



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 25, Issue 5 • May 2014

IN THIS ISSUE

The Word is 'Help'.....	p. 2
Bridges as spiritual icons.....	p. 3
Chinese pastors at Wesley...	p. 4
Retirees serve 772 years.....	p. 4
Young adults serve as Christ	p. 5
Love appointed director.....	p. 6
Making a Difference.....	p. 6
'God's Morning Vietnam!'.....	p. 7
Clinton encourages UMW.....	p. 7
Hamilton speaks on Bible....	p. 8
Imagining No Malaria.....	p. 8

'We are the ones,' bishop tells districts



Melissa Lauber

Bishop Marcus Matthews speaks at one of 14 district meetings held throughout the conference this spring.

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMC*Connection* Staff

AT 14 DISTRICT meetings held throughout the Baltimore-Washington Conference, United Methodists stood together this spring and sang: "I need you, you need me; we're all apart of God's body."

At these meetings, which featured conversations with Bishop Marcus Matthews, the song "I Need You to Survive" was a focal point as the bishop shared the message that we are the ones God has called to be in ministry in this time and place. The people responded with their passions and concerns.

At Mt. Zion UMC in Bel Air, clergy and laity met in the tent-like worship space and prayed for the Rev. Craig McLaughlin, whose daughter had died just days before the meeting. Later, someone asked what the tent was made of.

Giving "a preacher's answer," McLaughlin answered it was constructed of the untraditional and things that have never been tried before. He went on to lament the decline of The United Methodist Church. "What Methodists have is a lot of love in our churches, but we're still doing things the way we did in 1958. Look at who is growing – independent churches that are doing nothing traditional. If we keep doing everything the way we always have, we will die."

At the session with the laity in the Greater Washington District, the superintendent, the Rev. Joseph Daniels, echoed this sentiment.

"Today, only 17 percent of Americans worship in any church, synagogue or mosque on a weekly basis," he said. "They're saying we're irrelevant. We need to begin to take the Gospel to the streets, get to know people by name and engage where there is the greatest need. Only then will lives change; even the church will change."

Bishop Matthews encouraged those present to "Seize the very moment in which we are living. Don't get caught holding onto past stuff," he said. "We are the one God is looking toward to make a difference."

Throughout the eight districts, members shared the new ministries and ideas they were embracing. Two of the laity sessions were canceled due to the weather.

In Frederick, they heard about how the church is supporting Ellie Walton, a documentary filmmaker who is a member of Middletown UMC, in making a film about the Hope School for the Deaf in Monrovia, Liberia.

During the filming, American and Liberian rap stars Famus, Takun J, and Trade, serendipitously met and joined forces to make a music video about the school called "Just Like You." The sign language for that title is becoming a common greeting for people across Monrovia, said the Rev. Susan Halse.

The Cumberland-Hagerstown District held an impromptu book sale during their session, raising money for the Imagine No

See Districts, page 3

Annual Conference Preview: 'Building bridges; be love'

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMC*Connection* Staff

MORE THAN 1,500 members of the Baltimore-Washington Conference will celebrate a United Methodist home-coming when they gather at the 230th session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference May 29-31 at the Waterfront Marriott Hotel in Baltimore.

"For our clergy and laity, annual conference really is like coming home," said Bishop Marcus Matthews, who will preside over the session. "It's a gathering of

brothers and sisters for holy conferencing. The annual conference is not an event, it's not 'them.' It's 'us.'"

This year's session will have a global flavor, featuring the choir from Africa University in Zimbabwe at opening worship and James Salley, Associate Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa University, who will lead a Bible study each morning. The Latino band "No Other Name," will perform as people gather for worship May 29, and the Eden Korean Women's Choir will perform at the Memorial Service. A delegation from our partners in the South Conference in South Korea will also be present, led by

Bishop Han Yang Soo.

The theme of the conference is "Building Bridges: Be Love," and the scriptural focus will be on the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-35. Bishop Matthews will preach on this theme during his sermon in the opening worship service, on Thursday, May 29, at 7:30 p.m. His sermon, and the other plenary and worship sessions will be live-streamed online at www.bwcumc.org.

During the opening worship, the conference expects to be celebrating pledges that complete its \$2.1 million

See AC Preview, page 3

... well said

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

By MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

HELP IS NOT a word that's easy for us to say. My own reflexive response to someone who asks if I need help, in any form, is "No thanks, I got it." Even when I don't "got it." Even when I would like some help.

It's a reflex. Like saying "fine" when someone asks how you are, even when you spilled coffee on your suit, your kid has an ear infection, your mom is having surgery today and you are down to nothing in the fridge but ketchup and pickles. Help is a hard word, at least for me.

But in the church, our model of ministry is a body, where all the parts work together for the common good. Doesn't the hand need the help of the eye? Doesn't the foot need the help of the leg? Our most wonderful and "successful" ministry comes where we all pitch in together, where music ministry and preaching and art and prayer all come together in a sort of Holy Spirit dance.

At a larger level, I'm grateful all the time for an Annual Conference where the churches help each other, and for Conference staff that stand by to help, with workshops and seminars and advice. We are not left to do ministry "all by ourselves."

All this is of course built on the foundation of the help that comes to us from God, through the Holy Spirit, sent as comforter and advocate, and coming to us in the form of hands to help and hearts to love. Psalm 121 tells us: "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth."

Very often the help that comes from the LORD looks mighty like a sister or brother to lend a hand at the soup kitchen, an accountant helping with a church audit, an unhoused neighbor who sings in our choir, or even a district superintendent with some ideas for how to serve our neighborhood better.

In Jesus, God sent "help" when we could not help ourselves. And when we are seeking to do God's will, or find ourselves at the end of our rope, when we turn to God, we know, help is on the way.

... well said

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

By DARYL WILLIAMS
Pastor, New Hope Fellowship UMC, Upper Marlboro

WHEN SHE WAS three, my goddaughter became fiercely independent. It was almost strange how it happened. One day she was the sweet cuddly little girl who wanted help with everything. No matter how big or small the task, she was pulling you off a couch, dragging you across a room, or calling for help. Time and time again we would happily, or sometimes begrudgingly, get up and go aid her in her latest pursuit.

Then one day, I went to help her and she announced, "I can do it." In that moment she was telling me, thanks but I got this, your help is no longer required. The only problem was, while she thought she had it, she really didn't. She still needed help; she had just convinced herself that she could do it all herself.

Like my goddaughter, many of us want to do things ourselves. We know what we want and we don't need anyone's help to do it. We have declared ourselves independent and without the need for assistance. The only problem is, the big things in life are too big for us to do alone.

The "independent person" idea is a myth. Everyone that has ever done something great had help. To do great things you need other people on your team. You need people with different expertise than you, different perspectives than you, and sometimes just another set of hands.

Most of all, you are going to need to call on the Lord. Having help does not diminish the accomplishment, it actually makes it more likely to get done. Having the Lord on your side helps make sure it not only gets done, but gets done God's way.

How long will it take you to ask for help? The assignment on your life is too big for you. God made it that way. God has actually assigned people to help you, all you have to do is ask. Asking for help does not make you weak, it makes you smart. It shows that you know that having others around makes your job easier, not harder.

So stop trying to be the Lone Ranger. God is ready, willing and able to help you. You just have to ask for help, then rest assured that help is on the way.

... well said



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EVENTS

UM Family Fun Day

**Kings Dominion
May 17**

A full day of fun, food and United Methodist fellowship at this 30th anniversary event. Tickets must be purchased online. Log in as: username – KDUMC; password – KDUMC. Information at www.kingsdominion.com.

Missionary available to speak

May 15-29

To schedule the Rev. Richmond Williams, a professor at Africa University, contact BWC Secretary of Global Ministries, N. Sharon Leatherman, at 301-331-2643, or bwcmissionsec@aol.com.

Care kits for Baltimore

**Annual Conference
May 29**

The Baltimore Region is asking every church to donate 10 care kits for those who are un-housed in Baltimore City. Bring care kits to Annual Conference for distribution. Visit www.bwcumc.org/carekits for all the details.



Register for Summer Camp

**West River, Manidokan
Now through summer**

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

Golf Tournament

**National Golf Club in Fort Washington
June 9**

The United Methodist Men of the Baltimore-Washington Conference are sponsoring a golf tournament to support Imagine No Malaria, hunger ministries and Scouting. For more information, e-mail golf@bwcumm.org, or visit www.bwcumm.org/golf.

Mission u

**Bethesda Marriott
Aug. 8-10**

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



Mark Schaefer

**Sunday, May 18, 2014
(9:30 AM & 11:00 AM services)**

Schaefer currently serves as United Methodist chaplain to American University where he also teaches in the department of philosophy and religion and at Wesley Seminary. He is fluent in English, Russian, and proficient in German, Hebrew, and Koine Greek.



FOUNDRY 1500 16th Street NW ~ Washington DC 20036
202-332-4010 ~ www.foundryumc.org

UMConnection

**Bishop Marcus Matthews
Maidstone Mulenga**

Resident Bishop
Assistant to the Bishop

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

Director of Communications
Managing Editor
Graphic Designer
Communications Associate
Webmaster
Communications Associate

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Districts: Bishop hears joys and concerns of area churches

From page 1

Malaria initiative. In the Baltimore-Suburban District, the Rev. Stacey Nickerson shared information on the teenage residents of the Board of Child Care being



Revs. Rudy Bropleh, Mary Jo Sims and Ken Walker worship.

involved in service projects and how they are interested in forming partnerships with local congregations interested in mission projects.

At the Greater Washington session, a member from Mt. Zion UMC told about their ministry with the “shelter-challenged,” which led to a homeless man joining and becoming an active member of their congregation.

Those at the session also expressed their concerns about divisions arising in the denomination around the issue of same-gender marriage. Others implored the church to be more active in the lives of the poor.

Potential changes in health care benefits for the clergy, the importance of clergy observing Sabbath, the need for covenant groups, the potential of community gardens, new ways of thinking about small churches, a ministry of filling and distributing backpacks to feed hungry children over the weekends, and even the rivalry between United Methodist chaplains to area high school football teams were all discussed at the district sessions.

Matthews soothed some of the concerns by quoting the title of a recent sermon he had heard by the Rev. Ianther



Penny Gaver, left, and District Superintendent Conrad Link .

Mills. “Today’s test is tomorrow’s testimony,” he said.

But he also challenged the clergy and laity of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. “I don’t think our job is to just feed people what they want. Our job is to speak the Gospel the best that we know how,” he said. “It is time for us to do what God has laid on our hearts and minds.”

AC Preview: Looking forward to the annual reunion

From page 1

Imagine No Malaria campaign to help rid sub-Saharan Africa of the treatable, preventable disease.

The Memorial Service, honoring those who have died in the past year, will be May 30 at 10 a.m.

The Service of Ordination will be in the hotel’s Grand Ballroom May 31 at 2 p.m. This year, one Deacon and nine provisional Elders will be commissioned and one Deacon and eight Elders will be ordained.

Preaching at both of these services will be Bishop Kenneth Carter of the Florida Annual Conference.

During plenary sessions throughout the event,

conference members will hear reports on a wide variety of ministries, vote on a \$17.3 million budget and consider 14 resolutions on subjects as diverse as the conference moving policy for clergy, to guidelines on how outside groups might partner with the conference, to aligning investments with resolutions on Israel/Palestine.

This year, members are also invited to minister to people of Baltimore by bringing Care Kits for the unhoused of the city. The kits will be distributed to shelters in Baltimore on the evening of May 29. Each church is asked to bring 10 Care Kits, which are valued at \$10 apiece. A list of the preferred contents can be found at www.bwcumc.org/carekits.

In preparation for the annual conference, members will be attending pre-conference information sessions. These sessions, on May 15 at Towson UMC for the clergy and May 17 at John Wesley UMC in Hagerstown for the laity, will also include worship led by the Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, superintendent of the Baltimore Metropolitan District, and the Rev. Conrad Link, the Cumberland-Hagerstown superintendent. James Salley will speak at the Laity Session in the afternoon; the clergy will hold their executive session after lunch. For more information on the Annual Conference Session, visit www.bwcumc.org/events/annual_conference_2014.

Area bridges help illustrate Annual Conference theme

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

The theme of the 230th session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference – coming up later this month – is “Building Bridges: Be Love.” The logo features four bridges, one from each region of the conference. In previous issues, we’ve learned about the Burnside Bridge at the Antietam Battlefield (Western Region) and the Howard Street Bridge (Baltimore Region).

In this issue we’ll look at the Taft Bridge (Washington Region) and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge (Annapolis-Southern Region).

The Taft Bridge, located in Washington, D.C., is an iconic reminder of days gone by. Built between 1897 and 1907, the bridge carries traffic on Connecticut Ave. over Rock Creek Gorge.

The bridge is well-known for the statues of lions that guard each entrance. Originally made out of concrete and installed in 1906, the lions have been restored – twice – with mixed results. The current statues were erected in 2000. Around Christmas, local residents have been known to decorate the lions in festive attire.

The bridge also features beautiful lampposts along the structure, installed in 1906. Each of the 24 lampposts features a decorative eagle on top.

The Washington Region is home to two districts: Greater Washington, served by District Superintendent, the Rev. Joe Daniels, and Central Maryland, served by District Superintendent, the Rev. JW Park. Greater Washington boasts 22,667 members, with more than 8,900 in worship each Sunday. Central Maryland has 23,141 members, with 8,735 in worship.



Taft Bridge

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge, often the bane of travelers headed to or from Atlantic Ocean beaches, was originally opened in 1952. The parallel span was added in 1973.

Officially called the William Preston Lane Jr. Memorial Bridge – after the Maryland governor who initiated the construction project – the two spans are some of the longest over-water crossings in the world. Bridge traffic numbers about 61,000 vehicles per day (but why does it seem all of them are trying to cross eastbound on Friday night?).

Recently, ospreys have built a nest on the bridge, right in front of one of the traffic cameras, blocking its view. The Maryland Transportation Authority has removed the nest three times (according to the Baltimore Sun), and each time the nesting pair have returned.

The Annapolis-Southern Region is home to two districts: Washington East and Annapolis. Washington East sees 8,575 people, on average, in worship each weekend from its more than 19,500 members. The district is served by the Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli, superintendent. The Annapolis District is led by the Rev. Evan Young, superintendent, and the district averages 8,717 in worship each week from its more than 24,200 members.



Chesapeake Bay Bridge

Clergy retirees, Class of 2014, served the church 772+ years

By Linda Worthington
UMConnection Staff

There is no one “most memorable” occasion in his 49 years of service to the church, said the Rev. Dean Snyder. “I could give you 100 memorable times.” Snyder is one of 32 clergy retiring this year, representing more than 772 years of service to God and the church.

In The United Methodist Church, ordained clergy may retire at age 65, and must retire by age 72. Exactly half of the 2014 retiree class is clergy women. The longest serving clergywoman retiring is the Rev. JoAnne Alexander in the Frederick District who has served 37 years. Her ministry has been as part of a clergy couple, with the Rev. Kent Tice.

Together, they have served Oakland UMC in Charles Town, W. Va., for more than 20 years. She said she did not encounter opposition to clergywomen “even back then,” when she stepped into a three-point charge that had had seven student pastors in seven years. She assured them she wanted to grow the church and put down roots in the community. That she did, and she’ll continue serving there with her husband as a part-time church hire.

The Rev. Sandy S.W. Taylor, the only retiree from the Washington East District, has served 29 years. Snyder is the longest serving clergyman, with most of his years served elsewhere, but 17 of them in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, including the past 12 as senior pastor of Foundry UMC. Among his memorable moments, he said, is “receiving Frank Schaefer into membership at Foundry church after he was defrocked for conducting his son’s wedding.” He also recalls “writing stories about the work of the UMC in Zimbabwe.”

Perhaps what he’ll remember most, he said, were the “important moments (that) were not high profile,” such as the homeless man on the streets of Philadelphia who picked up coins and took them to the church, “because he wanted to make an offering to the church that welcomed him.”

Close behind Snyder in years of service is the Rev. Al Clipp, who, along with 10 other retirees, is from the Frederick District. He has served 47 years; almost 20 at Calvary UMC in Martinsburg. Many will remember Clipp as the Secretary of the Annual Conference in the 2000s.

On the other end of the spectrum – clergy serving the fewest years– is the Rev. Janice Leith with nine years, all at the Texas Charge in Cockeysville. The Rev. Stella Tay, an ordained Deacon, is credited with nine years, but before her ordination she served another dozen years. Most of the dozen pastors who are retiring with fewer than 20 years of service had another career before heeding the call to ordained ministry. One former district superintendent, the Rev. Mark Derby, is retiring. He was a D.S. from 2000-2004, then two more years while also pastoring the church from which he is retiring, Grace UMC in Gaithersburg. Serving as a district superintendent “helped me to see the importance of our connection,” he said. As a local church pastor, he sought to help congregations to

become Christ-centered, he said, then as a D.S., “I saw much more clearly the importance of our relationships as colleagues and as sister churches.” Derby said he’s looking forward to continuing ministry in other forms. “I plan to work with Ambassadors for Christ International, a mission agency,” led by a seminary classmate. And “when I’m not traveling, I’m looking forward to working with Habitat for Humanity.” Each retiring pastor has poignant memories of his or her time serving the church, not all good, but by this time in their lives, they say, along with Alexander, “I have been blessed!” The retirees will be honored at a luncheon at the Conference Center May 13.

Retirees share 772+ years of service			
Clergy	Years Served	Clergy	Years Served
JoAnne Alexander	37	John E. Lewis	15
Maria Andita H. Barcelo	12	Lloyd B. McCanna	31
Harry L. Burchell, Jr.	27	J. David Roberts	22.5
Margaret H. “Peggy” Click	25.75	Bernadette M. Ross	26
Albert L. Clipp	47	Victor E. Sawyer	31
Mark A. Derby	40	Laura L. Schultz	20
Vicki M. Dotterer	15	Gary Sieglein	13
George G. Earle, Jr.	39	Mary Jo Sims	21.25
James H. Farmer	31	Dean J. Snyder	49
Leonard R. Felton	37	Kathy J. Spitzer	13
Bruce C. Frame	10.75	Michael. P. Szpak	25
Linda J. Glassbrook	17	Stella S. Tay	9
Sandra M. Greene	21.50	Sandra Taylor	29
Mae Etta Harrison	23	William H. Warehime, Jr.	20
Elza M. Hurst	17	Mary K. Worrel	19
Janice E. Leith	9	Daniel L. Wright	19

Beijing pastors provide rare glimpse into Christian China

By Amy Shelton* & Erik Alsgaard

ATYPICAL SUNDAY FOR the Rev. Wang Xuan includes preaching to more than 10,000 people, leading a choir practice, visiting home-bound parishioners, handling administrative tasks, and preparing for her next sermon. She is one of six pastors serving this church and they hold multiple worship services every Sunday, with an attendance of 3,000-4,000 every service. Xuan is one of the leading Christian pastors in Beijing, China, and she’s spending the semester at Wesley Theological Seminary to complete an intensive study – the first of its kind in the United States. Recently, she and her classmates shared details of their ministries and their lives in the People’s Republic of China. “I hope to gain more knowledge and spiritually and to improve my pastoral skills this semester at Wesley,” said Xuan. “It is an unusual decision for the Beijing Christian Council to send five top pastors to us for such a long time because there is such a significant lack of pastors

throughout China,” says Wesley President David McAllister-Wilson. “The absence of these pastors will be felt greatly in their home churches.” The Beijing Christian Council, which is the official sanctioning body of Protestant churches in Beijing, selected five students to study in the United States. Helping the Chinese pastors with translation was the Rev. Ingrid Wang, pastor of Wesley Grove UMC in Hanover since 2013. She has been sitting with the Chinese pastors in the classroom, offering simultaneous translation and helping to translate homework. Born and raised in Taiwan, Mandarin Chinese is Wang’s native tongue. She had been a language teacher before becoming a pastor. “This has been an exciting yet humbling experience,” she said. “I had been praying to find a way to utilize my bilingual skills, and when this came, unannounced, I felt so blessed.”

Wang said that it occurred to her one day that the work she was doing could — and would — have an impact on tens of thousands of Christians in China some day. “We all have gifts,” she said. “God has a way of using us for His purpose. Sometimes we don’t see this, but it’s there.” Wang said that she was impressed with the Chinese pastors’ evangelistic zeal. “We talk about decline here (in the United States) all the time,” she said. “But there, they’re growing like crazy. God’s work isn’t limited to just one area of the world; this growth cannot happen just in China. Pay attention to where God’s working and see how that can

impact your ministry.” The visiting pastors are leading their churches in a country that has an estimated 14 million to 130 million Christians, within a total population of more than 1.35 billion people. While Christianity is growing faster in China than in any other region of the world, there is ample need to educate — and evangelize. “People are usually surprised that I’m a Christian pastor,” said the Rev. Wang Hai Qain. “Some don’t know what a Christian pastor is. And sometimes people don’t understand the difference between Protestant and Catholic or Muslim, but more and more, people in China are gaining more knowledge about Christianity.” In addition to evangelists such as Qain, people typically become followers of Christ in China because of curiosity, a connection to a Christian, or through searching for help. Though Christianity might not be the cultural force in China that it is in America, there are tremendous similarities between the visiting pastors and their American counterparts. When asked what their prayers and hopes were, one pastor answered, “For my church to feel the will of the Holy Spirit and for the congregation to grow.” “This semester of intensive study is important for both Wesley Theological Seminary and for the Christian church in China,” said the Rev. Dr. Kyunglim Shin Lee, Wesley’s vice president of international relations. “This semester provides rigorous theological preparation for the visiting students, while offering the opportunity for Wesley’s students and faculty to learn about Christianity in China. We have much to learn from these visiting students. “We at Wesley are very grateful for the trust the Chinese government and the Beijing Christian Council have placed in us,” said Shin Lee. “We anticipate the education these pastors receive this semester will have a tremendous influence on their future ministries.”

**Amy Shelton is Director of Marketing and Communications at Wesley Theological Seminary.*



Leading Chinese pastors, who are studying at Wesley Seminary, join in worship.

YA Mission Trip: ‘As the Father sent me, I am sending you’

PHOTOS AND STORY BY ALISON BURDETT
UMConnection Staff

ON THURSDAY, APRIL 24, ten young adults departed from the Conference Center to travel to Seaville, NJ, for a Hurricane Sandy relief mission trip. Before leaving, Washington East District Superintendent, the Rev. Rebecca Iannicelli, gathered with us to pray, read Scripture and share Communion. She read from John 20, emphasizing verses 21 and 22; “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

Iannicelli pointed out that this is the Scripture read the week after Easter. She told us we were being sent, by Jesus, with three things: peace; the breath of the Holy Spirit; and a responsibility to spread the word of God.

Three-and-half hours later, we arrived at Seaville UMC, where we would be staying for the duration of our mission trip.

We traveled from Seaville to Delmont to work on an elderly couple’s home near the Delaware Bay. The home had been raised 10 feet in order for the homeowners to keep their flood insurance. The 10 of us split into two teams and we got to work. Almost immediately, the homeowner, George, came out to greet us, leaning on his cane with one hand and holding his Chihuahua, Rocky, in the other. George was extremely grateful for



bolted and spindled one section of railing.

Saturday was a day of full endurance. We knew it was our last day and we had goals of how far we wanted to get before the next team came in. Because it was a Saturday, Pat was home and we got to visit with her for a bit. Pat asked if she could pray with us. We all stood in a circle, holding hands, and she prayed for us and thanked God for sending us.

The dry wall team finished a hallway and stairwell. The deck team completed nearly four sections of railing. We cleaned up the worksite, took a few photos, and headed back to Seaville UMC. We had dinner at the local diner and enjoyed the fellowship that grew between us all throughout the weekend.

Sunday morning we had one last devotional time together. The Rev. Kirkland Reynolds, from Chevy Chase UMC, asked us what we got out of the trip. One person said it made her want to reach back out to people she’s done mission work with before and reconnect. Another said it made her want to do outreach to the homeless or to seniors on a local level. We all said that we hope this is the first of many young adult mission trips.

Reynolds pointed out that “Our Lord and Savior was a young adult. There is a biblical mandate for us to serve.” He then talked with us about the Emmaus story and how the disciples didn’t recognize Jesus, but Jesus made himself known to them when he broke the bread. The disciples then had to go back to Jerusalem and tell the people that they had seen the face of Jesus and how he made himself known to them. He wrapped up the devotional by saying, “We are away from our homes and we have seen Jesus and it is time to go home and tell people we have seen him.”

Jillian England of Crofton (left) and Cheryl Cook of Annapolis (right) work together to build a sturdy frame for George & Pat’s home in Delmont, New Jersey.



Cricket, Marty & Charlie Mae Brennan (standing at left) of Seaville UMC pose with the BWC young adults (standing L-R): Cheryl Cook, Kirkland Reynolds, Kristin Krautwurst, Lauren Busky, Kate Lawton, (kneeling L-R) Jillian England, Rachel McNamara, Shelby Lynn Wade, and Alison Burdett. Not pictured: Shamika Murray.

the help, and was excited to see the work being done, as they had been living in a trailer in the yard for the past four months, after about a year of shuffling between family members.

The inside team was busy hanging drywall. Their task wasn’t particularly easy, as they had to avoid covering



any electrical wires so the electrical work could be inspected the following week. The outside team had some difficulties of their own, as they needed to use power tools and the home still had no electricity. Thanks to a very long extension cord from the neighbor’s house, which George and his wife, Pat, were using for their trailer, we were able to get squared away with our circular saw. By the end of the day, the inside team had completed one whole room and the outside team had measured, cut,



(Left) Kirkland Reynolds, Lauren Busky, Rachel McNamara, and Shelby Lynn Wade measure and cut drywall in Delmont, NJ. (Lower Left) Kirkland Reynolds, senior pastor of Chevy Chase UMC, carries drywall into the home. Kirkland served as the team’s daily devotional leader, giving the team spiritual motivation and confidence for the daily tasks. (Right) Kristen Krautwurst uses a sawzall to cut knots out of a 4” x 4” piece of lumber.



Tony Love named new Vibrant Communities director

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

BISHOP MARCUS MATTHEWS has appointed the Rev. Antoine Love, pastor of Journey of Faith Church in Waldorf, as the new Baltimore-Washington Conference director of Vibrant Communities, effective July 1.



Love, who is also the conference chair of the Board of Trustees, takes over from the Rev. Andy Lunt, who will return to retirement on June 30. The position will now be full-time.

In his new appointment, he will be building on the Vibrant Communities ministry, which has included starting eight new faith congregations in the past two

years and assisting several existing congregations with strategies for growth.

Q: You were recently appointed to serve as Director of Vibrant Communities for the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Which part of this ministry are you most looking forward to?

A: Beyond building upon the work already started by our Office of Vibrant Communities, I am excited about helping our churches and new faith communities to introduce all persons to Jesus Christ as friend, Lord and Savior, as we share the Gospel and make our presence known and real in our “back yards and beyond” through our love, our witness and our service.

Q: Within the last year, the BWC launched eight new faith communities, but before that we did not have a lot of success in creating new churches. Have we, as a conference, turned a corner? What do you think might be some of the most important challenges and opportunities facing us as a conference?

A: I celebrate our starting eight new faith communities, and our commitment to launch new communities in the future, but I would not say that we have turned the corner yet. I believe that our success

will come when we are not only starting new faith communities but also we find these communities being stable and sustainable to have a lasting impact for Kingdom-building. I would suggest that given many current trends and understandings, our conference will need to be open to departing from our “conventional” vision of what a new community of faith looks like and how it operates. This will be a risky but necessary challenge we will encounter if we are sincere about offering new persons a faith relationship with Jesus Christ.

Q: Do you have a specific style of leadership? How would you describe it?

A: I would describe my style of leadership as open and collaborative. I believe the Holy Spirit is at work in the Church and in our leaders, and I want to be a partner with them as we cast a vision for the future together.

Q: Sometimes the church development portion of Vibrant Communities gets overlooked. Are there one or two lessons, ideas or best practices that you would encourage our churches that are struggling to consider?

A: Prayer is, and should be, the starting point for churches that are struggling. I affirm that a congregation who prays together starts to see evidence of God’s presence in their midst. Following prayer, the church can begin the process of discernment: who are we as a church? What has God given us, which often leads us to see what God is calling us to do, for the sake of our community? From discernment, the church seeks to become equipped to do the work of ministry and mission.

Q: What role do metrics play in your thinking about vibrant congregations?

A: I affirm that metrics are important and necessary as a way to measure effectiveness and fruit, as we strive to reach new disciples and grow disciples for the world’s transformation. I can appreciate when metrics provide the space and opportunity for honest and candid conversation to occur, especially when there must be a reconsideration of a current thought or direction. Metrics are one tool to evaluate the health of a community. All churches, regardless of size, can be

vibrant communities. Health and vitality are important hallmarks to be considered at every church.

Q: How would you define the current, and then perhaps the best, relationship between a local church and the annual conference?

A: I think the best relationship that can exist between the local church and an annual conference comes when all persons provide mutual respect, extend grace, and show a willingness to work toward the fulfillment of God’s plan and purpose.

Q: If you had to cast an initial vision of what you want to accomplish in the first year of this ministry, what might it entail?

A: I would like for the Office of Vibrant Communities to become an integral part of the life and language of every local church and new faith community in this conference by continuing to provide leading-edge training to empower and equip our clergy and laity. We should inform and inspire a culture that is invitational and intentional about discipleship and evangelism.

Q: How would you describe yourself?

A: Wow, this question is difficult for me to answer. I am a “sold out” disciple who seeks to grow in Christ daily; a man of prayer who finds joy in helping others grow in their faith; and I try to bring joy, hope and laughter to my work. I’m a collaborator who is relational and committed to build upon the legacy of the Vibrant Communities. And I am a visionary who wants to see this ministry go to the next level.

Q: What’s the first thing you look forward to doing after July 1?

A: Believe it or not – after I settle into the office, I actually can’t wait to start traveling throughout our conference to hear and learn the inspiring stories of how God is moving in our local churches. I’m excited to see where opportunities are being created and formed to invite and grow persons into a new faith relationship.

Q: Any other thoughts for the moment?

A: Yes, I ask for prayer ... that I will remain open and faithful to the Holy Spirit’s leading as together our conference and our Vibrant Communities’ office reach out to disciple all persons through our existing congregations and in new places.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



One in six go hungry. Five in six can help. Members of Ashton UMC build a canned-good labyrinth to address hunger.

Maryland volunteers help New Jersey victims

BOONSBORO – Mt. Nebo UMC’s Mission Team worked this May on helping New Jersey’s recovery from the devastating effects of Superstorm Sandy.

They volunteered with A Future with Hope for the recovery work and worked in Keansburg. More than 25 different mission teams have volunteered in the last year.

In a ceremonial volunteer appreciation day, Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno, and Bishop John Schol expressed their appreciation.

The homeowner shared his experiences during the storm when nearly three feet of water submerged the house; he and his teenage son escaped through the attic, he said.

A Future with Hope, the New Jersey non-profit UMC-based recovery organization’s goal is to use 20,000 volunteers to help rebuild 300 to 500 homes and provide case management to affected families over the next five years. So far, they have hosted more than 5,000 volunteers from 27 states, a press release said.

Laity Gathering gathers socks

BALTIMORE – With the theme “Faith in Action,” more than 100 people from the Baltimore Region held a Laity Gathering. The two district superintendents were joined by the regional guides, lay leaders, certified lay ministers, youth coordinators and adult lay servants.

Based on the text from James 2:18, “You have faith;

I have deeds. Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds,” the attendees came with “good deeds” in their hands. An appeal had gone out two days earlier to bring new socks to the gathering to give to un-housed neighbors living near the New Hope Christian Fellowship UMC in Edgewood.

The gathering was a bit of a ministries fair as attendees displayed resources and information on a variety of their ministries.

Baltimore Suburban District Superintendent Laura Easto challenged the laity in her message to move beyond their comfort zones to help others through deeds of love and compassion. “(She) gave us a Holy Ghost-filled message that we can use and share with others daily,” said Jennifer Farabee.

“The response was simply overwhelming,” said Darlynn McCrae, regional Guide.

BCC Youth exhibit their artworks

BALTIMORE – A new exhibit opened May 1 at the American Visionary Art Museum, which includes artwork from the resident children at the Board of Child Care ages 12 to 14.

“Open Eyes, Open Minds: Raising Mental Health Awareness through Art,” is the second annual art exhibit presented by the Maryland Coalition for Mental Health Awareness. To learn more, visit www.boardofchildcare.org.



Residents of the Board of Child Care had their art displayed at the American Visionary Museum.

Holy Week run raises INM funds

MT. AIRY – On Holy Saturday, the day before Easter, 80 runners finished a 5K run that ended at the cross at Taylorsville UMC, the organizer of the event. The runners were from South Carroll High School, where the run began, the South Carroll Fellowship of Christian Athletes, churches and the community.

About 50 members of the Taylorsville UMC helped in some way, said the Rev. Sarah Dorrance. The run raised about \$1,000 for Imagine No Malaria.

Reaching out to Vietnam, one bicycle at a time

BY REV. RON FOSTER
Bethesda UMC

In February, I had the privilege of traveling to Vietnam with Phuong Bui, a member of our congregation, to deliver 408 bicycles that had been donated by members and friends of our church as part of a special Christmas Eve outreach through her foundation, Children of Vietnam. The following is an excerpt from my "God's Morning, Vietnam!" blog (GWVBUMC.blogspot.com).

OUR DAY BEGAN early with a 5:30 a.m. departure from Saigon. There is no such thing as going fast as we are constantly making our way through a maze of motorbikes, pedestrians and an odd assortment of other vehicles. After close to three hours, we finally arrived at the school for the first distribution of 50 bikes where we were greeted like rock stars.

Phuong made a moving speech to the children, talking about how her mother had been a teacher in Vietnam before the war, and then she presented about 25 scholarships to some very happy children. Just \$50 will cover a year's tuition, but for many families even that is beyond reach.

We were then all eager to move on to the presentation of the bikes. We had prepared a sign for each child indicating the donor of their bike over a colorful backdrop of hands washing feet to connect it to our church's mission; there is a need to be subtle in a Communist country. We took pictures of each of the



The Rev. Ron Foster stands with Vietnamese children.

children proudly receiving their bikes and, though polite and reserved by nature, there was no hiding their pride and joy. We even got one group to do a victory lap around the courtyard.

Driving through the Mekong Delta on our way to Bac Lieu was a fascinating mix of shanties, banana trees, rice

fields and overburdened motorbikes carrying everything from roasted pigs to mirrors to large baskets of produce. The roadside was littered with makeshift markets and small business stalls all day long.

We had been invited to a local Buddhist temple for dinner that night and again we were received like royalty, greeted with tea and a vegetarian meal. The head nun graciously invited us to tour the grounds and to take pictures at the evening prayer service. The chanting was hypnotic and what a treat to end the night connected in prayer both worlds and religious traditions apart.

Sunday morning, we headed from Bac Lieu toward Cam Mau and then took a longboat ride up-river to deliver 30 bikes at a remote Buddhist temple. The 30-minute journey through these backwaters of the Mekong Delta in itself was a poignant privilege that I could barely take in: extreme poverty on the water's edge co-mingled with the stark beauty of the landscape. The feeling of being at the edge of the world far, far away from Bethesda, was overpowering.

When we finally arrived at our destination, the place was buzzing with people and anticipation. Children and adults had gathered from many miles and villages around to receive their bikes and the food distribution



from the Buddhist Temple where we had eaten the night before – one poor community reaching out to an even poorer one. Sandy, our blonde-haired traveling

companion from Minnesota, was quite the spectacle as we were the first foreigners that many of these people had ever seen in their lifetimes – they kept wanting to touch Sandy's arms and hands to see if she was made of



Photos by Ron Foster

the same stuff as they were.

Our trip to Phan Ri the next day was pleasant and brought quite a change of scenery. Gone were the rice fields and in their place we saw rubber trees, dragon fruit cactus and evergreens. Our local hosts, Mi and Long, were both retired teachers who now devote a good deal of their time caring for the poor and most vulnerable in their community. We got to see and be part of their work firsthand as we visited a number of severely disabled and disfigured individuals throughout the community our first night, and then helped with their monthly rice and financial outreach the next morning. It was by far the most heartbreaking and difficult part of our trip.

They started lining up early in the morning, hours ahead of the official distribution time. One by one they came, mothers carrying grown and maimed children, blind men hobbling on canes, one woman literally dragging her body across the concrete sidewalk to the doorstep. An endless sea of human need.

I was often asked to make the presentation of rice and money and, while I felt totally inadequate, did the best I could. I'd kneel low, look into their eyes and use some variation of this simple script each time: "This gift means you are loved and not forgotten. There are people who care about you. May God bless you." Sometimes I would sing a blessing, always I would say a prayer in silence as part of my sacred assignment. The crush of people, the outstretched hands, the begging eyes: *Kyrie eleison*. Lord, have mercy.

Hillary Clinton encourages United Methodist Women

BY KATHY L. GILBERT
United Methodist News Service

LOUISVILLE, KY. – Hillary Clinton shared her love and gratitude to all the United Methodist women in her life and then challenged the more than 6,500 United Methodist women before her to go out and "make it happen." About 150 participants were from the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Clinton spoke for 45 minutes at the Saturday, April 26, morning worship service for the 2014 United Methodist Women Assembly. The gathering took place at the Kentucky International Convention Center.

"We need to wake up our world to what can and should be done," she said. United Methodist women have a great tradition of "rolling up our sleeves and taking the social gospel into the world."

In introducing Clinton, Yvette Kim Richards, board president of UMW, called her "a daughter of The United Methodist Church and United Methodist Women." She added that Clinton declined the honorarium offered by UMW "and paid her own expenses."

That was one of the many times when the crowd responded with applause and cheers.

United Methodist Women, the official women's organization of The United Methodist Church, and the former U.S. secretary of state share a common concern for women, children and youth.

Clinton started her speech talking about the influence her United Methodist family had on her life. She spoke of the "great witness" of seeing her father kneel by his

bed to pray every night. She also said her mother taught Sunday school and was committed to social justice issues.

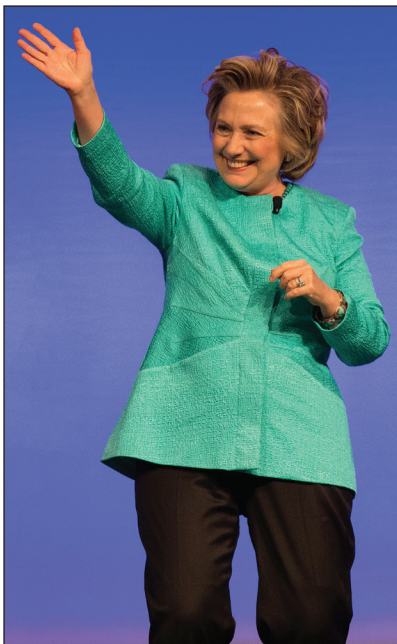
It was her grandmother, Hannah, "a tough Methodist woman" she said, who "taught me to never be afraid to get your hands dirty."

But it was Don Jones, her youth pastor at First United Methodist Church in Park Ridge, Ill., whom she credits with being the first person to teach her to "embrace faith in action."

She commented that the event's theme "Make It Happen" was such a fitting title.

The biblical text for the 2014 Assembly was the story of the feeding of the multitude in Mark 6:30-44, in which Jesus instructed his disciples to organize the people into groups of 50 to feed them with five loaves of bread and two fish.

Throughout the event, participants grappled with Jesus' instructions for his disciples to



Mike DuBoise

"give them something to eat."

"The miracle of loaves and fish was the first great potluck supper," she said. Jesus responded by serving the community.

"It is what women do every day: we feed the multitudes."

As the nation's first lady, she spoke before the 1996 United Methodist General Conference, the denomination's top legislative body. At that time, she urged the church to continue its social witness for the world's children and cultivate "a new sense of caring" about its responsibilities to the larger society.

Clinton, on April 26, commented on the church's dedication to global health and, especially, the campaign Imagine No Malaria.

"I know what a difference you make," she said. The nearly 800,000-member United Methodist Women is the denomination's official women's mission organization. Members raise more than \$16 million annually for mission with women, children and youth.

"Even when the odds are long, even when we are tired and just want to go away somewhere to be alone and rest, let's make it happen."

Farilen Coates, a United Methodist woman from Kansas City, Mo., had to miss breakfast to get in line outside of the doors to see Clinton. She was happy with her place on the end of a row, even though it was several rows from the front.

"This has been a wonderful assembly," she said. "It just shows how great United Methodist women are."

Adam Hamilton ‘makes sense of the Bible’ at Foundry UMC

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

THE REV. ADAM Hamilton wants to invite you to a conversation. Not any ordinary conversation, but one about the Bible.

That is why, Hamilton said, he wrote “Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today,” his latest — and 19th — book. Hamilton began a book publicity tour at Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C., April 23.

Hamilton, senior pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection near Kansas City — the largest United Methodist Church in the United States — repeatedly called for a more sophisticated view of the Bible, and reminded the several hundred people gathered at Foundry and online that the Bible itself allows for latitude in its interpretation.

“Is the Bible ‘the Word of God?’” he asked. “Was it dictated? Is it infallible and inerrant, written without errors?”

Hamilton explored these questions during his talk, noting that the New Revised Standard Version has the phrase “word of God” 40 times in its pages. These references, he said, do not refer to a book, but to the way that God speaks to us. “And God is not silent; God speaks to us in a lot of ways,” Hamilton said.

“God wants to speak to us,” he said. “In the beginning of John’s Gospel, Jesus is ‘the Word’ made flesh. For me, Jesus becomes the only inerrant word of God.”

Hamilton noted that he was not trying to undermine anyone’s sense of the authority of the Bible in writing the book. “I love this book,” he said, holding out his own Bible. “But the Bible is a bit more complicated than many of us give it credit for.”

That’s because, he said, “there are things I read and I think, ‘What am I going to do with that?’”

In the book, Hamilton deals with thorny issues such as science and the Bible, women and the Bible, slavery,

homosexuality, and all that violence and killing in the Old Testament. In his talk at Foundry, he touched briefly on each of these subjects.

Hamilton offered his own model of a way to view biblical texts. Using three “buckets” of various sizes, he suggested that biblical teachings can be placed inside one of the three.

The first — and largest — bucket contains the teachings that you just know are good and right, he said. “Love your neighbor, love God, love one another,” for example, he said.

The second — and medium-sized — bucket contains those teachings that were relevant for a particular time and place, but are not applicable for today. Hamilton noted circumcision and kosher laws as two examples Christians have discussed and come to different agreements about over the years.

The third — and smallest — bucket is the place for things that “never ever reflected the heart of God,” Hamilton said. Using Leviticus 20:13 as an example, Hamilton said that he knows no one who would “put to death” practicing homosexuals as is commanded here. Instead, he said, “Progressives would put it in bucket 3, conservatives in bucket 2, but no one sees it as a bucket 1 command.”

“Here’s the point,” he writes in the book (p. 273), “there are things commanded in the Bible, in the name of God, that today we recognize as immoral and inconsistent with the heart of God.”

Hamilton argued that everyone “judges” Scripture at one level or another. To illustrate his point, he pointed to a conversation he had with a fellow United Methodist pastor. During the conversation, the other pastor was saying that people should refrain from interpreting Scripture — judging Scripture — through their own eyes. Hamilton asked the pastor if he had a pension. The pastor said yes. Hamilton asked if the pastor contributed to his pension. The pastor said yes.

Hamilton then asked the other pastor what he thought about the passage in the Gospel of Matthew about “not laying up treasures on earth.”

“I’m inviting you to judge Scripture,” Hamilton said, “but to do so through the lens of Jesus. When confronting difficult issues, ask: Does this really capture the heart and character of God?”

Hamilton briefly addressed the difficult issues of homosexuality and same-gender marriage, issues, he said, that are threatening to tear apart the church.

“United Methodists on the extremes aren’t looking for dialogue,” he said. “They seem to want to defend their own points of view. Perhaps we need a middle way.”

That “middle way,” Hamilton said, means that faithful Christians can disagree on these (and other) issues.

“We’re not disagreeing on the authority of the Bible,” he added.

“If we can get to this place, we won’t need to divide. We have to figure out how to live with people who are in different places. Either we’re going to blow the church up or learn how to live together.”

Hamilton continues to read the Bible every day, carrying around a “pocket” testament wherever he goes. “I challenge you,” he said, “to carry one, too, and to get caught reading it.” In fact, he added, Hamilton wants to be buried with a pocket testament.

The Bible, Hamilton said at the end of his presentation, “is more complicated than we think. God speaks to us through it. In it, we find life and meaning.”



By the numbers: UM initiative to eradicate deaths by malaria

Imagine No Malaria is an extraordinary effort by the people of The United Methodist Church, putting our faith into action to end preventable deaths by malaria in Africa, especially the death of a child or a mother.

Achieving this goal requires an integrated strategy against the disease. As a life-saving ministry, Imagine No Malaria aims to empower the people of Africa to overcome malaria’s burden. We fight malaria with a comprehensive model of prevention, education, treatment, and communications. For more information, visit www.bwcumc.org/ImagineNoMalaria.

