clairematheny · May 29

Was Jesus an introvert? -Rev. Laurie Haller #bwcumc15

Adam Briddell @asburyadam · May 27

No reconciliation without relationships #gcorr #belovedcommunity #bwcumc15 @FoundrySocJust

AmyEll Duke-Benfield @Aedukefield · May 28

Thanks, @GingerGC, Bonnie, Mark, Pat, and Ron for the amazing worship at #bwcumc15 this morning!

emkaytweets @emkaytweets · May 28

Way to go young adults! Making #bwcumc15 more fun!

Theresa S. Thames @TsThames · May 29

@bwcumc Last night the Circles of Grace were really powerful as we listened and were present to one another #bwcumc15

sarah Dorrance @revsarah81 · May 28

"It now appears to be the dawning of a new day in the city of Baltimore." #bwcumc15

Donna Claycomb Sokol @DonnaSokol · May 29

What are you doing that you could not do apart from the power of God? #bwcumc15

Megan Blizzard @megblizz · May 27

BWC has given 100% of apportionment a since 1999! Because we are awesome! Dare to believe! #bwcumc15

Kirkland Reynolds @kirkrey · May 28

May church be where diversity and inclusiveness are not hollow words #bwcumc15

Rev. Bryant Oskvig @RevOskvig · May 27

"If you are going to be in extension ministry, be a three prong extension cord, be grounded" - Bishop Peggy Johnson #bwcumc15

Julie Wilson @UMdeaconJulie · May 27

"I don't know the candidate but... If she can win over my mom, she should be ordained". Awesome endorsement #bwcumc15

Sarah Schliekert @InHzService · May 28

Why can't men hug each other? Jesus would totally hug. :-) #bwcumc15

Circles of Grace allow all voices to be heard and respected

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON CONFERENCE MEMBERS again showed their leadership in the denomination by using the Circles of Grace process to deal with some potentially sticky resolutions.

At its foundation, Circles of Grace is a way to enable “holy conferencing” to take place, said the Rev. Maidstone Mulenga, Assistant to the Bishop, in introductory remarks to the process Thursday night.

During the Circles of Grace, members broke into more than 100 small groups of 10 to 12 people each. Sitting in circles, members used a “talking stick” – this year, a colorful toy boat – as they took turns sharing their thoughts on the resolutions. There, after being instructed by the bishop, members took time to listen to one another discuss four resolutions that had come to the conference seeking the BWC’s blessing before being sent on to the 2016 General Conference.

The first petition sought to remove the sentence,

“The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching” from the Book of Discipline. The other three resolutions concerned issues between science, theology and the church.

Following the Circles of Grace, members voted on each petition. The first petition was approved by a vote of 539 yes to 234 no. That petition will now go to the 2016 General Conference noting that the BWC has voted this way. Only General Conference has the authority to change the Book of Discipline, and they next meet in May 2016.

The other three petitions received mixed results. A petition that sought the General Conference to re-adopt a resolution in the Book of Resolutions around “God’s Creation and the Church” was approved by BWC members, 642 to 127. Two other petitions — one opposing the teaching of creationism in public schools, and one on climate change — were defeated, 370 to 403, and 330 to 438, respectively. Those petitions may

still be sent to General Conference by the author of the petitions, but they will not have the support of the BWC Session.



Holy Conferencing is an integral part of the Sacred Circle process for decision making.



More than 100 circles were formed for discussions on sexuality, and faith and science.

Circles of Grace – We Dare to Believe in...

Acceptance • Accepted • Accepting • Agape • Bouyant! (sic) • Calm • Calming Seas • Candid • Caring • Civilized • Clarify • Compassion • Compromise • Conciliatory • Courage • Creation • Dare to Love • Effective • Embrace • Embracing • Engaging • Enlightened • Enlightening • Eye-Opening • Family • Fruitful • Gentle • Gnarly • Grace • Grace-full • Grateful • Heard • Helpful • Holy • Holy Blending • Honest • Hopeful • Inclusion • Inclusive • Insightful • Listening • Love • Maranatha • Mosaic Tapestry • Obedience • Open • Open Crucible • Openness • Overwhelmed • Question Marks • Peter • Prayer • Respect • Respectful • Respectful Listening • Revealing • S.S. Inclusion • Safe • Scripture • Share-Clarity • Smooth • Soft-edges • Spirit-filled • Stimulating • Struggling • Synergy • Thoughtful • Togetherness • Truth • Turbulence • Understanding • Welcoming • Yes

Overview: In Baltimore and abroad, BWC is in ministry

From page 1

small groups in the hotel ballroom, sitting in circles of 10 to 12 people. There, guided by the bishop, members took time to listen to one another discuss four resolutions that

petitions and/or resolutions could be amended during the process. Currently, that is not possible. After several speeches for and against the Sichel amendment (using Robert’s Rules of Order), debate was

gathered, “Your loved ones’ lives are calling you to follow Christ. Never forget who you are and whose you are. You are children of the king.”



Bishop Seung Chul An of South Korea, left, brings greetings during a time of celebrating the partnership between the South Korea Methodist Church and the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

had come to the conference seeking the BWC’s blessing before being sent on to the 2016 General Conference. The first petition sought to remove from the Book of Discipline the sentence, “The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.” The other three resolutions concerned issues between science, theology and the church.

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Another moment of holy conferencing occurred during what is, normally, contentious debate. Jen Ihlo, chair of the BWC’s Rules Committee, brought a resolution that would incorporate the Circles of Grace process into the conference rules. Currently, conference rules must be suspended to use the Circles of Grace process. Matthew Sichel, a lay member from Wesley UMC in Hampstead,

halted by Bishop Matthews for the Memorial Service, a so-called “order of the day.” When the Session resumed after lunch, Matthews took to the stage. “Who knew that an order of the day would provide an



Bishop Marcus Matthews welcomes the 1,500 Conference members.

opportunity for us to dare to believe,” he said. “I’m always open to God’s surprises.”

During the break, he said, he, Ihlo and Sichel had had a chance to talk. “It was a time of holy conferencing,” the bishop said. “Matt and Jen have something to share with you.”

At that, Sichel and Ihlo came to the podium. Together, they announced that they had reached an agreement whereby they would withdraw the motion and the resolution to allow a time for reflection and information gathering regarding the Circles of Grace process.

“By mid-fall,” Ihlo said, “we commit to having a working resolution on the Circles of Grace, and we’ll post that on the BWC Website. Hopefully, by Jan. 15, we will have a resolution on the Circles of Grace that embodies the spirit of the Circles process but addresses the concern about perfecting resolutions.” “I would much rather sit down and have a conversation, get everyone’s thoughts, and reach common ground,” said Sichel from the podium. “I appreciated the chance to talk with Jen and the bishop.” Ihlo closed her remarks by noting that the process she and Sichel had participated in was a “prime example of holy conferencing.”

Conference members agreed, giving the pair a 60-second standing ovation.

At the Memorial Service, members celebrated the lives of bishops, clergy, clergy spouses and laity who had died in the previous conference year. Bishop L. Jonathan Holston of the South Carolina Conference preached, reminding the friends and families

assistant, Jannette Graulau, as they came to strengthen a new partnership between the two conferences.

- Welcomed Moses Kumar, General Secretary of the denomination’s General Council on Finance and Administration. He spoke at the Laity Session Wednesday night and thanked the BWC for its continuous 100 percent support of General Church apportionments since 1999.
- Overwhelmingly approved a \$17.2 million budget.
- Celebrated that 82 percent of BWC congregations paid 100 percent of their apportionments in 2014.

The 232nd session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference will be held June 1-3, 2016, at the Wardman Park Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C.



Robert Willasch plays a Native American flute.

moved to amend the Ihlo resolution. His amendment sought to bring a way into the Circles process whereby



Conference youth represent their districts in the opening processional.

Photos by Tony Richards