



UMC Connection

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Equipping Disciples to Transform the World • www.bwcumc.org • Volume 24, Issue 4 • May 15, 2013



Bishop Marcus Matthews invites members to bring the names of new disciples to the May 29 annual conference opening worship. He issued the invitation at the May 4 PreConference Session, which drew more than 1,200 people to Martin's West for a time of worship and holy conferencing.

Melissa Lauber

BWC begins 2013 holy conferencing

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

MORE THAN 1,200 United Methodists packed the hall at Martin's West in Woodlawn May 4 to celebrate together in worship, learn more about the issues facing the church and begin the business of the 229th Session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Bishop Marcus Matthews, who took over as episcopal leader of the Washington Area last September, presided for the first time over the conference in which he once served as pastor, district superintendent and Council of Ministries director.

The bishop stressed the need for lay and clergy leaders to participate in holy conferencing "as we come together as a community of faith to determine where God is leading us," he said.

As part of the holy conferencing, members learned about the proposed 2014 budget and 11 resolutions coming before the Annual Conference Session, including one on equitable compensation for pastors, five on conference rules and five on social issues.

Reports were also given on business that was carried over from the 2012 Annual Conference Session, including a recommendation for the conference not to move forward with a capital fundraising campaign and clarification of the relationship between the Conference and Be the Change, a 501(c)3 that addresses homelessness. (See related story on page 4.)

2014 Budget Considered

Charlie Moore, the chair of the conference Council on Finance and Administration, went over some of the highlights of the proposed 2014 budget of \$16.8 million. The proposed budget represents a 1.6 percent

decrease in spending from 2013 and a 7 percent decrease from the 2012 budget.

The proposed benevolence factor for local churches remains steady at 17.75 percent. In its planning, CFA is counting on the collection rate for apportionments rising from 91.5 percent in 2013 to 92.5 percent in 2014.

The proposed budget reflects the conference's missional priorities, Moore reported. The 2014 budget provides funding for a new young adult/campus ministry director position to resource local churches. It also reduces the number of Guides from 2 per region to 1.5 per region. The half-time position will focus on developing and nurturing youth ministries.

The budget also increases mission funding by 3 percent, adds \$60,000 for congregational development, increases deaf ministry funding to allow for two full-time pastors and adds \$213,000 to the Strategic Growth Initiative, which provides associate pastors to ethnic minority churches with high growth potential.

The 2014 budget, Moore said, also reduces funds

See Preconference, page 9

BWC statistics reflect growth in discipleship, mission & learning

BY MAIDSTONE MULENGA
UMConnection Staff

RESPONDING TO JESUS Christ's commandment to go and make disciples, United Methodist churches in the Baltimore-Washington Conference are sending more people on missions and community ministries, according to newly released conference statistics.

The conference is also seeing an increase in Christian formation, Vacation Bible School attendance and in the nurturing of disciples, the 2012 statistics reveal.

The annual statistics report provided by the Conference Treasurer Paul Eichelberger's office shows that there was a 24 percent increase in the number of people sent out on Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM)

teams in 2012 as compared to 2011.

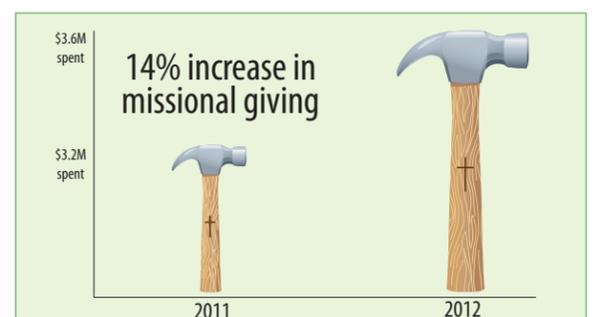
"That is what the church is about – mission," Bishop Marcus Matthews said in reaction to the numbers, adding, "sometimes we get so preoccupied with numbers that we forget what we are called to do as Christians, which is to make disciples of Jesus Christ."

Bishop Matthews noted that bringing souls to Christ is the top priority for the church. At the 2013 Annual Conference Session, Bishop Matthews will be receiving an offering of names of those who have been brought to Christ in the last year.

"When we talk about bringing the sacrifices of praise into the house of the Lord, we are talking about offering up names of those we have helped come into a relationship with God," he said.

BWC churches also saw a 7 percent increase in

the number of ministries for community outreach, justice and mercy, resulting in 1.1 million people – a 5 percent increase – being served by these community ministries.



See Statistics, page 9

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.

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

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

MAY IS THE month of May flowers and merriment, as in the "merry-merry month of..." and it is the whirlwind-fire month of Pentecost. It is also, if all goes right, the month of my ordination as a full member of the Order of Elders. It is a grand day, involving laying on of hands by our bishop and promises on my part to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, lead God's people to serve, and order the life of the church. We know that one major characteristic of God is faithfulness and the keeping of covenants (promises), and one major characteristic of ours is a disturbing tendency to be unfaithful.

What's a fallible, human "new full Elder" to do, in the face of all these intimidating promises, anyway?

Fundamentally, it all starts with our promise-making and promise-keeping God, who consistently pledges, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the age." The bedrock of covenantal promises rests, not on human goodness, but on divine grace. It rests on being a part of something bigger than simply we ourselves. It rests on the Church, who will help us keep promises, love us when we fail, and remind us of our own walk with God.

To promise is to take a leap of faith and to call on the best of who we are, but it is also to call on God to be all of who God is, too.

Baptized people have already made some of the most powerful promises I know of. Ordination promises are no less radical than the promises made at baptism or confirmation. In fact, I think they ought to send a news crew every time someone dares to approach a baptismal font!



And whether we make holy promises on our knees in an alb underneath a hotel chandelier or seated in a pew on some Sunday morning, or lying in a hospital bed, we make them standing on the promises of God.

"Standing on the promises of Christ my king, through eternal ages let his praises ring. Glory in the highest I will shout and sing, standing on the promises of God."

... well said

what does "promise" mean to you?
"chitchat" with us on
getUMSocial.com

BY DARYL WILLIAMS
Pastor, Nottingham Myers, Upper Marlboro

ALL OF US have had someone promise us something in life. Some of us were promised by a salesman that this would be the best car that we ever owned. Others of us have been promised by our wonderful children that their rooms would certainly be cleaned before the end of the week. No matter who made the promise it creates an expectation that something will come into being that we cannot see right now. If we are honest we know that all promises are not created equal.

The truth of the matter is a promise is only as good as the promise maker. There are plenty of times when we were promised something that we were at best suspicious of whether the promise would be fulfilled, because we knew the promise maker. Every promise is only as good as the ability of the promise maker to deliver on what they have promised. There will be times when we face disappointment because the person making a promise, while good intentioned, just does not have what it takes to deliver. Don't let that spoil you on promises.

There is one promise in which you can always have faith, any promise made by God. The wonderful thing about promises made by God is that they always come true. God has a perfect record of delivering on exactly what God said God would do. The greatness of God comes in the fact that God is all powerful so he can deliver on every promise he makes. There will be times when it will take longer than you expected, be tougher than you expected, and make you ask more questions than you expected, but just hang in there. God has it all under control and will deliver. That's a promise!

... well said

Congratulations

This month, we also lift up the word "blessings" for the Rev. Daryl Williams, who is one of the writers of the monthly page 2 column, "Well said."

On April 27, Daryl was married to Erin Nicole McCoy. We congratulate the couple and wish them all the best life has to offer. Congratulations!

EVENTS

Retreat on youth violence

May 18, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Seneca State Park, Gaithersburg

The Central Maryland UMW and UMM are co-sponsoring a retreat on the theme "Solving the Silent Crime: Intercepting Teen Dating Violence before It Hits the Evening News." For information, contact Kathleen Charters at kcharters@mac.com or 240-463-7598.

60th Anniversary celebration

May 18, 9 a.m. to noon

Board of Child Care, Baltimore

The Auxiliary of the Board of Child Care will observe its 60th anniversary during the Auxiliary's annual meeting, at 3300 Gaither Road in Baltimore. The celebration will honor some of the Auxiliary's key milestones over the past six decades. Registration is at 9 a.m., lunch at noon, followed by the business meeting at 1:30. Visit <http://boardofchildcare.org/help/auxiliary.php>.

Healing Communities training

May 25, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Randall Memorial UMC, D.C.

This intensive training helps churches heal broken lives and relationships among former prisoners and the communities that welcome them home. Cost is \$25, which includes continental breakfast, lunch and training materials. For more information and to register, visit www.randallumc.org/healing-communities.html.

Peace with Justice Sunday

May 26

For resources, visit www.umcgiving.org/site/c.qwL6KkNWLrH/b.3833883/k.512C/Peace_with_Justice_Sunday_Overview.htm.

229th Annual Conference session

May 29-31, 9:30 a.m.

Baltimore Marriott Hotel

The people of the Baltimore-Washington Conference gather for worship and holy conferencing. Visit www.bwcumc.org/events/annual_conference.

Workshop on pensions

May 29, 9:30 a.m.

Baltimore Marriott Hotel

A representative from the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits will explain the changes to the Clergy Retirement Security Plan, (CRSP) which will take effect Jan. 1, 2014. Registration is required through the online annual conference registration process. Re-open your registrations to sign up for this event.

Mission u

Marriott Hotel, Bethesda

July 26-28

Formerly called the School of Christian Mission, the training offers classes for everyone, youth and adults, women and men, clergy and laity. For information, contact the registrar, Darlynn McCrae, at 443-254-2083 or darmccrae@yahoo.com.

WEB HIGHLIGHTS



Online Pre-Conference Devotional Booklet

Daily devotionals to fan the flames of your faith & ignite the Christ-light within you.

www.bwcumc.org/growinlight



Thank God BWC Got Social

An all-access social network to what's new, the marketplace, BWctv, chitchat, galleries, and more.

www.getUMSocial.com



FAQs about Annual Conference

Questions collected from members at the Preconference Session are answered.

www.bwcumc.org/content/faqs_about_annual_conference

UM Connection

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UMConnection is the newspaper of the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church, whose vision is to seek to become like Christ as we call, equip, send and support spiritual leaders to make and cultivate disciples, grow vital congregations and transform the world.

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Be the Change ties clarified

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

WHILE THE CONFERENCE remains strong in its commitment to address homelessness, a clarification by the Council on Finance and Administration has made it clear that Be the Change Washington has no official relationship with the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

At the Preconference Session May 4, Charlie Moore, the CFA chair, reported on questions raised at last May's conference about Be the Change, a 501(c)3 developed by a group of conference leaders to create and provide permanent supportive housing to the homeless in Washington, D.C.

Moore led a six-member Be the Change Relationship Task Force. He told the Annual Conference members:

+ There is no formal relationship between the conference and Be the Change.

+ Recent actions have insured the repayment of a large portion of funds that have been advanced by the Conference Trustees through the Greater Washington District Reserves.

+ The Conference Trustees have full control over Calvary/Casa del Pueblo.

+ Work is being done by the Discipleship Council to provide guidelines for any entity wishing to be in official relationship with the conference.

No guarantees provided

Moore also reported that the task force rejected a time-sensitive proposal by Be the Change that the conference serve as the guarantor of funding on a \$25 million project to build 111 units of supportive housing on North Capitol Street in Washington.

"After extensive study and deliberation of this issue, with the help of industry experts, the task force felt that the guarantees would expose the conference to too much risk," he said.

While the task force's decision puts an end to the conference's participation in this particular venture, "it in no way reflects a diminished commitment on the part of the Baltimore-Washington Conference to address poverty and homelessness," said Bishop Marcus Matthews.

Audit explores background

An examination of Be the Change began in earnest at last year's annual conference session when Christie Latona of Emory Fellowship in Washington proposed a motion that an independent audit be performed to review the relationship between Be the Change and the



North Capital Commons (left) and Calvary Place (right) were proposed as supportive housing in D.C. by Be the Change.

Baltimore-Washington Conference.

The task force was formed in mid-2012 and subsequently hired the Novak Consulting Group, an Ohio firm, which has done organizational assessments for a variety of United Methodist groups.

Be the Change Washington was created as an independent, non-profit 501(c)3 in 2010 by a group of conference leaders, including Bishop John Schol, who at that time was leading the BWC; the Rev. David Argo, who was serving as conference director of connectional ministries; Conference Treasurer Paul Eichelberger and the Rev. Dean Snyder, pastor of Foundry UMC in Washington.

Snyder had taken Schol and others on a tour of a Common Ground property in New York City, which was hailed for its success in offering permanent supportive housing to the homeless. It was the intent of Be the Change Washington to bring some of the best practices and success of Common Ground to D.C.

Roseanne Hagerty, the director of Common Ground, visited Foundry and shared that its housing-first facility, the Prince George, cost approximately \$36 a night to operate, significantly less than public expenditures of \$54 for a city shelter bed; \$74 for a state prison cell, \$164 for a city jail cell, \$467 for a psychiatric bed and \$1,185 for a hospital bed.

In D.C., efforts began in partnership with Community

Solutions, a new organization led by Hagerty, to start two supportive housing facilities.

North Capitol Commons was planned for the NoMa neighborhood of D.C. on North Capitol Street. It would include 111 studio apartments, 64 of which are to be set aside for the homeless. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$25 million. Construction on the project was initially slated for the spring of 2013.

Calvary Place was intended to be located in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of D.C. in the former Calvary UMC, which was closed in 2010. This facility, which is also envisioned as housing a worship community, would provide 76 apartments for the homeless and working poor. The cost is estimated at \$16 million and construction was initially scheduled to begin in the first half of 2014.

The Calvary property has not yet been sold and is still owned by the Baltimore-Washington Conference. According to Thomas Starnes, the conference chancellor, the ultimate disposition of the Calvary property resides with the conference trustees, who are obliged by denominational and conference policy to dedicate the proceeds of the sale to urban ministry.

"Eighty five percent of people who enter permanent supportive housing never return to the streets," said Hagerty. "With this approach, they regain control of their lives. We have the evidence. We're not going to offer an aspirational promise or a prayer. We have a really solid plan. ... By welcoming and caring for the most vulnerable among us, we can participate in miracles."



Concern not 'what,' but 'how'

The Novak audit, released in December 2012, called Be the Change "a laudable initiative" that was consistent with the mission history of the conference. However, their concerns ultimately were "not 'what' but 'how.'"

For example, "no legislative action establishing Be the Change as an initiative of the annual conference was ever taken," Kim Novak explained in a meeting with conference leaders in December. In addition, while the story and plans of Be the Change were shared with conference members, information about the business relationship between Be the Change and the conference was never communicated, even when opportunities for this sharing presented themselves, said Novak. "These types of oversight fuel feelings of distrust."

Included in information about the business relationship, the audit revealed that in April 2012, the conference Board of Trustees signed an agreement to loan up to \$800,000 to Be the Change for pre-development expenses. In December 2011, \$7,350 from the bishop's discretionary fund was provided to Be the Change. In November 2012 Metropolitan Memorial UMC approved an additional loan of up to \$800,000 for pre-development expenses.

Of the conference's \$800,000 loan, Moore reported, \$519,000 was spent -- \$188,000 on the North Capitol project and \$331,000 on Calvary Place and general administration costs.

According to Starnes, all these expenditures and uses are permissible and were properly authorized.

Guarantees assumed by others

The audit also noted that in May 2012, Be the Change filed loan papers with the District of Columbia, saying the Baltimore-Washington Conference would be a potential guarantor of a \$5 million loan.

Task force members entered into in-depth conversation with Be the Change Washington board members. In their research, it was learned that the scope and nature of these guarantees was much broader than expected and included elements related to successful construction, completion, occupancy and operations. There were also issues of obtaining revenue benchmarks and compliance with IRS tax issues that could stretch out over 15 years, said Moore.

Based on their findings and analysis, Moore reported, the task force members made a recommendation, which was subsequently approved by the conference Council on

Finance and Administration and the Board of Trustees, that the conference is unable to support any requested guarantees from Be the Change.

In early May, Community Solutions found another guarantor, McCormack, Baron Salazar Development, Inc., a leading for-profit developer of economically integrated urban neighborhoods, who will also serve as the construction firm on the North Capitol Project.

Moore also reported that as a result of this agreement, Common Ground has assumed all responsibilities for the North Capitol project, ensuring the full repayment of the BWC's \$188,000 loan, plus 4 percent interest.

Moore continued to say that "at this point, the role of Be the Change Washington with Calvary Place is still under development. Once this is defined, we will have a better understanding as the probable dollar amount and timing of the repayment of the remaining \$331,000."

Other issues addressed

The task force also addressed several other issues and actions including a concern that the conference treasurer serving as treasurer of Be the Change represented a conflict of interest. (Eichelberger has since resigned as treasurer of Be the Change but continues to serve on the board of directors.)

They also called on the Discipleship Council has been tasked to develop a protocol to follow, not just for Be the Change, but for any group desiring a relationship with the conference.

The Discipleship Council is expected to provide an update on how such a protocol will be created to the members of annual conference when they meet in session May 29-31, said Cynthia Taylor, the chair of the Council, who served on the task force.

Homeless ministry still priority

"Every person involved in this discussion understands that homelessness is a serious social issue and all are interested in efforts to get our brothers and sisters off of park benches and church steps, and out of alleys, and into safe shelter," Bishop Matthew's assistant, the Rev. David Cooney, wrote in a letter to church leaders about Be the Change. "To be for or against Be the Change as a conference ministry is not to be for or against caring about the homeless. This is a discussion about the path, not the destination."

However, the Be the Change conversation "has provided a catalyst for the Baltimore-Washington Conference, as a whole, to identify a path forward for meeting the social challenges before us as we seek to act, in Christ's name, caring for the poor and marginalized," Matthews said.

Addressing homelessness is at the heart of who we are as a people of faith, Matthews noted. "I pray this conference never backs off the issue of trying to find housing for the poor," he said. "The challenge is how to do that together. At the center of any discussion of homeless ministries must be our commitment to care for the poor as we would care for Christ."

Be the Change Baltimore begins ministries

The 501(c)3 Be the Change Baltimore was developed in January 2012, but it adopted a different model to address homelessness.

Be the Change Baltimore focuses on local church initiatives in which congregations chose to repurpose their buildings to provide affordable housing, the Rev. Karin Walker explained.

Currently, Be the Change Baltimore is in partnership with two churches.

New Hope UMC in Edgewood, plans to sell its property to Episcopal Housing Corporation, which intends to invest \$19 million in creating supportive housing for the homeless.

New Hope is a "unique missional outpost," Walker said, which meets in a double-wide trailer and provides services to the homeless.

The other partner is Govans Boundary UMC in Baltimore, which voted in a church conference May 5 to sell its building to Baltimore Station, a nonprofit group that plans to repurpose the facility to provide 75 to 100 units of housing for disabled veterans.

Both churches will retain a presence and a worship space in the new facilities.

"A study of the Govans Boundary building found that it will be uninhabitable within five years," Walker said. "The 30 to 40 worshipping members see this as a possibility to sustain a long-term future."

"The sale of this building, said Govans Boundary's pastor, the Rev. Terry McCain, will assist the congregation financially while allowing the sacred property to be used for God's work by helping those who fought for our country and are now in need of shelter."

Butler provides legacy of outreach

BY LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff

WHEN PHYLLIS BUTLER died last June, she left a significant legacy to Arden UMC and the Baltimore-Washington Conference, both of which she served for many years.

Butler's husband, A. Elwood Butler, a farmer and orchardist she'd married in 1957, died in 2000; and their only child, Steven Pressley Butler, died in 1974. She served as accountant for many years for the family business, Butler Brothers Dairy and Orchard, which is still run by family members.

Butler was a good steward and knew she wouldn't spend all that she was caretaker of. So she turned to the conference, where she'd spent many years in leadership positions, and willed \$20,000 as an unrestricted gift.

As the conference learned of her background, they decided the bequest should go to the United Methodist Appalachian Ministries Network. "We looked into her activities and UMAMN seemed to be where her heart was," said Pier McPayton, conference controller. As a member of the Appalachian Development Committee (UMAMN's former name), Butler traveled to all 55 counties in West Virginia. UMAMN, an UMCOR Advance Special, covers the Appalachian states from New York to Mississippi. But West Virginia was where Butler's home, mission and heart were.

"It's an overwhelming gift," said the Rev. Bob Wilkins, executive coordinator of UMAMN. "We're very grateful that the conference would allocate the funds to us."

Butler was a dedicated and active member of Arden UMC until her death. She taught Sunday school classes, played piano and organ, directed the choir, was treasurer, lay leader and lay member to annual conferences, and served in many other capacities. She had been elected as lay member this year.

"She was my most avid supporter," said the Rev. Kathy Spitzer. "I miss her a lot."

Not only did the church benefit from her presence and welcoming spirit, but from her generosity as well. She left a \$30,000 legacy to the church. She had already

contributed generously to the building of the family life center, which will be named in her honor in the fall.

"She was my hero," said conference Director of Connectional Ministries, Sandy Ferguson, who oversaw many of the ministries in which Butler participated. "She had an impact on my life, especially when she was Conference lay leader," Ferguson said. "She was the first woman to serve in that capacity."

Butler had polio in her teens, delaying her graduation a year from high school in Martinsburg, and all her life coped with its after-effects. For the past 20 years or so, she was in a motorized wheelchair. But it never stopped her. She broke ground on many fronts as "the first." For five years she was chairperson of the Conference Council on Ministries. She also was a member of the General Council on Ministries for eight years, and enjoyed her work on the Advance committee for United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

"She was a very active member of our conference, very dedicated to mission and of course to the Appalachia area," said Sharon Leatherman who for several years headed UMAMN.

When the Frederick District was created in the early 70s, Butler was its first chairperson. She also held the position of president of the conference United Methodist Women (1976-1980), the first time the position had been held by a woman living outside the Baltimore and Washington areas.

The conference membership elected her as a delegate to General Conference five separate times, encompassing more than 20 years. In 1992, as the first lay person elected as a delegate, she led the delegation.

Spitzer took her to the dedication of the new conference center in August 2010, her last visit to the conference, where she was swarmed with people wanting to greet her, Spitzer said.



Phyllis Butler

Even with all her involvement in the church at all levels, she took time to read and travel. In 1991, she went to Singapore to attend the World Methodist Council. In 1990, she attended the Oberammergau Passion Play in Germany, as well as helping on a mission trip to Haiti in 1984. She visited 40 states including Hawaii and Alaska. Her local interests ranged from reading to elementary school children to serving on various local boards and committees.

Phyllis Puffenberger Butler was born in Washington, D.C., but when her mother died at age 5, she moved to Berkeley County to live with her grandparents and aunt, and never really left there.

Butler died June 8, 2012, a few months short of her 80th birthday. She had had an accident with her wheelchair that she didn't recover from. On the day before her death, she happily confided to her sister-in-law, Jenny Butler, that she saw angels coming for her.

"She was a hard worker, tireless, courageous, eloquent, and respected by clergy and laity alike," summarized Ferguson. "And she was always gracious."

What is UMAMN?

The Appalachian Ministry Network is designated by The United Methodist Church to work with local, district, conference and general church leadership to develop coordinated ministries that seek justice for all God's people in Appalachia. It particularly focuses on hunger and poverty in Appalachia, an area that includes 20 conferences stretching from New York State to Mississippi and encompassing three United Methodist jurisdictions.

Money from Butler's bequest will help provide education and training for local church leaders, lay and clergy, in an Appalachian context; provide grants to local churches for ministries that address childhood health and hunger issues; advocate on issues that impact Appalachia, such as those related to the coal mining companies; and address systemic causes of poverty in Appalachia, Bob Wilkins said.

UMAMN's office is located in the West Virginia Conference offices in Buckhannon, W.Va.

Church addresses human trafficking

BY CHRISTINE KUMAR
UMConnection Correspondent

Denene Yates has dedicated her life to providing safe arms to catch those who fall prey to human trafficking and abuse in Maryland.

More than 40 people from churches and advocacy agencies heard Yates and other speakers at Bethany UMC in Ellicott City April 24 to learn about human trafficking and what they can do to help children, adults or foreign nationals who are crying for help.

Yates, the mother of eight children, works countless volunteer hours as the director of Safe House of Hope in Baltimore. She keeps her cell phone close to her as she receives countless texts and phone calls from children who are hurting, need advice, or just need someone to listen to them.

"I grew up behind closed doors with secrets," she said. She spoke about the abuse she endured by a family member and how she found healing by helping other innocent victims. "We have to be the people who are willing to listen and not cringe or cry," she said.

"If you are interested, broken people fall into your

arms," Yates continued. "You've gotta have safe arms."

During a presentation by the Howard County Advocacy Against Slavery and Trafficking staff (HoCoAGAST), attendees shook their heads as they saw the growing statistics in the United States and Maryland. According to the Department of Justice, 300,000 children in the U.S. are at risk every year of sexual exploitation. UNICEF reports that 2.7 million children, especially young girls, are exploited

'If you are interested, broken people fall into your arms. You gotta have safe arms.'

nationwide, making this a \$32-44 billion industry.

The presenters also reported that human traffickers are not an exception in Columbia. A running list was displayed of those who were convicted of the crime in Columbia and surrounding areas. The presenters also spoke of how the traffickers prey on victims who are runaways or throw-away youth who live on the streets and are in need of a place to sleep and food to eat.

These victims generally come from homes where they

have been abused or abandoned by family members. Traffickers trick them by paying them compliments, providing good meals and giving them a place to sleep before forcing them into prostitution.

The Rev. Martin Brooks, associate pastor of Bethany and Emory UMCs, trusts that the church has safe arms to help those who are victimized by becoming aware of the growing epidemic and providing assistance to them. He expressed his concern about this issue to Bethany congregants and said that they were supportive of helping the children and adults.

Through Brooks' efforts, the two churches that make up the Ellicott City Parish have partnered with Linda Hayes, director of the crisis helpline and outreach ministry at the Howard County Link. Hayes will be running the Howard County Link from Emory UMC three days a week with the help of church volunteers. "Our mission will be to guide our most vulnerable county neighbors to financial aid to avoid evictions and utility turnoffs," said Hayes. "Plus, help them find food, medicine, shelter, housing, healthcare, job and other basic needs." This resource includes helping countless children who are runaways and throw-aways so that they can be in safe arms.

"Christ challenges us to go to the world with our hands and feet," said Brooks. "We have to go and act."

Prized communicator joins BWC Center staff

BY LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff



Rev. Moidstone Mulenga

STARTING APRIL 1, the Rev. Moidstone Mulenga, a clergy member of the Upper New York Conference, joined the conference communications staff, in charge of global affairs and new media. He will also serve half time as assistant to Bishop Marcus Matthews.

Since 2010, Mulenga served as Director of Communications in the Upper New York Conference in Syracuse, where he worked closely with Bishop Matthews. He is a journalist, with a master's degree in computer-mediated communications in addition to one in divinity. His divinity degree is from

Colgate Rochester Crozier Divinity School. He also holds a bachelor's degree from Wayne State University in Detroit.

As a journalist for more than 15 years with the Rochester (N.Y.) Democrat and Chronicle, his particular passion was to internationalize local stories and the reverse to localize international stories, he told his former paper as he left for Syracuse. "I strived to help Rochester understand the world better." This will also be part of his role in the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

He is the founding president of the Rochester Association of Black Journalists and serves as National Chair of the National Association of Black Journalists Ethics Committee. Mulenga is a member of the Board of Directors of the United Methodist Publishing House

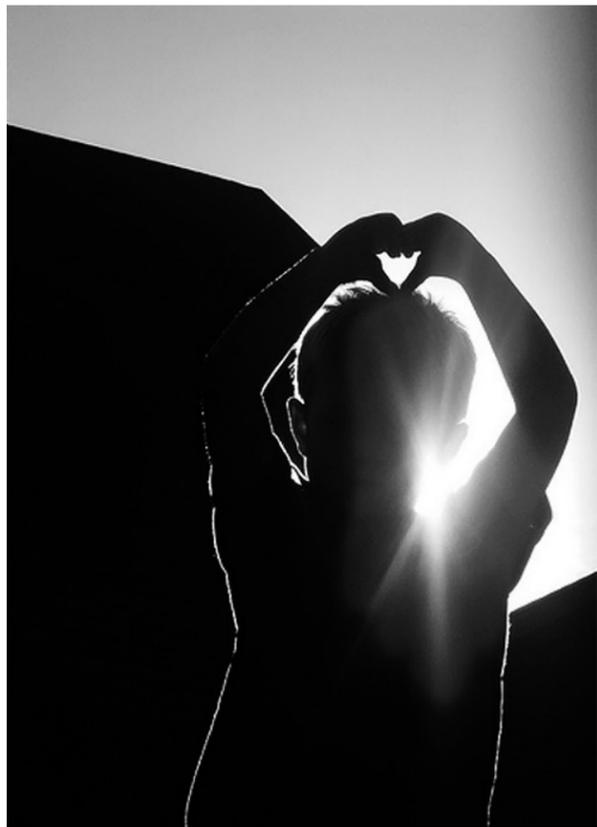
and was editor of the 2012 Northeastern Jurisdiction Conference Christian Daily Advocate. He recently was elected Vice President of the Black Staff Forum of The United Methodist Church.

Mulenga pastored churches in New York state after leaving his journalism career. He was also an active lay member for several years in his home church, West Avenue UMC, holding positions including Lay Leader, president of the Board of Trustees and was elected delegate to the 2008 General Conference.

He and his wife, Charity Chanda Mulenga, were married in Zambia, their home country, nearly 20 years ago. He has an 18-year-old daughter, Lukonde, who attends the University of Michigan; and a 15-year-old daughter, Mukuka, who attends Atholton High School in Columbia.

Photo contest winners reflect the light of God

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



Rachel Peterson, 16, Wesley Freedom UMC, Sykesville
Winner of first place in the People Category



Hailey Apperson, 10, Pine Grove UMC, Parkton
Winner of the Young Photographers Category

MORE THAN 200 photos were entered into the Baltimore-Washington Conference's Be the Light photo contest.

Images of people at play, butterfly wings, numerous sunrises over exotic places, a child coming forward to kneel at the altar railing, reflections, refractions and the sacred and mundane illuminated side-by-side all made their way into the contest.

Four winners in the categories of nature, people, miscellaneous and youth photography were named. Choosing the winner was a difficult task. So many of the photos drew us into remarkable stories.

We wanted to dance with the students from Zimbabwe, submitted by Lawrence Bennett of Community UMC, and embrace the young girl in Haiti leaning on a laundry line where the sugarcane workers live, an image captured by Terri King of Calvary UMC in Mt. Airy.

Several of the photographers explored a wide range of subjects. The Rev. Sandy Rector's shot a sack race at Oak Chapel UMC, a castle in Ireland, a beautiful young girl who had lost her front tooth and a butterfly landing on a summer tomato that a squirrel had recently picked.

Melissa Richardson sent a photo of a small blond girl looking straight into the camera from her hospital bed. In an e-mail that accompanied her picture, she wrote, "My daughter after multiple surgeries at Hershey Children's Hospital. Much LIGHT!"

Much light, indeed.



Beauford Williams – Epworth UMC, Baltimore
Winner of first place in the Nature Category

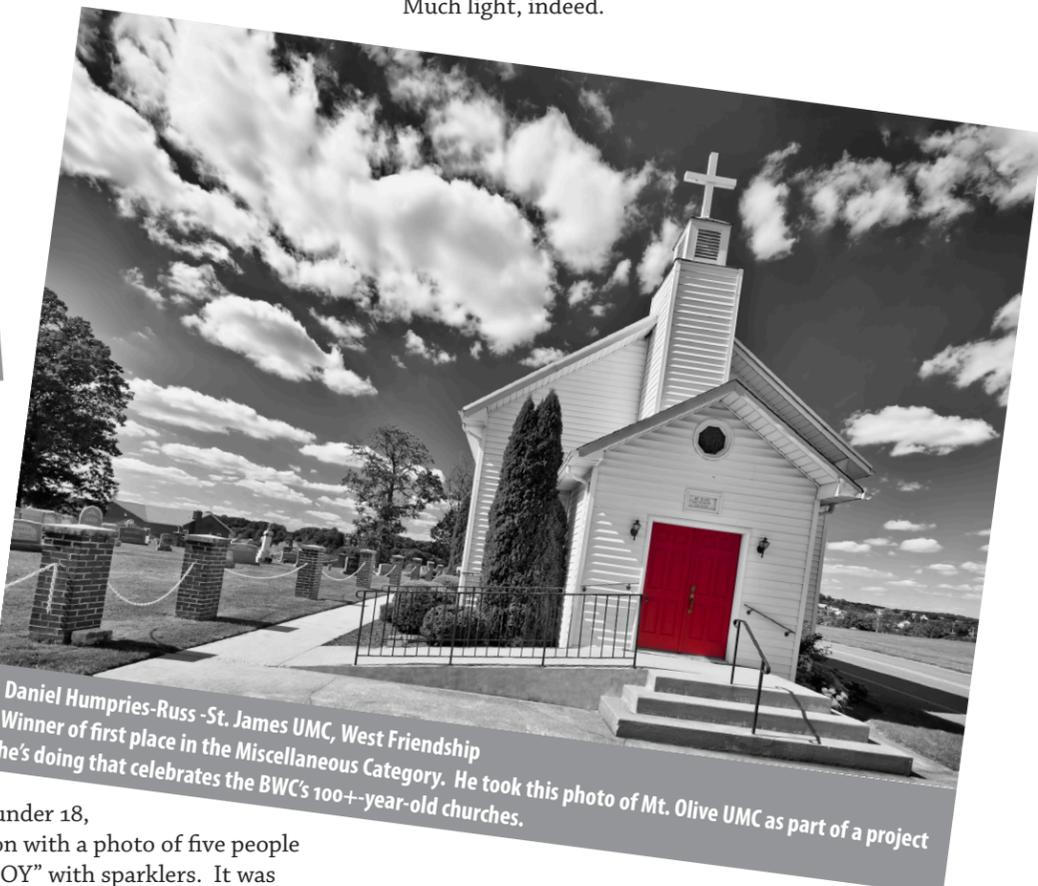
BE LIGHT, THE theme of the recent BWC photo contest, ignited the imagination of people throughout the conference. Of particular interest to us were some of the works made by the younger photographers.

Kelly Brewer, 18, of Glenmont UMC took the assignment to heart. She made a collection of photos of feathers and water droplets.

"Sometimes our lives get so crazy that we overlook God's light shining right in our faces. On the day I took these," she wrote in an e-mail, "I stepped onto my porch and came upon these gorgeous wet feathers. Looking at them I couldn't help but notice how the water drops captured and reflected the sunlight. It made me think about my own life and I couldn't help but think, am I like this water, reflecting God's light? It's an important

question, as we are the light of the world. I love how God's light is present in so many ways, everyday. I hope these photos can be a reflection of the joy I took in taking notice of God's light in nature."

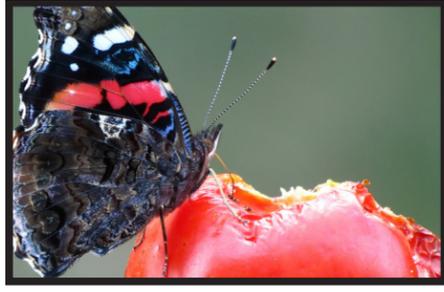
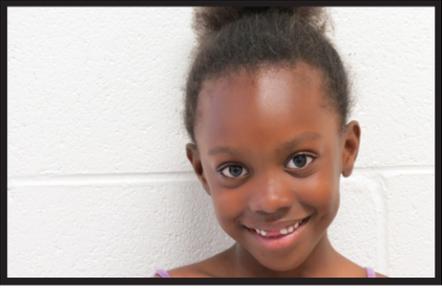
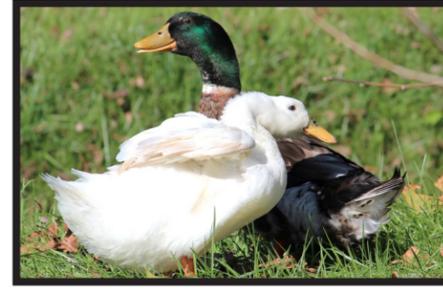
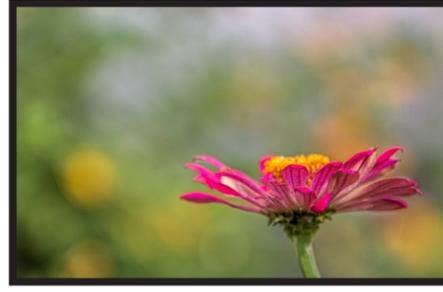
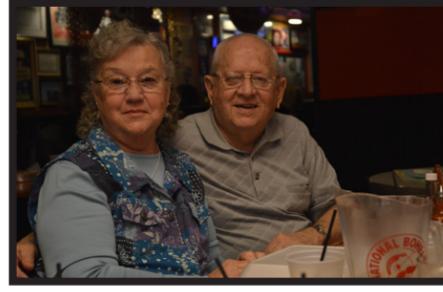
Stephanie Asher, another photographer under 18, also caught our attention with a photo of five people spelling out the word "JOY" with sparklers. It was perfect and some of the judges began to question if pictures can be too perfect. In the end, we determined, it didn't matter. Faith and photography are both about capturing joy where ever you find it.



Daniel Humpries-Russ - St. James UMC, West Friendship
Winner of first place in the Miscellaneous Category. He took this photo of Mt. Olive UMC as part of a project he's doing that celebrates the BWC's 100+-year-old churches.



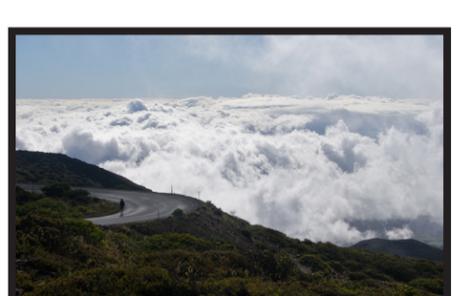
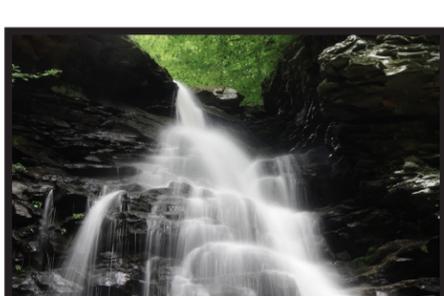
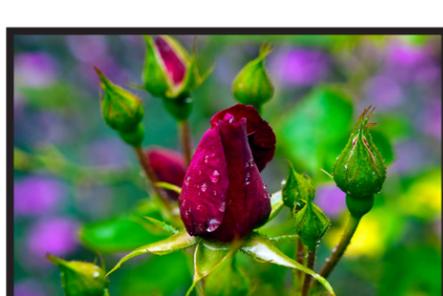
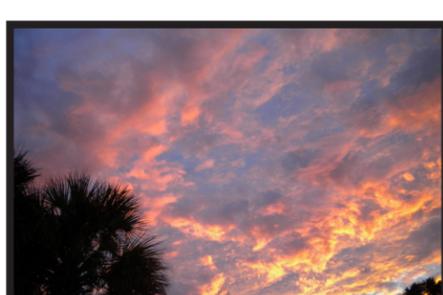
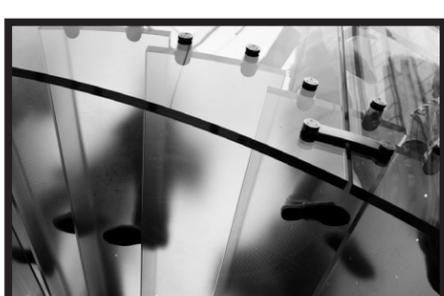
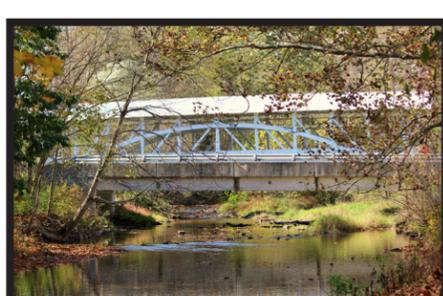
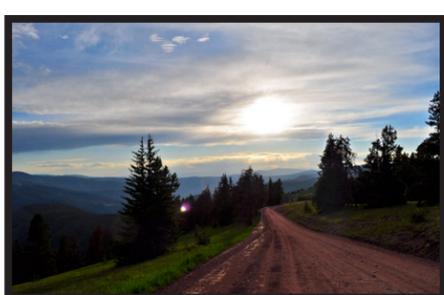
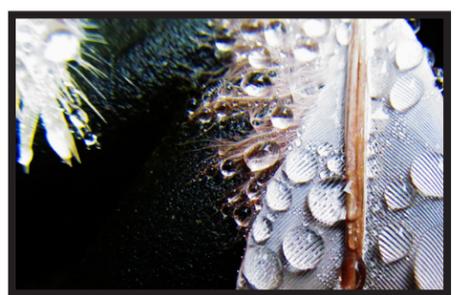
2nd place winners - left to right
Katelyn Reigger, Pasadena UMC
Nicolele Walker
Bryan O'Neill
Bill Conway
Cindy Stegle
Sally Ransom-Knecht





LIGHT

PHOTO
CONTEST



Laity explore wide range of ministry opportunities

BY LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff

IN THE CROWDED assembly room at Martin's West, lay members gathered for the Laity Session of the 2013 annual conference, meeting May 4 in a new way to do yearly meeting, with both clergy and executive sessions meeting in advance instead of May 29, the first day of the session of annual conference.

Delores Martin, the conference lay leader, told a little of what her role is as she introduced herself. She also introduced Sandy Ferguson, the first laywoman to head the Conference Connectional Ministries.

Sandy Jackson, the recently retired director of Connectional Laity Development in the division of Leadership Ministries of the General Board of Discipleship, was the keynote speaker.

Jackson stressed the importance of lay leaders being spiritual leaders first. "As baptized people we're expected to live holy lives," she said. "You're called to be a spiritual leader, both outside and inside."

Moving from general to specific, Jackson explained the roles of each lay person in leadership.

The lay leader, she said, represents the local church in the community, serving with the clergy. "As a leader, you're called to model discipleship," she said.

Lay members, elected by the congregation, are to prepare for and participate in all sessions of annual conference and report to the congregation. They also interpret to the congregation the actions that take place at the annual conference. In addition, the lay member serves on the Church Council, the SPRC and Finance committees. Lay members, like all laity who serve in the church, must seek to know and use their spiritual gifts in the life of the church, Jackson said.

Improving leadership in the church is "a continuous and multifaceted process," Jackson said. She urged lay members to consider moving toward being a certified lay servant, a new designation and rewrite of the old lay



Baltimore-Washington Conference Lay Leader Deloris Oden leads the annual laity session at Martins West May 4.

speaker role. Many lay members have already become lay speakers and Jackson suggested they move a step further.

After relating a little of the history of lay speaker ministry, as perceived and taught by John Wesley, Jackson noted that "lay speaker," started in 1956, but is no longer an adequate description of the lay ministry. For one thing, the lay speaker has often been defined and used solely to fill the pulpit when the clergyperson couldn't. Lay servant "is way more than preaching," Jackson said. The name change passed at General Conference in 2012. "We have to get over the old name," she said.

Who are lay servants? They are laity ready to serve,

informed, committed and equipped.

To be equipped to be a lay servant and to be certified requires taking several courses, offered by each district twice a year, including preaching, discerning spiritual gifts, leading prayer, United Methodist polity and heritage.

Lay speakers in the audience resisted some of Jackson's instruction, specifically raising questions about why a lay speaker has to take so many hours of coursework for the new role of lay servant, when they had already had the training in preparation for lay speakerhood. Jackson said they could apply those courses to those required of lay servants. She added that in order to do that, the lay speaker would have had to first keep up with the required refresher courses.

Certified Lay Ministry (CLM) is something quite new, requiring two years of training in modules four times a year for seven weeks each, explained Sondra King-Shaw, the conference director for CLM. "CLM is in partnership with God to grow disciples," she said.

The conference has 156 certified lay ministers (CLM), 19 of the new class of 24 were present. They received certificates of completion of their courses.

What does a CLM do? The answer is wide ranging and includes leading small churches as a local pastor, assisting senior pastors in ministry, teaching courses and classes, serving as a church's administrative assistant, parish nurses, children's and youth ministries. "The possibilities are limited by you and your district approval," Jackson said.

"Lay servants and members can be agents for change in the direction we're taking the church," Jackson said. "Discover your spiritual gifts, discern your passion and listen for God's direction," she instructed. "Listen for God's will in all you do. ... It is important that the clergy and the laity ... live out our ministry as we have been gifted and called whether it is in the factory, or the hospital; at work or at home; in the church or in the community."

New associate director reflects on ministry with poor

BY ANDREA MIDDLETON KING
Special to the UMConnection

BY MY COMMUNITY'S standards, my family was considered "rich" because we had a cinder block house and an indoor toilet. My father was a truck driver-turned-carpenter's-apprentice, married to a stay-at-home cosmetologist, with two sons in elementary school and two younger daughters (I was the elder of the two girls).

At age 4, I used to watch my brothers go off to school in the mornings and beg to go along with them. As a little black girl growing up in the isolated rural South (with a sister in a playpen), there was not very much to do except follow my mother around the house and watch television. Soon I developed a morning television ritual and a passion for watching Captain Kangaroo.

I was pretty content with mornings with the Captain and afternoons with Mr. Rogers, while learning to cook and do housework with my mother to fill the hours in-between. Then a few months before my sixth birthday, some people from town and our pastor came to talk with my parents.

After that conversation, my mother announced to me that I finally would be able to go to school, a special summer school.

Even as I watched, President Lyndon B. Johnson on our black and white TV, deliver his State of the Union address in January 1964, declaring "War on Poverty," I didn't realize its impact on me. At the time President Johnson appointed Sargent Shriver to oversee the coordination of academic activists and the assembly of civil rights activists to develop the strategy that would facilitate children in overcoming the obstacles intrinsic in poverty. By May 1965 President Johnson was announcing Project Head Start, an educational program for low-income communities.

In the summer of 1965 I went to school for the first time. At school we learned to read, write, count and color. Grown-ups there checked our vision, hearing, and gave us dental supplies. We ate a snack each morning. By mid-day we were on the way home. The program

only lasted for eight weeks, but its impact has lasted a lifetime.

My love for learning had been stimulated, and my passion for Captain Kangaroo had been replaced by a passion for education. I still remember my teacher Mrs. Dantzler, and her daughter Jade, who was a teacher's aide and a college student. As a 5-year-old I did not realize that I was one of the very first Head Start students. Not until I was well into my adulthood did I understand that I was an active participant in "The War on Poverty." Recent headlines about the "sequestration," which has put automatic spending cuts into effect, will impact Head Start programs all over the country.

Pre-school aged children of lower-income families will not only be denied the opportunity to begin the educational process with a solid foundation, they will also be denied nutritional meals, basic medical assessments, and the opportunity to socially prepare for entrance into the public school system. Shortages in educational funding can create long-term deficits in the lives of these children and consequently the larger communities in which they will grow, work and live.

Poverty, at its most basic, simply means lack or deficit. As a child in the rural South, poverty meant not having an indoor toilet. As an adult, poverty has taken on a multitude of different meanings, especially after the Holy Spirit led me to read Psalm 86. David cries out: "Bow down. Hear me, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy!"

Whoa, overwhelmingly rich King David saying to God. "I am poor and needy"? That's when the realization hit me that God was using the psalmist to address many areas of life in which we can be impoverished, lacking love, mercy, safety, peace, justice, spiritual soundness, political power, emotional well-being, physical health and strength – not to mention educational shortfalls.

While David does have economic wealth, the psalm speaks to other gravely impoverished areas of his life, which says to me that each of us has areas of wealth and each of us has areas of lack. The challenge is to pool our

collective resources so that we may be able to give and to receive in mutually beneficial ways.

As the new Baltimore-Washington Conference associate director for ministry with the poor, I am challenged to bring what we have to a common table, a place where we share what we have and take what we need to both sustain ourselves and build up others. Considering King David was crying out to God about being poor and needy, I feel certain that he was not only crying out for himself but standing as an intercessory voice for others.

David's prayer was and continues to be an investment into the lives of others, even as Lyndon Johnson's State of the Union Address (and his support of early childhood education) became intercession for me and thousands upon thousands like me.



Rev. Andrea Middleton King, one of the first Head Start pupils

Preconference: Members learn more about 11 resolutions

From page 1

spent on conference insurance, legal expenses, IT systems and moving expenses.

In the past, CFA has expressed interest in lowering the benevolence factor to 16 percent, or roughly one-tenth of a church's income. Toward this end, it has created a connectional giving task force to explore the implications of such a move on local church finances, apportionment giving and the conference budget, Moore said.

In other financial matters, Jim Johnson, chair of the Commission on Equitable Compensation, said that the commission is proposing a 2 percent increase in the minimum salary to \$39,728. No change is recommended in the housing allowance of \$19,534.

This proposal is a change from the original resolution of no increase that was noted in the 2013 Preconference Booklet. It was revised following conversation at the spring Connectional Table and subsequent discernment by the commission.

Resolutions highlighted

Members to the May 29-31 Annual Conference Session will be asked to vote on 11 resolutions. Jen Ihlo, chair of the conference Rules Committee, provided a brief overview of each one. They cover such topics as:

- Examining the church's role in evolutionary scientific thinking;
- Ending bullying;
- Preventing gun violence;
- Encouraging the practice of earned sick time;
- Divesting from firms involved in the Israeli/Palestine conflict;
- Creating a conference personnel committee;
- Amending the rules of the session to be more in line with current practices;
- Defining the role of the Discipleship Council;
- Crafting new rules on the selection of committee chairpersons; and
- Electing delegates to General Conference a year earlier than usual, in 2014.

Members of the conference submitted a variety of questions on white index cards on the resolutions and other issues. Many of these questions were answered and several, especially those on the resolutions dealing with social issues, will appear in a FAQ page on the conference website. (www.bwcmuc.org/content/faqs_about_annual_conference)

The questions covered a wide range of topics: the

strategic importance of the episcopal office on Capitol Hill; a new tenant that will be moving into the space in the Conference Center vacated by the Cokesbury bookstore; the importance of addressing substantial arrearages in pension and medical payments by several local churches; developing a strategic approach to campus ministries; the role of Guides in providing contextual ministry support to congregations; and why funding support is being given to minority ethnic churches for associate pastors, rather than to multicultural congregations.

Worship focuses on sowing the seed

Sow the Seed/Be Light is the theme of this year's Annual Conference Session. That theme was reflected throughout the morning worship at the Preconference session. It was also featured in the sermon delivered by the Rev. Terri Rae Chattin, superintendent of the Frederick District.



The Rev. Terri Rae Chattin preaches at the Preconference Session.

Chattin celebrated the potential of the seed and the "great and gratifying things that result from small beginnings."

She encouraged those present to harvest what others have planted while planting the seeds for others to harvest, all the while centered on the faith of a people who have not seen and yet believe.

"Faith is given to us in the measure in which we are able to go out in faith," Chattin said. "If we're willing to move out in faith, to reach into new generations, to new communities, in new ways, then our faith will carry

"And therefore, let the immeasurable come. Let the unknowable touch the buckle of my spine. Let the wind turn in the tree, and the mystery hidden in the dirt swing through the air. How could I look at anything in this world and tremble, and grip my hands over my heart? What should I fear? As sure as God is faithful the harvest will come."

-Benediction from Mary Oliver's Little Summer Poem Touching the Subject of Faith

us through. ... We must keep on sowing. Believing that we can is not enough; believing that we will is what is required."

During the afternoon, the clergy met separately in their annual executive session and the laity met to hear more about conference ministries. (See the story on the laity session on page 8.)

The full session of this year's Baltimore-Washington Conference will be held May 29-31 at the Waterfront Marriott in Baltimore. For more information, visit www.bwcmuc.org/events/annual_conference.



The Rev. Dred Scott raises his hands in praise during the Preconference worship.

Statistics: Churches report increase in missional giving

From page 1

With an increase in the ministries, there were more United Methodists participating in the community ministries (7 percent increase) and in outreach ministries (4 percent increase).

"It is a new spirit and you can feel it," said BWC Director of Connectional Ministries Sandy Ferguson. "Even before I saw the statistics, I knew that we were doing more in ministries than before."

She noted that while it has taken some time for some churches to become more involved, there has been "a significant increase when we encourage and recruit more of our members to engage in ministries within and outside our communities."

In addition to actual mission work, churches increased their financial support of missions and ministries, and not only of those sponsored by The United Methodist Church but other benevolent and charitable causes as well.

The amount of direct costs incurred by the local churches for mission and community ministry activities rose from \$1.8 million in 2011 to \$2.4 million in 2012, a 32 percent increase. The total spent by local churches on UMC causes and missions was up 14 percent from \$3.2 million in 2011 to \$3.6 million in 2012. BWC churches also gave \$5.3 million to non-United Methodist benevolent and charitable causes, a 6 percent increase.

"The local churches are not only talking about mission and ministry but committing their resources to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ," Bishop Matthews said about the increase in missional giving.

The missions BWC churches are engaged in include the United Methodist Community Services, Peace

with Justice, criminal justice and mercy ministries, Imagine No Malaria, Zimbabwe partnership, health and wellness, Hope for the City, mission in Nicaragua, Asian Initiative and Russia Initiative. The conference also sent more than a dozen VIM teams to West Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Haiti, Liberia, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

Apart from reaching out and spreading the Gospel, churches also saw a rise in Christian formation as there was a 2 percent overall increase in the number of participants in Christian formation groups and other small group ministries. More than 18,400 children participated in Christian formation groups, while more than 30,500 adults participated in Christian formation ministries. There was a slight decrease in the participation of youth and young adults.

While there was an overall 1 percent decrease in Sunday School attendance, there was a jump in the attendance of Vacation Bible School. With nearly 25,000 participating in VBS, the conference saw a 7 percent increase from 2011.

Church experts have noted that churches should provide Vacation Bible School, since it offers a unique approach to Christian education during the summer months. At most VBSes, participants learn from the Bible in a fun way and get a chance to meet new friends and experience fun, Bible-themed activities. For many churches, VBS has also become a family affair and an excellent outreach tool into the community.

Apart from VBS, there was also a 2 percent increase in the number of ongoing classes for learning for all ages. Confirmation preparation classes saw a 7 percent increase, with up to 1,493 participants.

In terms of professing members, the number of racial and ethnic members continues to grow even as the number of white professing members continues to decline.

Hispanic, Asian and multi-racial professing members rose a combined 21 percent in the BWC last year. Hispanic/Latino members rose by 3 percent to 672 while Asian members rose by 2 percent to 2,167 and multi-racial members by 16 percent to 1,348.

White membership dropped 2 percent to 129,818, while African American professing membership was down 1 percent to 39,559. Pacific Island members fell by 34 percent to 174 and Native American membership stood unchanged at 129.

Overall, the total professing members in the conference was 177,160, down 2 percent, mostly due to correcting of the previous year's reporting errors. In terms of new members, the conference received 3,591 by profession of Christian faith, 718 by reaffirmation of faith, 1,046 by transferring from other United Methodist churches and 625 by transferring from non-United Methodist churches.

Average worship attendance at all weekly worship services dropped 2 percent to 64,542 while the number of persons who were baptized was down 2 percent to 2,463. The number of baptized members who have not become professing members was 11,396, a less than 1 percent decrease.

On the business side, the market value of church-owned land/buildings and equipment in the conference rose to \$1.4 billion, a 4 percent increase and there was a 4 percent decrease in debt secured by church physical assets.

Bishop May implores, 'By all means, save some'

By BISHOP FELTON EDWIN MAY
Special to the UMConnection



Bishop Felton Edwin May

TRAGEDY COMES IN threes, some say. If that is so, then we've had our share on U.S. soil this spring. What's left are vexing questions about what we can and will do next to limit future tragedies.

The beloved Boston Marathon became a Boston Massacre last month when two unsuspected terrorists took precious lives and left broken, bloodied victims, along with a nation in shock at its own vulnerability. Then a fertilizer plant's storage facility exploded in tiny West, Texas, also taking lives, destroying homes and leaving us once again dismayed at our vulnerability – this time to environmental disaster when regulations are too often broken and not adequately enforced.

However, the third tragedy may be the most insidious and lethal over time because it has – and will – cost us many more lives through violence, murder and suicide. I'm referring, of course, to the collection of sensible gun control bills that held such promise for our nation's safety and sanity. Even the heavily compromised background checks bill failed to reach the U.S. Senate's 60-vote threshold to become a law of the land. Sadly, the news coverage and painful outcry from that tragedy were too quickly muted.

While the deadly crimes and mayhem in Boston prompts investigations, analyses and maybe public policy decisions, the post-mortem on the Senate vote against gun safety can only evoke just criticism and cries of shame ... for now.

As he pleaded with the Tsarnaev brothers to surrender, their distressed uncle railed at them on television for the shame they had brought on their

family. I and many others could echo his cries at our Senators who broke the hearts of gun victim's families everywhere and also broke their vow to represent the interests of voters, an overwhelming majority of whom support universal background checks for gun purchases.

The most shameful part of that vote was the lies of opponents and conspiracy theorists who misrepresented the content and intent of the bills before them and who profess more concern for protecting our right to keep and bear arms than protecting what our Constitution and our culture both value most: human life.

Twenty-five people were shot over Easter weekend alone in my hometown, Chicago; and more than 400 young people there were victims of gunshots last year. We are forced to grieve over too many Hadiya Pendletons – young lives lost to illegal gun possession and senseless gun violence.

Indeed, God's Sixth Commandment should be more vital to God's faithful than our Constitution's Second Amendment – enough so that rampant murders, whether they happen all at once or daily in our streets and homes, should prompt us to adhere even more vigilantly to the Commandment than to the Constitution. Besides, no rights exist without responsibilities and necessary rules. Even the most fundamental right of voting requires registration and increasingly, verification.

The devotion some have to their right to possess arms becomes irrational when they see it as a right to willfully buy and sell arms – which is not in the Constitution. And zealous resistance to legal oversight or common-sense constraints, or to making existing public safety laws more universal, and thus more effective, is more than irrational; it's dangerous. To restrict background checks to store sales and not include gun-show, person-to-person and Internet sales makes a mockery of the law and places everyone at risk.

Gun-safety laws have been proven to work, despite the persistent lies of those who assert otherwise. Those

who ignore that critical truth and instead submit to the purely mercenary motives of the National Rifle Association will bear blood on their hands for every death caused by firearms that end up in the wrong hands unnecessarily.

Nevertheless, I am decidedly hopeful — my faith demands as much — that God's truth is marching on. We must appreciate and be encouraged by the progress of this recent and recurring endeavor. It took advocates a half-dozen tries before the Brady Bill was signed into law two decades ago, although that law was later weakened. The poignant advocacy offered by courageous families of the Newtown, Conn., mass shooting victims prevailed to force a Senate vote against efforts to prevent it through a filibuster.

"We deserve a vote!" President Obama and the families of many victims proclaimed. And we got one.

Now we deserve much more. We must keep going, keep pushing, keep praying and organizing and working for gun safety – indeed, gun sanity – laws that will surely save some lives. Not all, but some.

That's what the Apostle Paul wrote of his valiant mission to save souls in 1 Corinthians 9:22: "That we might, by all means, save some." So let us use all means – from hosting prayer vigils, protests and community forums, to buying ads and publishing opinions in print and social media, even to registering, informing and transporting voters to the polls during the crucial 2014 Congressional elections.

Estimates cite more than 3,500 U.S. gun deaths since the Newtown massacre four months ago; and that figure pre-dates last week's Boston massacre. We can't be daunted by the unprincipled Senators who voted no to sensible gun safety laws, whether they did it for heartless or spineless motives. We still have work to do, a charge to keep, a commandment to follow for the sake of thousands of victims and their families and for countless others who will surely become victims if we don't prevail. By all means, let us try to save some.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Remembering 150 years ago

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Asbury UMC participated in the Emancipation Day parade April 16, the only church body to do so, according to the program. The Rev. Louis Shockley received an invitation from DC Council member, Vincent Orange, to walk in the parade to commemorate the 3,100 slaves freed by President Lincoln April 16, 1862, with the declaration of the Compensated Emancipation Act. The move came nine months before slaves were freed throughout the nation.

UMW helps 'dress' Haitian girls

MONROVIA – Inspired by Steve Hull, founder of The Least of These Ministries, the United Methodist Women at Pleasant Grove UMC responded. They sewed 24 print dresses for little Haitian girls, and sent them off first hand with Hull and his wife Ann to the Dominican Republic, where the ministry distributes food and clean water to Haitian refugees.

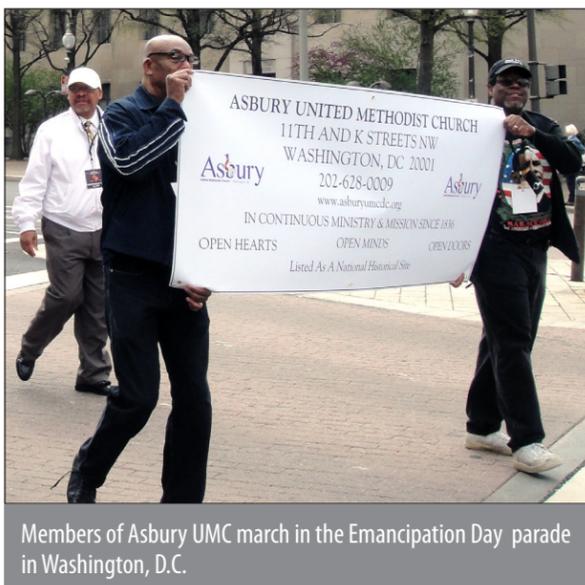
The simple colorful dresses were modeled by some of the girls in the Sunday School, blessed and dedicated March 10. "The dresses were given with love to those in need," said Ann Harden, the project's coordinator.



Sunday School students at Pleasant Grove UMC model dresses made by the United Methodist Women for girls in Haiti.

Group makes comfort blankets for patients

HUNTINGTOWN – The Plum Point Pearls formed in 2012 to crochet blankets for breast cancer patients in Calvert County. With 26 members, including five "young Pearls," 16 and under in age, they meet Saturday



Members of Asbury UMC march in the Emancipation Day parade in Washington, D.C.

mornings. They made a total of 50 blankets in 2012 and donated 33 of them to the local breast cancer center for patients to choose from after surgery. "Our hope is that the blankets offer warmth and comfort," said one member, as they continue crocheting. Before the blankets go to their destination, the church holds a blessing ceremony.

Supper honors wounded vets

CHEWSVILLE – Bethel UMC, in a switch from its usual Sunday night suppers, held a Saturday supper Feb. 9, as part of developing a relationship with veterans who are trainees at the Veteran's Administration Acquisition's Academy in Frederick.

"These are Wounded Warriors," said Stephanie Bealla, the program coordinator, "who due to injuries received in Iraq or Afghanistan had to retire from the active military." They're being retrained for jobs in the VA. Many of the vets are separated from their families for most of the two-year program.

Attending the event were 119 veterans, some family members and church members. "It was a special time of fellowship for both the veterans and the church members," Bealla said.

One of the Warriors stood up and in a little speech asked that we continue this as a yearly event, she said. The church is also planning for a cookout in the summer.

Women remember march for suffrage

OVERLEA – The Rev. Karen Davis, megaphone in hand, was on the front lawn of the Overlea –Fullerton Community Center at 8 a.m. on a drizzly Saturday morning Feb. 23. She was there to offer the invocation and march with 200 other women and a few men for the commemorative 100th anniversary of the Suffrage March of 1913. That march, 230 miles from New York City to Washington, D.C., went through Overlea on today's Bel Air Road, on its way to Baltimore.

Davis, the pastor of the Mt. Washington-Aldersgate-Overlea Chapel UMC Cooperative Parish, evoked her sisters of old, "Foot-stomping, passionate, out-loud, powerful women. Bruised souls whose blistered feet marched, marched, marched to the beat of those two soul-swaggering sisters: justice and equality ..." as she offered a blessing.

It took the 1913 marchers 17 days to get to Washington, but there they joined 5,000 people in what was considered one of the most dramatic events of the suffrage campaign. It took another seven years, to 1920, to ratify the 19th amendment to the Constitution, for women's right to vote.

Asbury UMC expands for community

SHEPHERDSTOWN, W. VA. – Asbury UMC broke ground March 10 for a new \$2.2 million multi-purpose center, 25 years after the current building was opened. The original church was founded in 1867, according to Lorraine Rutherford, the church administrator.

Pastor Ginger Medley led about 200 congregants in worship on the lawn of the church, exclaiming, "This is the work that God has commissioned us to do."

The new 24,000-square-foot expansion will be finished in about a year. It will include a gym, six classrooms, a nursery, restrooms and a commercial kitchen, said Clark Dixon, the building committee chairman.

"This is the house of the people of God," said the Rev. Rudy Bropleh, the church's senior pastor. "It's a place for recreation, classrooms and community."

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

Church needs to reclaim its language and its power

BY REV. MATT POOLE

Senior Pastor, Glen Mar UMC

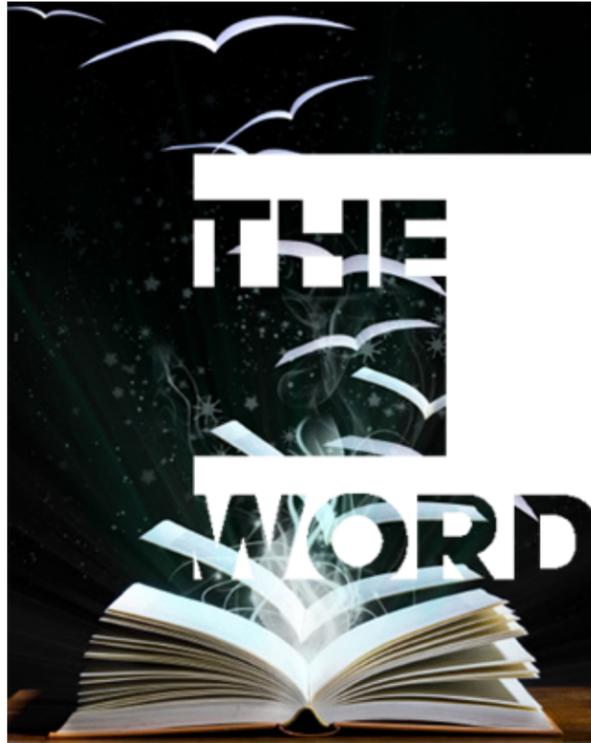
EVANGELISM MARKETING IS a rather recent concept in the business community that encourages word of mouth marketing about products or services and promotes customer loyalty. The idea is to get a customer to become so loyal that they convince others to buy and use the product. I find this interesting that the business world is embracing the word evangelism, which means “to share or bring good news,” at the same time the church seems to be rejecting it.

I find many Christians who like to hide behind the quote from Francis of Assisi; “Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words.” We tend to interpret this as advice not to use our words or say anything about our faith at all. St. Francis was not only a man of action but a man of words. During the crusades while men fought against the Muslims, St. Francis went to the Sultan himself to share the good news with him. The sultan would have been converted to Christianity if it had not been for the fact he would have lost his life as a result.

St. Francis also sent out his followers two by two to share the good news as Jesus commanded. This suggests that St. Francis understood that it was “necessary” to be an evangelist in the best sense of the word. He was concerned that our actions and our words be in alignment. There are times when basic needs are to be met before someone can actually hear the good news. This is true in many places, but many people living in America today already have their basic needs met. They are longing for the life-changing message of Jesus Christ and there is simply no one sharing it with them.

St. Francis also said, “Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the

impossible.” When Jesus invited some fishermen to become followers he encouraged them with the phrase, “Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for people!” (Luke 5:10) So we find that it is necessary to share our faith with others. If we do not use our words of good news, others are unlikely to understand our good actions. They are less likely to connect our good



actions to God and we personally get all the credit for the good we do instead of God.

Evangelism in its purest and simplest form is to share with others the good news. What may intimidate us or feel uncomfortable to us is thinking that evangelism is converting people to our way of thinking. I am going to go out on a theological limb here and say that God does not ask us to convert people. God is the one who does the converting, not us. As fishers of people we are simply the ones casting the net of good news into the world. Some will swim into the net of good news and some won’t. God only asks us to share our faith with others.

And why wouldn’t we share our faith if it is good news! If the message of Jesus Christ is a life giving message that helps people in this life, wouldn’t we want to share it? We share the good news of a birth, a new job, a new car, a marriage, an anniversary and many other good things happening to us. The life giving grace of Jesus Christ is something good that has happened to me and changed me for the better. I can’t think of a good reason not to share this life giving message. God can use each of us through words and good actions to help root people in the life-giving message of Jesus Christ.

I know Bishop Marcus Matthews has challenged each of us to bring one person to Christ. I once prayed that God would give me the opportunity to bring 10 people to Christ in one year. Within six months I realized I had shared the good news and prayed with 11 people. After that I stopped counting, because it really isn’t about keeping score. God needed to change me in regards to sharing my faith and not other people. When we are open to the opportunities to share the Good News we find them all around us.

How do you create a culture of evangelism?

BY REV. KEVIN BAKER

Lead Pastor, Oakdale Emory UMC, Olney

REMEMBER IT LIKE it was yesterday. It has only happened once, but once was enough to make a lasting impression on me. About 13 years ago, I was in the middle of a sermon on an average Sunday morning. I can’t recall much about the sermon except that I was pressing the point that God in Jesus was inviting us home. I was talking about how it felt to be far away from home and desperate to get back. Right then, in the middle of my words, she stood up. She didn’t move, just stood straight up, and said out loud for everyone to hear, “I want to come home!”

As I looked at her, she was weeping — not merely crying — but weeping so that her nose was running and tears were pouring down her cheeks. I stopped preaching, walked over to where she was and put

my arm around her. In a gentle voice, with tears still streaming, she said, “I want to come home and have a relationship with God.”

Right there, in the middle of the room, in the middle of the service, I asked everyone to join me and I led her in prayer as she spoke directly to God about where she was in life and what she needed from him. I encouraged her to trust in God’s promises and then we hugged and she sat down. To tell you the truth, I don’t remember whether or not I finished the sermon.

That is a great story, isn’t it? But it doesn’t end there. The following week, I was with some of our longtime church members, and one of the women brought up the incident from the previous weekend. I expected her to have the same joy I had experienced, but I was sorely disappointed. Her comment was, “Things like that have

no place in church.” She went on to say, “I have more religion in my little finger than what she has in her whole body.”

I didn’t know how to respond. Perhaps that’s one of the problems in our churches today: we’ve given the Lord our little fingers, rather than our whole selves.

What does the culture of your local church look like regarding the condition of humanity? Does the culture of your weekly worship services and small groups invite people to “come as they are” and seek love, help and healing? Do you know how to receive broken sinners in the midst of their pain, or does the culture of your church work against people admitting their hurts and faults until they are all better? Are you a “come and get clean” kind of church, or only the “already clean” should come type of place?

Four steps to make a space that encourages the Holy Spirit to move

If you have not been seeing as many “conversions” in your church as you would like, below are some cultural changes that might set the stage for the Holy Spirit to move powerfully:

1) You go first. Pastoral and leadership vulnerability is a sensitive issue, but someone has to demonstrate what behaviors are acceptable and what behaviors are not. There are plenty of ways to share your own struggles appropriately as a part of your preaching and teaching ministry. This makes you more real—not less. Most people would rather hear counsel from someone who has been in the trenches of life and is finding healing and wholeness than someone who has never struggled at all. Sharing your own struggles, losses and victories helps to create a culture where people understand it is okay to be broken.

2) Have the church go second. Create a culture ripe for evangelism through the regular use of testimonies. Start listening for stories from your members that you know would be appropriate to share and that would increase a culture of evangelism. Every one of us has a story of redemption and God’s work in our lives that will touch someone who is listening.

3) Turn up the volume. Vulnerability and culture change take time, but we must start slowly. As people begin to trust you as their pastor and the church is viewed as a safe environment in which to share their stories, there will be a gradual shift from, “I used to struggle with...” to something like, “Right now, I am in the middle of...” It is always easier to share our past struggles than to open up about the current issues in our lives. But as trust grows and culture changes, people will be more and more ready to “get real” about where they are today, which means that the Lord will be able to meet them in their pain right here and right now in your church.

4) Train your leaders. Jesus said the fields were ripe with the harvest but the workers were scarce, so we should pray for workers. I agree, but workers need to be trained. Many of our church members and leaders have never been equipped to help someone go from “lost” to “found.” Take time in your staff, council and committee meetings to help your leaders find their own evangelistic voices. Keeping the process “fuzzy” helps no one.

I remember a United Methodist clergy person once saying to me that in all of her training and church experience, she had neither seen nor helped anyone to accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord. How many of our leaders and church members feel woefully ill prepared to meet someone wherever they are on their spiritual journey and assist them to take the next step? If we can’t do it, then who can?

Premier helps inspire spiritual awakening in Bermuda

By CARRIE MADREN
UMConnection Correspondent

KNOWN FOR ITS white sandy beaches and azure-turquoise waters, Bermuda is undergoing an unparalleled spiritual revival. This island nation, with a population of about 64,000, recently elected a new leader, Premier Craig Cannonier, a long-time member of Marsden First United Methodist Church, which has about 110 members and is one of two United Methodist churches on the island.

Pastor Joseph Whalen has served Marsden for about 13 years. He said that Cannonier and his wife, Antoinette, took part in Disciple Bible Study 1 and 2 courses, and that Cannonier also co-taught a Disciple 1 course, that he often serves as a worship leader and for a few years, directed the Vacation Bible School.

Among Cannonier's first areas of focus as the nation's leader is to help lead the country in a sort of spiritual awakening.

Whalen said that change was in the air a few years ago when he and his wife, Heather, gathered a few couples to dive deeper into God's Word and to study spiritual formation. It was during one of those meetings that Cannonier shared that he felt that God was leading him into politics. He became the leader of a political party that merged with another party, creating One Bermuda Alliance (OBA), which he led before being elected to represent the Devonshire South Central constituency.

In the months before the national election in December 2012, Pastor Whalen prayed with Cannonier and his campaign workers. "Although the OBA was going up against a political Goliath in the (Progressive Labor Party), there was a great spirit in that room that night on the eve of the election — something awesome was happening," Whalen told UMConnection. Cannonier won 15,949 votes out of 30,862.

The Sunday after he was sworn in, Cannonier invited his Cabinet to attend church with him. In the months



Craig Cannonier, a member of Marsden First UMC, now serves as Bermuda's new premier.

since his swearing in, Cannonier sought a national day of prayer. "This came as a result of his acknowledgement that the ultimate answers to our dire national problems and concerns can only come from Almighty God," Whalen said.

During a meeting with island clergy, the Premier shared his desire for spiritual awakening within Bermuda. The passage from 2 Chronicles 7:14 fueled their purpose: "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

These key church leaders from various denominations formed a steering committee that organized a Pastor's Prayer Breakfast and a Solemn Assembly, planned for May 5, 2013, as a day for people to gather for confession

and repentance and to seek the heart of God.

Then, churches across the island will reach out into the community and share the power of prayer during A Week of Open Doors. Marsden UMC will partner with another church to create teams to knock on doors and invite neighbors to share requests for intercessory prayer. That week will be followed by The National Gathering for Prayer on the steps of City Hall in Hamilton on May 16, when government will close for an hour and many international businesses have invited employees to take part.

In addition, for each of these prayer efforts, the committee is working on ways to reach schools, prisons, bus riders, ferry riders, gang members and more. "What ails the nation cannot be ultimately resolved without God," Whalen said.

Since the new Premier took office, Whalen said he's seen tremendous unity across all Christian denominations — Methodist, Baptist, Catholic, Salvation Army, non-denominational churches, and others — and that this effort has been larger than any in the past. "We're trying to create a groundswell of unity around our theme 'Heart to Heart: Awakening the Nation' that will build up year to year," Whalen said. "There's a great deal of optimism and excitement, and when you have the leader of a nation acknowledging God and looking God-ward, it makes a big difference."

In the coming years, Whalen hopes for a greater recognition of a regard for the power of prayer and awareness of answered prayers.

"Serving as the pastor of the Premier is an awesome responsibility," Whalen wrote in an email. "We never know where God will lead us and those we serve. We are called simply to be faithful over the matters at hand and not doubt the possibilities of sowing seeds of the Kingdom of God."

Whipple honored for leadership in growing Asbury UMC

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



Beryl Whipple

SOMETIMES BERYL WHIPPLE thinks he needs a nap. But then he receives another word from God and life becomes too interesting not to pay attention, he said.

By night, Whipple stocks shelves and does customer service at a Safeway grocery store. By day, he pastors Asbury UMC in White

Marsh and is a doctoral student in the church leadership program at Wesley Theological Seminary.

The witness he provides going about these tasks has not gone unnoticed. In April, he was inducted into the Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Preachers at Morehouse College in Atlanta, his alma mater. With this honor, he was charged "to be a faithful servant scholar leader, a guarantor of continuity, celebrator of change, negotiator of structure and facilitator of meaning" and to use his "time, talent, tender and technology" to build a beloved community.

He was one of the youngest people to be inducted into the board of preachers. He takes his charge very seriously

and is living it out as pastor of Asbury.

When he arrived at the church in 2008, there were six people in the pews. Today, there are 65 who attend each Sunday.

Whipple is careful not to "swell" the church. Rather, he focuses on allowing the community to grow itself, each person bringing one person to church. "Sometimes it's co-workers," he said. "Sometimes the youth bring fellow team members. But everybody knows somebody who might need the church, who needs God."

When they come through the door, Whipple believes "it's essential to let them know that Sunday morning is a can't miss moment of the week. Sunday helps dictate the rest of the week," he said. "Sunday morning sets up proactive momentum. We're not here to spectate or be entertained. We're here to get recharged."

To recharge the people, he takes care crafting worship. "Whether there are six people or 40, I preach as if it's Easter Sunday every morning, he said. "I believe in doing my best, no matter what I'm doing. That attitude is contagious. The choir, the music, the church leaders know this church thing is not for play."

It's not always been easy. There have been times in the past year when some intense personal issues have made him stumble. He praises his wife, Roxanne, and his mother, Barbara Whipple, who is a minister at

Centennial-Caroline UMC in Baltimore, for helping him when his soul gets weary.

A third-generation preacher who grew up Baptist, Whipple believes God closes doors, but "God also opens doors we cannot ignore."

"Everybody needs a word from God," he said.

Everyone needs an encouraging word that pushes them when they want to give up. The best thing is when we become that encouraging word for one another."

Social media is key

One of the key's to Asbury UMC's success and growth, Whipple said, is its use of electronic media to tell its story.

"Social networking is free," he said. "I find those moments where we can to update Facebook. We've gotten one or two new members a week from social networking. It lets our members showcase their church to others."

Website - www.achargetokeep.org
Facebook - /AsburyUMCWhiteMarsh
Twitter - @AChargeToKeep
YouTube - ACharge2Keep

19 clergy, representing 565 years of ministry, to retire

By LINDA WORTHINGTON
UMConnection Staff

OF THE 19 retirees this year, four are women, two are a clergy couple retiring together, one was a Minister of Music. Their years of service add up to more than 565 years, according to the Office of Pensions and Health Benefits; which means an average length of faithful service is more than 29 years. In that time, a clergyperson could preach more than 1,450 sermons.

The retirees will be honored at a luncheon May 21 and the upcoming annual conference session.

Clergy	Years Served	Clergy	Years Served	Clergy	Years Served
Archie David Argo	43	Glen Dameron	22	Theodore Higby	35
Roland M. "Bud" Brown	37	Patricia C. Dols	14.5	Kenneth M. Humbert	42
Bonnie M. Campbell	18	Kenneth R. Dunnington	42	Michael G. Marsh	33
John Howard Campbell	41	Walter George Edmonds	45	David C. Myers	41
Roger John Carlson	40	Charles Harrell	28	Charles Joseph Shacochis	8
Eva L. Clark	19	Joeann Turner Harrod	23		
Fidel Compres	3	Terrance Thrasher	22		