

UMC Connection

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Becoming fully alive in Christ and making a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world • www.bwcumc.org • Volume 26, Issue 10 • November 2015

BWC partners with Puerto Rico



Bishop Rafael Moreno Rivas, left, shakes hands with Bishop Marcus Matthews after signing a ministry partnership covenant agreement between the BWC and Puerto Rican Methodists. The Revs. JW Park, center, Joe Daniels (in red shirt) and Edgardo Rivera, right, applaud the new agreement.

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff



A SOCIACIÓN IS PARTNERSHIP in Spanish. *Bendiciones* are blessings. *Iglesia* is church. Above all, always, is *Dios* – God.

It was God who called the Baltimore-Washington Conference and the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico into partnership, said bishops Marcus Matthews and Rafael Moreno Rivas.

A covenant between the two groups was signed by the two bishops on Oct. 13 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. In reality, it began 25 years ago when the Rev. Edgardo Rivera and Evelyn Rivera were called to leave their homeland on the Island of Vieques in Puerto Rico.

It has always been a prayerful mystery to them why God had not called them to be in ministry there. But establishing the partnership and leading a team of 20 conference leaders began to illuminate answers.

It was for “such a time as this” that the two had been prepared – their lives and ministries spanning the two cultures and building bridges for shared worship, fellowship, learning, service and evangelism.

“Words can’t express what it means to me. It is a dream come true,” said Edgardo Rivera, the superintendent of the Frederick District and director of the new partnership. There was joy in being able to share the island and the people he loved with his colleagues. But there was also hope that the variety of perspectives being shared among the two cultures will bring new life to God’s church, he said.

The Puerto Rican Methodist Church separated from The United Methodist Church in 2004. Remnants of the cross and flame linger in much of its culture. It has approximately 12,000 members in 100 churches. About half of its pastors are lay pastors.

To begin the partnership, Bishop Matthews led a delegation of his Cabinet and others for a 10-day immersion experience, touring mission and ministry sites. He encouraged the BWC leaders to listen, learn and begin to imagine how local churches might become involved in Puerto Rico.

“Most things in our churches that are really working don’t start with multitudes of people,” the bishop said. “They start with one person having a vision and others

catching on fire.”

In Puerto Rico, Matthews found himself looking into people’s faces and expressions, where he found “so much hospitality, so much joy. Despite the struggles they’re going through,” he said, “there is so much joy. I hope we will see more of that in our churches.”

On the trip, the bishop identified two urgent needs: a stove needed pieces so that it could pass a health inspection to ensure that students at a church-run school could continue to receive meals; and a fence was needed at a church’s camping facility to add security for the children.

Before the team left the island, Oct. 15, they delivered the money to meet both needs.

Puerto Rico has been struggling with severe debt issues. Government officials say the island is \$72 billion in debt and, unless significant assistance is provided, the government could run out of money in November.

These financial problems have had a significant effect on churches and the people in communities they serve. Church leaders are cutting back even as the needs grow greater. But Bishop Moreno Rivas continues to seek opportunities among the challenges and is insistent that God will provide.

“If we can’t afford to eat, we won’t eat, but we will continue preaching the Gospel,” he vowed.

As part of the trip, BWC leaders were invited to visit mission outreach programs in San Juan, led by St. Juan the Apostle Methodist Church and Emanuel Methodist Church.

The Rev. Aixa Maldonado Marti led them to the Ribbons of Love ministry, which provides food, clothing, showers and medical care to people living under a bridge and in increasingly troubled neighborhoods.

Coral Corcino, the director of a school at Emmanuel Methodist Church and wife of the Rev. Ingmar Rivera, provided a tour of a school run by the church before offering opportunities to serve meals to 80 of the community’s neediest people.

One of the most striking things about both mission trips was how present the church volunteers were in the lives of those they served. They knew names, family situations and were unafraid to venture into areas where drugs were sold and crime was rampant.

See Puerto Rico, page 4

Christ UMC of the Deaf turns 120

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



In 1895, if you were Deaf and lived in the Baltimore area, you likely lived a subsistence lifestyle with no prospect or little hope for improvement.

The Rev. Daniel Moylan, who had become Deaf at age 4 due to complications from a case of the measles, and who had been rejected for the priesthood in the Episcopal Church because he was Deaf, founded a small group meeting of Deaf people in Baltimore that year, which grew into the first Deaf Methodist Church in the area.

The Rev. Sandi Johnson recalled that history as the congregation of Christ UMC of the Deaf met in October to celebrate its 120th anniversary.

“Rev. Moylan asked for the support of the then



The Revs. Sandi Johnson, left, and Kirk van Gilder.

Baltimore Conference,” Johnson said about Moylan, “and he received it.”

The new church began worshipping on Eutaw Street in Baltimore. Later, Moylan would start worshipping congregations in Washington, D.C., and Frederick. But it’s the church in Baltimore that remains to this day, thanks to the support of the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

Without that support, Johnson said, the congregation

See Christ UMC, page 3

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

BY MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

HEBREWS 13:16 -- "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

Thanksgiving is about the 3 F's for me: food, family and football. I can taste the turkey and dressing as I type this, my mouth already watering. A large meal, a banquet table set, and people invited.

I know Jesus didn't play football, but Jesus did come "eating and drinking." He ate with tax collectors and sinners, with disciples and outcasts. He talked about a banquet in which those who were specially invited decided not to show, so the Master threw open the doors and let in all who would come. He took a little bit of food, one boy's lunch, and fed a multitude.

Thanksgiving, for people who follow Jesus and who have "tasted and seen that the Lord is good," has to be about something more than just "me and mine" and the big nap afterwards. Thanksgiving is about giving thanks to God and sharing what we have with others, especially those who cannot repay. That's part of how we give God thanks.

For a Christian, every Thanksgiving is an invitation to share bread, because Jesus is the Bread of Life. Let us extend our Thanksgiving tables to share what we have with those who are in need. Let us invite all to join into the chorus of gratitude for God's grace. Let us open our hearts, and give thanks, by sharing our blessings with others, by giving instead of grasping, and extending the table to those who otherwise would not have enough.

What is food? Jesus gives us a deeper idea about food than just a tryptophan coma. Who is family? Jesus tells us "family" includes folks we otherwise might not include. And football? Well, "Drop Kick Me, Jesus, through the Goalposts of Life." This Thanksgiving, don't forget who and what we are thankful for...and don't just consume. Share.

... well said

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

BY DARYL WILLIAMS
PASTOR, ST. PAUL UMC, OXON HILL

AS AN ONLY child, there was a word that I learned very late in life: share.

You see, growing up as the only child, the world is yours. Every toy is yours. Every remote control is yours. Every small article of clothing is yours. You almost feel like a prince because everything that you can reach becomes a part of your domain.

It is because of that, much later than those who have siblings, I learned the word share. Sharing is that bizarre concept of allowing others to have usage of a part or the whole of something you have deemed yourself to be in control of.

It was my cousin who taught me the word share. One day when he was visiting, I was playing with all the toys. I didn't mean any harm but, like many children, I was just not aware of what I was doing. I was having all the fun. I was going from good toy to good toy at my will, leaving him only the leftovers.

With only the bad toys available to him, he wasn't having any fun, so he left. I wanted to play with him, and all the toys, and have it all be my way. So he decided that if everything had to be my way then he simply would go somewhere where he could have something his way.

It was then that I learned what sharing really is. Sharing is not simply giving; sharing is valuing. When we share, we tell someone else that we value them as much as we value ourselves. We value their happiness, their wholeness, their hopes, dreams and desires as much as we value our own.

It is because we value them that we are willing to give them something that is not extra to us, or that we don't really want, but something that we value and want for ourselves, so we share it with them.

True sharing only comes when we are willing to give of our best, so that someone else can have the best as well.

So in this season of sharing, show someone how much you value them, by truly sharing with them.

... well said



#OURLIVESMATTER

Finding the place to be comfortable with the uncomfortable.

Saturday, November 21 | Noon
1459 Columbia Rd, NW, Washington, DC

Registration and information:
ourlivesmatter2015.eventbrite.com
Twitter: @OLMS2015

Hosted by InspireDC and BWC Young Adult Council

EVENTS

Bishop's Advent Day Apart First UMC, Hyattsville Nov. 17, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

The Rev. Dr. David McAllister-Wilson, president of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., will be the speaker. The cost is \$15. Online registration is at <https://arenaweb.bwcumc.org/default.aspx?page=3115&event=2529>. If you signed up for last year's Lenten Day Apart, which was cancelled due to weather, you are already registered for the Advent gathering.

#OURLIVESMATTER Symposium InspireDC, Washington Nov. 21, 12 p.m.

The BWC Young Adult Council and InspireDC are holding a forum for conversations on race and racism. Registration opens at 11 a.m.; the program begins at noon, and lunch will be served later in the afternoon. More info at ourlivesmatter2015.eventbrite.com

Quality of Life Retreat Fundraiser Beaver Creek Country Club, 9535 Mapleville Road in Hagerstown, 4 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 and go to support this HIV/AIDS ministry in the BWC. Contact Pastor Nancy Green at 301-797-5433 for more information and tickets.

ROCK 2016 Convention Center, Ocean City, MD Feb. 5-7, 2016

Learn more at <http://bwcumc.org/rock> and register at <http://bwcumc.org/rock>

Giving Tuesday Dec. 1, online

On Dec. 1, you are invited to come together with thousands of United Methodists to support the work of Advance projects and missionaries on UMC #GivingTuesday. - See more at: <http://www.umcmiission.org/giving-tuesday/resources>.

Do you know someone from the Baltimore-Washington Conference who has the gifts in ministry to be a bishop?

Episcopal candidate recommendations are being sought and must be submitted before Nov. 30.
Send statements to Jen Ihlo at jenGC2016@gmail.com

UMConnection

Bishop Marcus Matthews
Maidstone Mulenga

Resident Bishop
Assistant to the Bishop,
Director of Connectional Ministries

Melissa Lauber
Erik Alsgaard
Alison Burdett
Kat Care
Linda Worthington
Kayla Spears

Director of Communications
Managing Editor
Multimedia Producer
Web Content Manager
Communications Associate
Communications Associate

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This symbol appears with stories that show your apportionment dollars at work, making a difference in people's lives.

Circles of Grace: New resolution addresses concerns

BY JEN IHLO*

THE RULES COMMITTEE of the Baltimore-Washington Conference met on Oct. 6 to consider all that we heard and learned from the four Town Hall meetings, e-mails received, and blog postings concerning the Circles of Grace process. We are deeply grateful to everyone who took the time to express their views and opinions.

We reviewed and seriously considered all the concerns and comments which were very helpful in our discernment. We have endeavored to be as inclusive as possible in addressing those concerns. The process described below may not be perfect, but it has arisen out of the conversations we had and a genuine attempt to make the process better.

Next Steps

The next step in the ongoing information gathering is to report and circulate our decisions, so that we can obtain additional feedback before the Jan. 15, 2016, deadline for submissions of resolutions.

The summary here is based on what we heard and learned over the past few months and after conversation with Matthew Sichel, who participated in all the Town Hall meetings (either in person or by video).

The information about what we learned and our decisions will be available online, with feedback option via e-mail to Rules@bwcumc.org. We will post a blog in order to generate an online discussion. We will send e-mails to the Annual Conference and, by request, to those who participated in the Town Hall meetings. Finally, we will have a discussion at the Connectional Table and with the Discipleship Council.

After receiving the next set of feedback, the Rules Committee will make our final decisions about a resolution to be offered to the Annual Conference next year.

What we learned

The top "learning" is that, overall, folks like the Circles of Grace process. While approval of the Circles of Grace is not unanimous, there is a strong consensus to continue using this process. We noted, as well, that the past two Annual Conferences voted, by a 2/3 majority, to suspend the rules of the session in order to use the Circles process.

The next learning is that many folks were frustrated that

there was no opportunity to "perfect" the resolutions. There was not a consensus about whether this perfection opportunity should be at Annual Conference or via a debate process. Overall, the Rules Committee felt that imposing a debate process following the Circles discussion would undermine that process. We heard clearly that there are some who believe that they lose their voice if there is not a debate opportunity. There was not a consensus about this and the Rules Committee concluded that more voices are heard by more people using the Circles since the debate process is generally limited to only six voices — three for, three against.

In order to address the consensus that there should be some opportunity to perfect the resolutions, we developed a process (described in detail below) that would occur prior to Annual Conference. We hope that the process described below will provide all with an opportunity to comment on resolutions early enough that the makers will be able to edit their resolutions, if needed, and that it also allows the Connectional Table to perfect the resolutions before voting for concurrence/non-concurrence.

There is nothing in our rules to prevent a resolutions' perfection process prior to Annual Conference and, in fact, this has been done in the past via legislative committees and the Connectional Table. This process will apply to all resolutions, whether or not they are considered for the Circles process, which will hopefully also allow for a more streamlined debate once we get to Annual Conference.

Other learnings that resulted in specific edits to this proposed resolution include: (a) limiting the Circles to a single topic; (b) having groups of not more than 10; (c) allowing comments of up to three minutes by the maker of a resolution under consideration; and (d) developing questions based on the topic under discussion.

The Rules Committee believes that the proposed resolution addresses the key concerns that we heard, including allowance for a pre-annual conference perfection process. The pre-annual conference process can be tweaked over time, as needed, and can later be codified if it proves to be a useful tool.

Although not necessary for inclusion in the resolution, we also clearly heard a call for enhanced facilitator and participator training and a request that the Circles process not be held in the evening.

In this regard, we noted the logistical challenges of

setting up for the Circles but will take this request to the Sessions Committee for their consideration. We heard some concerns about why the results of the voting are held until the next morning. The final vote is announced the next day in order to further enhance the discussion process. We did not want to end what we hope will be holy conversations with an announcement of a "winner/loser." The final vote tally information is closely held by the Chief Teller and there is no opportunity for tampering with the ballots.

Pre-Conference Resolution Perfection Process

(This process is based on 2016 dates but generally allows one or two week intervals. These dates will need review by the Sessions Committee and the Conference Lay Leader, as she sets the date for the Connectional Table meeting.)

Jan. 15 - Resolutions due (per the current Rules of the Session)

Jan. 29 - Post all resolutions online and send a Survey Monkey to AC members. (The Survey Monkey questions are still being developed but will be along the lines of: a) is the resolution clear; b) would you be comfortable voting on this resolution as written; c) what amendments, if any, would you offer to this resolution; and d) what additional information do you need to make a decision. There would be opportunity to make written comments, not simply answer yes or no.)

Feb. 12 - Survey Monkey closes

Feb. 19 - Rules Committee sends Survey Monkey results to

- makers of the resolutions;
- chair persons of Connectional Table and Discipleship Council; and
- posts online

Makers of resolutions may amend their resolution, prior to CT consideration, based on feedback received

Feb. 26 - Amended resolutions due by maker to Conference Secretary

March 1 - Amended resolutions

- forwarded to members of the Connectional Table
- posted online

March 12 - Connectional Table meeting

- can further perfect resolutions, then vote concur/non concur

**Jen Ihlo is chair of the Rules Committee.*

Christ UMC: Culturally Deaf church celebrates 120 years

From page 1

couldn't afford its pastor or perform many of its ministries. That's because many of the congregation have a hard time finding employment, live at or below the poverty line, and some are homeless.

"Today we're celebrating the gift of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, that this church still happens, that this church still exists," said Johnson. "The first and only culturally Deaf United Methodist Church in the United States."

The church also includes a Deaf Shalom Zone which seeks to empower the Deaf community through education, advocacy and assistance.

Johnson said that many members of the church have come to her for assistance in reading English. One person, who had received mailers from organizations seeking donations, thought that they were bills and had to be paid.

"As a hearing person," Johnson said, "I work very hard at getting out of their way and letting them run the church. It's not my church, it's our church; it's God's church."

Lasander Saunders has been a member of the church for 20 years. She said the church represents God to her.

"My life has changed since I've been involved in this church," she said. "I found God in the people here. There are so many things that have happened in our church — the choir, the preaching, the missions and ministry."

Before coming to Christ UMC of the Deaf, Saunders had attended a hearing church and was the only Deaf person there. She missed out on a lot of what happened because she had to read lips and that doesn't work well, she said.

"When I came to the Deaf church and I found people who were the same as me, who were Deaf like me, who used Sign Language, suddenly communication was open," she said. "It was such a better life. Thank God for the Baltimore-Washington Conference for supporting us."

Johnson, who has served Christ UMC of the Deaf since 2009, said that her goal is to double the size of the congregation in the next 10 years.

The Rev. Kirk van Gilder, a Deaf clergy member of the BWC, delivered the keynote address. Now an assistant professor at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., van Gilder had served at Christ UMC of the Deaf with who is now Bishop Peggy Johnson.

"The Deaf Community knows that this is a place for us and by us," he said. "It's a place where we can praise the Lord."

One of those praise moments came from the church's Deaf Sign Choir, which has been chosen to perform at the 2016 General Conference next May in Portland, Ore. The choir, Johnson said, is seeking to raise \$20,000

for transportation and other expenses. The choir will be touring throughout the BWC and holding a variety of fundraisers in the coming months.

Christ UMC of the Deaf is not only proud of its choir, van Gilder said, but it was also the very first church to be racially integrated in the conference, doing that in 1955. "We're very proud of that," he said.

The church comes together for worship every Sunday at noon, he said, and ends with a time of fellowship that often lasts well into the afternoon.

"We come together to support each other in community," van Gilder said. "It's what we do."



Members of the Christ UMC of the Deaf Choir perform at their anniversary celebration.

Puerto Rico: New partnership strengthens the church

From page 1

Some of the BWC leaders expressed hope that the partnership will help people in the U.S. and Puerto Rico learn to be in ministry with the poor in a more effective and systemic manner.

Others on the trip were pleased to note the intergenerational aspects of the church in Puerto Rico and the way young people were regularly included in all parts of the worship experience, as liturgists, musicians and readers of the Scripture.

Metamorphosis, a musical group made up of youth from Rev. Tomas Rico Soltero Methodist Church in Garrochales, provided opportunities for its members to write their own music and lyrics, believing too much of contemporary worship is about “feeling good and singing, ‘holy, holy, holy’ rather than delving deeper into the profound realities of living faith.”

The youth of Puerto Rico were also present in the Church’s educational efforts. The Julia Torres Fernandez Methodist School in Ponce is an elementary school run by the church that helps students, many from low-income families, integrate faith and values into the public school curriculum and provides the students with a world view of service.

The Rev. Luisette Berastain Sane of McCabe Methodist Church leads a weekly chapel service for the children. Because they have to compete with more prosperous private schools, the pastor and the board of directors are constantly seeking creative collaborations to help pay their staff a competitive wage, providing “extras” like sporting equipment and art supplies, and seeing to the academic, emotional and spiritual needs of the students.

But the partnership involves giving and receiving by everyone, said Bishop Matthews.

The Rev. Yolanda Correa of Universidad Methodist Church in San Juan agrees. She believes the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico also has a great deal to offer those in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. “We have talked and shared together. It is amazing our struggles are the same as yours,” she said.

Correa and other Puerto Rican church leaders say that the Methodist Church there has an outstanding camping program that creates and nurtures new leaders. It provides effective mission training required of all laity who want to do mission at home or abroad. They also report having strong certification programs for the laity.

“Puerto Rico churches are open to give the joy and the grace to all people,” she said. “This is a new beginning in our faith journey. We’re on new paths that will bring new blessings.”

One of the struggles facing both faith communities is declining membership. The 165-member congregation of Puerto del Cielo in Patillas was addressing that by building a new, towering concrete sanctuary that will seat 1,200 worshippers.

Elba N. Ramos Malave says the Lord gave her and the congregation a vision of people walking up to this new church. But progress has been slow. The church is now being built by volunteers who work on the weekends. Ramos Malave and other women reassured themselves of the future by picking out the color of dresses they will wear to the grand opening.

BWC members asked direct and pointed questions — and in this exchange, some saw the strength and challenges of the two churches being lived out in this project — with BWC leaders appearing more pragmatically innovative and social-justice centered, while Puerto Rican leaders were more visionary and evangelical.

These are generalizations, to be sure. But for many, like Madeline Daniels of Emory Fellowship in D.C., the word “dream” came up in many conversations with Puerto Rican church leaders. “It was nice to know people are still dreaming dreams,” she said.

During the stay on the island of Vieques, many members of the BWC team had the opportunity to kayak at night time on a bioluminescent bay, one of only a handful of such ecosystems in the world. The conditions in this bay allow organisms in the water to light up when they are touched. The paddles made glowing patterns in the darkened water.

However, the tour guide explained, everything about the environment, from the rainfall to the impact of motorized boats, had an effect on how bright the organisms shone. “Everything is connected in this miracle,” he said.

It was a preachable moment for the people of a connectional church.

The Baltimore-Washington Conference has three other global partnerships, with Zimbabwe, South Korea and Eurasia. In the months ahead, districts and many local churches will begin working more fully as partners with Methodists in Puerto Rico.

The reasons for these partnerships are simple, said the Rev. Maidstone Mulenga, assistant to the bishop and director of Connectional Ministries. “United, we can

accomplish much more for the kingdom of God,” he said.

The ministries in this partnership will be cleared through the bishops’ offices. District superintendents will provide leadership to local churches seeking to serve in partnership.

Based on the recent trip to Puerto Rico, the following are some ideas about how BWC churches might become involved:

- Provide resources to fulfill the vision of a community garden, senior residential and health care facility and guest house on land owned by Esperanza Methodist Church in Vieques.
- Assist in the renovation of the deteriorating parsonage of Samuel Culpepper Methodist Church in Vieques.
- Support the radio station on Vieques that works for justice and community transformation.
- Participate in the ministries of San Juan Apostol Methodist Church, including Lazos de Amor (Ribbons of Love), which provides food, clothing, haircuts, showers, health care and more to the poor, many of whom live under a bridge in San Juan.
- Share in the outreach of Emanuel Methodist Church, which feeds and offers clothing and showers to the poor each Saturday.
- Give talents and treasures to the church-run Head Start program and school for children in grades 1-4 at Emanuel Methodist Church in one of San Juan’s neediest neighborhoods.
- Give a voice to “Metamorphosis,” a youth choir at Rev. Tomas Rico Soltero Methodist Church in Garrochales, which provides unique opportunities for expressions of faith.
- Promote camping opportunities at Camp Corson, an incubator for new church leaders, in the mountains of Jayuya.
- Become a part of the Julia Torres Methodist School, named after Puerto Rico’s first ordained woman, in Ponce. Supplies, funds and volunteers are all needed.
- Ensure children get the tutoring they need through the CRECE ministry. One of its premier sites is in Arroyo.
- Build a soaring \$3 million church building, Puerto del Cielo (Door of Heaven) in Patillas.
- Help build a vacation/vocation site, The Chapel of the Sea, a new, expanded camp on the Caribbean Sea in Patillas.

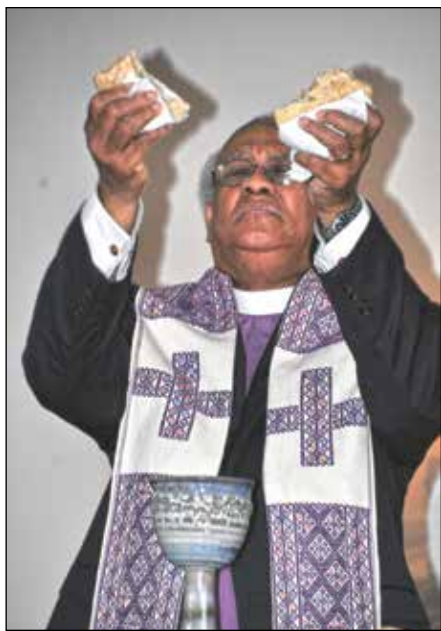


The Baltimore-Washington Conference entered into a partnership with the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico. As a part of their shared covenant, the two faith communities will begin “building on their common Wesleyan traditions to spread scriptural holiness (personal and social) through evangelism and ministries of justice and mercy.”

Asociación is partnership in Spanish.
Bendiciones are blessings.
Iglesia is church.
Above all, always, is *Dios* – God.



“It was nice to know people are still dreaming dreams.”



Reaching out to young people, serving the poor, praying for community development and creating conversations about discipleship are vital pieces of the BWC's new partnership with Puerto Rico.



Ministry Relationship Oversight Committee started

By MELISSA LAUBER
UMConnection Staff

EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS AND individuals who wish to develop a formal relationship with the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church now have a process in place to apply via the Ministry Relationship Oversight Committee (MROC).

MROC was formed in accordance with the resolution passed during the 2014 Annual Conference session and is a standing committee of the Discipleship Council charged with receiving and reviewing initial applications and then working with applicants to develop specific terms of a Ministry Relationship Agreement. All Agreements are approved by the Discipleship Council, the bishop, Chancellor and Annual Conference before becoming effective.

MROC spent 2014 and the initial part of 2015 developing a process and fine tuning the application now available at <http://bwcumc.org/finance/ministry-relationship-oversight-committee/>.

Members of MROC include representatives of the Conference Trustees, the Council on Finance and Administration, and the Discipleship Council, as well as several at-large members.

MROC has received one application thus far and is available to meet with other entities as they consider whether to apply. Applicants are encouraged to collaborate closely with MROC in the completion of their applications.

Questions can be directed to mroc@bwcumc.org.



Throughout his ministry, Bishop Marcus Matthews has been led by the love and imagination of God. As he retires in July 2016, that sense of love and creativity will live on in an innovative building project.

This love offering will build a complex at the United Methodist-affiliated Africa University in Zimbabwe that will provide a much needed place to heal the body and soul of future leaders.

There are three options to send your contributions:

Mail - A check marked Bishop's Love Offering, to the Conference

Treasurer at 11711 E. Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759

Online - bwcumc.org/about/bishop-matthews-love-offering

Text - Send your \$10 gift by texting 'BishopAU' to 410-220-2402.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Church garden provides more than food

WOODBINE – A year ago, Morgan Chapel UMC had great hopes for a ¼-acre garden plot the congregation had near the church. They'd planted it in corn and planned not only to feed the community but to sell some to purchase supplies for the next year.

"It didn't happen," said Pastor Lynne Humphries-Russ. "It was a complete bust."

Not to be deterred, one church member, her son and grandchildren were determined to try again, with many different vegetables. A neighbor and her family, not a member of the church, came along to help. And the results were outstanding: they grew tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, watermelon, squash, zucchini, cantaloupe and yes, corn. "It grew vegetables and a community," Humphries-Russ said.

The impetus for the garden came from their pastor when she realized the seven acres belonging to the church could feed people as well as horses. The church already supported a food pantry twice a month and the garden became part of the congregation's outreach into that community of sometimes homeless, always hungry, people.

The ministry hasn't stopped with the food pantry and garden, but has expanded to include pets. In rural Carroll County, people will feed their pets before they feed themselves, the pastor said. So one woman contacted local pet-food stores and soon was able to get contributions to make pet food available at the food pantry, leaving the "real food for the families.

"God is working overtime out there," Humphries-Russ said.

Maryland Bible Society alive and well

BALTIMORE – Since the Maryland Bible Society closed its Baltimore store a few years ago, many have thought the organization was also closed. Not so, says the Rev. Mary Worrall, a retired BWC Elder, president of its Board of Directors.

Among its activities these days — always focused on making the Bible available to more people — is partnering with public elementary schools. "Our interest and urgency is to bring Christ to unchurched children," says a recent newsletter. To do this, MBS is working with Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) through CEF's Good News Clubs, which meet in many elementary schools. For more information or to help with this effort, contact CEF at 410-944-6435 or e-mail Martha Wright at drmarthawright@gmail.com. To learn more of what MBS is doing, see www.MBSToday.org.

Young kids learn mission early

CHEVY CHASE - Instead of having a Sunday school lesson or learning about mission, once a month the young children in Sunday school at Chevy Chase UMC gather to do a hands-on mission project, called "Kids with Purpose."



Fifteen children recently provided a meal for the 60 homeless people who eat Sunday nights at nearby Our Lady of Lourdes church.

Church members provided the supplies, and the children made lasagna, salad and a dessert, which along with bread made up the meal. And they did it in an hour.

Some of their teen-age brothers and sisters helped in the kitchen, doing the heavy lifting, pulling lasagna and cookies from the oven and helping with the cleanup.

Even the smallest children were involved. They made greeting cards for each of the men and women who came to eat.

"We look forward to another year full of age-appropriate mission projects that offer our children a chance to engage with the community and the world around them," said Jan Walden, director of the Sunday school.

Older adults retreat to West River

WEST RIVER – Rainy weather cancelled any boat rides but not the enthusiasm of the 75 men and women who attended the fall Older Adults Day Away in early October.

The Rev. Tony Hunt, pastor of Epworth Chapel UMC, presented on "God's Mosaic: Building Beloved Communities in Changing Times." It set the stage for one of the afternoon workshops that told of the unique relationships between Ames Memorial and Glen Mar UMCs to the Sandtown area of Baltimore, the site of the Freddy Gray riots.

The Rev. Claire Matheny of St. Paul's UMC in Kensington led worship and Bible study to start the day and to close it with Communion.

As is customary with the daylong retreat for older adults, the afternoon split into workshops on various topics. Participants could take in two during the afternoon, or just use the time to enjoy the camp and friends.

In addition to the Ames-Glen Mar workshop, one was on art, led by Ruth Bailey. Participants made their own personal mosaic. West River is committed to being a good steward of its Chesapeake Bay heritage and one workshop, led by Kolya Braun-Greiner from Interfaith Partners of the Chesapeake Bay, helped participants to understand that heritage. The Rev. Patricia Wood led a session on Spiritual Disciplines.

Not to be overlooked, Andy Thornton, Director of Camping Ministries for the conference as well as West River, took those who wanted to see it on a tour of the newly renovated and renamed Kahlert House, one of the small family cabins now open for rental.



Older Adult attendees listen at the 'Day Away.'

How to celebrate 90

GAITHERSBURG - What do you give someone who is celebrating a 90th birthday?

Vivian Otto, who lives in Asbury Village, has an answer from experience. You could give her 90 pennies, as did her two-year-old great granddaughter. Or 90 dimes, or nine \$10 bills, or 90 gold \$1 coins, or 90 Forever stamps.

But her "best" birthday present, she said, was a certificate saying \$90 had been sent to Trees for the Future for 900 trees to be planted in forest gardens in Africa. Those trees will live far after I will, she said.

She's now wondering how she'll spend "all this money."

Preparing for General/Jurisdictional Conference

BY SARAH SCHLIECKERT*



THREE AND A half years ago, the *UM Connection* ran a photo of my then year-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Anna, as the lead photo for their report on Jurisdictional Conference.

In the photo, Anna was kneeling in the center of a prayer labyrinth the organizers had placed in the hallway outside the conference hall. The photo was just so darn cute and peaceful.

The problem is, that photo doesn't tell you anything (or at least much) about what it was actually like to lug a 20-month old six hours to a conference where she and I spent most of the time in our hotel room.

The adjacent mall had boasted an awesome kids' play area. Of course, it was under construction the entirety of Jurisdictional Conference. While Anna and I spent most of Jurisdictional Conference in our hotel room, my husband Chris (a lay delegate for the first time that year) joined in the also-not-as-fun-as-it-sounds work of electing five bishops. FIVE!

So many ballots. So, so many ballots...

The labyrinth was a brief and fleeting moment of peace and sanity for all of us. The rest of it was just rough.

On the way to Jurisdictional Conference, Anna (who was still learning words) tried to repeat what we were saying, and so she started talking about how she was going to "juris-difficult" conference.

Indeed, Anna. Indeed.

The work of the delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference is hard, rough work. We get to travel to exotic places like Portland, Ore., and Lancaster, Pa., sure. And then we proceed to sit in conference halls and meeting rooms for hours. Days.

The work that happens in those rooms and halls, though, begins long before we arrive. Already, your delegation has

been meeting to prepare for the work ahead.

We have developed (and shared with you) the values and qualities we will be focusing on as we discern who God is calling the BWC to endorse as a candidate for bishop. In the New Year, we will be meeting with and interviewing persons whose names have been lifted up for consideration. As is our practice, we anticipate offering a recommendation to the 2016 Annual Conference Session.

In addition, in the coming months, our delegation will be studying the key topics we anticipate coming up at General and Jurisdictional Conference. Many of these

educated about these important issues yourself.

None of the photos or accounts we or others share with you about General and Jurisdictional Conference will be able to convey not only the difficulty of the work (and sometimes the pain and discouragement), but also the Spirit-led, awe-inspiring moments when God leads us beyond our rules and processes to a new place; a new way of being.

Please hold us, your delegation, accountable for bearing witness to all these things, to sharing with you the work we are doing and our shared discernment on God's direction.

Though our photos and words will necessarily be incomplete, they are part of our commitment to you: to serve faithfully as delegates and to connect you and the entire BWC to the shared life and work of The United Methodist Church.

Finally, we welcome and invite your prayers for the work of your delegation. Please pray for our preparations as well as our time at the conferences. Please pray that our God, who is, has always been and will always be a God of new beginnings, is able to do a new thing in 2016. Pray that our God will lead all of us along a path that will lead

to making more and more disciples of Jesus Christ and to transforming the world.

Lord in your mercy...

**The Rev. Sarah Schlieckert is pastor of Arden UMC in Martinsburg, W.Va.*



are already on your radar as well: church structure and governance; the church's approach to ministry to and with LGBTQ persons; and the way we live out our call to be the church universal, especially in our denomination and global connections.

I invite you to engage in these learnings with us. Fellow delegation members will be writing about specific topics as we move through our preparations. I encourage you to consider their reflections, and devote yourself to becoming

Young Adult Ministry: This is why young people are leaving churches

BY CHERYL COOK*



PICTURE THIS: A huge ballroom in Hershey, Pa., filled with 600+ leaders from across the Northeastern Jurisdiction. People are seated at round tables as worship begins with a large choir from a nearby college. On either side of me are two young adult lay leaders, and the wife of one of our young adult clergy members is sitting across the table. We are talking quietly among ourselves (probably about some aspect of the weekend conference) when I am tapped on the shoulder by a gentleman who I had seen many times throughout the weekend as part of the event team. We turned to look at him and he said, "Worship has started. You all need to stop talking."

This is why young people are leaving churches.

You may think I'm overreacting, but I guarantee you that I am not. That 30-second encounter is exactly why young people are leaving our churches.

Let me give you another example. While at this same NEJ conference, I was seated for dinner next to a Wesley Seminary student who also serves as a part-time youth pastor at one of our local churches. Also at our table was a district superintendent who used to pastor the church where the youth pastor is working. The youth pastor started talking about how she has had to fight/argue with church staff over the dress code of youth when they are serving as acolytes. The district superintendent shook her head and said, "They're still arguing over that? We were discussing

that years ago when I left."

This is why young people are leaving our churches.

And just one more example for good measure, which occurred in my local church about two years ago. We have a young family who always brings their two children to worship with them. At the time, both children were under the age of five. They always sat in the back row and the parents brought toys and snacks every week. As happens with young ones, they would sometimes become bored and talk a little too loud during a quiet moment or throw a fit if their sibling took the crayon they wanted to use.

On one such Sunday when they were a little rowdy, the service ended and a woman from a few rows ahead of them approached the mother and handed her the bulletin. She had feverishly circled the portion of the bulletin that said, "Nursery and Sunday School available at all worship services." She thrust the bulletin at the mother and walked off in a huff.

This is why young people are leaving our churches.

We care more about correcting behavior than preaching the Gospel. We care more about wardrobe than prayer. We care more about our own comfort in worship than the community of worshippers around us. We care about the wrong things and focus on them more than we care for and focus on our community of believers and helping them become more like Christ.

Our young people see this and experience this in our local churches every week. Who wants to spend time at a place where you or your children are scolded by strangers for making a little noise? Who wants to become part of



Cheryl Cook with her daughter, Joanna.

a community who judges you because you wear jeans instead of khakis? Who wants to spend their time and effort at a place where people are more concerned about telling you how to live your life than actually walking along side of you when you are struggling?

This is why young people are leaving our churches.

It's time to refocus, people.

We need to turn our eyes to the Lord instead of rolling them at

the 15-year-old who shows up to be the acolyte in jeans. It's not about what he's wearing, it's the fact that he showed up and wanted to participate in worship that counts.

We need to see the bigger picture that young people want and need and deserve a place in our churches.

And the sooner we stop creating hurdles and obstacles for them to overcome, the sooner they will commit their time, prayers, presence, gifts and witness to our churches.

**Cheryl Cook is Associate Director of Young Adult Ministries for the BWC. ccook@bwcumc.org*

Not your usual United Methodist Men's meeting

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



THESE ARE NOT your grandfather's United Methodist Men.

Nor are they your father's, for that matter.

That much was clear at the 2015 UMM Annual Meeting, held at the Baltimore-Washington Conference Mission Center in mid-October that started with a video about heroin addiction and how the church can respond, moved to a law enforcement officer speaking about police-community tensions, and ended with a time focused on domestic abuse.

The video, "Heroin Kills," is a project of the Annapolis District UMM and shows two families and how the heroin epidemic has touched their lives.

"The video began in early 2013," said James Wilcox, a member of Eastport UMC in Annapolis. "We invited a group of people to our church, including law enforcement officers, to talk about heroin."

The men's group at Eastport, inspired by that



Bill Weller, UMM President

conversation, decided they couldn't let the issue drop and sought ways to tell the story of the horrible effects of heroin.

"People are dying like flies," Wilcox said. "It's important that this (story) get out and get out fast."

The video, still in its rough-cut phase, will be posted to YouTube once finished. There, churches throughout

the BWC will be able to use it to educate members about heroin and to offer hope to those suffering through its effects.

Bill Weller is President of United Methodist Men for the BWC. He said the meeting was designed to not be business as usual.

"We're highlighting a number of different ministries that men can get involved with and take home and do something," he said.

"If we are going to change the world as we now know that it is," Weller said, "you have to address your problems and you have to find answers for dilemmas. In my humble opinion, the hope for our church and the hope for America is through the United Methodist Men grabbing the reins, addressing the problems and inviting the world to change to our way of thinking."

Lt. Torran Burrus, a member of the Baltimore City Police Department for 20 years, spoke to the men about the up-tick in violence, especially homicide, in the city following the riots of last April. Burrus and his wife, Kimberly, also a law enforcement officer, started "Blue Love Across America" (<http://www.blueloveaa.org/>) as a way of highlighting the positive aspects of police officers.

Today, Burrus said, it seems that police officers are there only when something bad is happening. Blue Love Across America seeks to change that by having police attend social and community events and building positive, non-adversarial relationships.

"We want people to see that the cops are there to help you," Burrus said, adding that they need church men and women to minister to "our citizens and police officers."

The Rev. Daryl Williams, pastor of St. Paul UMC in Oxon Hill, brought greetings from Bishop Marcus Matthews, who was in Puerto Rico at the time. Williams stressed the importance of men in church.

"When a woman in a household becomes Christian, there's a 17 percent chance the rest of the house will follow suit," he said. "When it's a child, it's 35 percent. But when the man in the house becomes Christian, there's a 93 percent probability that the household will follow. That's

the importance men play in the church."

Williams encouraged the men to take their "rightful place" at the front of the family, community and the church,



Rev. Daryl Williams

saying that when men are in place, "the enemy flees."

These men even addressed the desire to reach out to the next generation, as the Rev. B. Kevin Smalls spoke on reaching the millennial generation.

Smalls, the pastor at Queens Chapel and Ebenezer UMCs in Beltsville, said that men need to become missionaries to this generation.

"They want to hear your story," Smalls said. "If the preacher is talking about his or her pain, millennials will think, 'It's okay for me to have that and still have faith.' Grandma would be horrified to hear about the preacher getting angry, but millennials want that."

The 2012 Book of Discipline states that "Each church or charge shall have an organized unit of United Methodist Men." (§256.6) For more information on UMM, visit <http://bwcumc.org/ministries/umm/>.

Celebrating Scouting at Bishop's annual dinner

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



WHEN HE WAS in second grade, Chris became a Cub Scout. He joined Scouting because his cousin was always "out doing really fun stuff, like camping." Chris wasn't raised in the church, he said. In fact, the only time he attended church was on Scout Sundays.

To his surprise, his mother enrolled him in the "God and Family" program which happened to meet at Baldwin Memorial UMC in Millersville. The pastor of the church and the leader of this program at that time was the Rev. Ken Lyons, and he required everyone to bring a Bible to every session.

Chris found a Bible at home that looked like it hadn't



Revs. Chris Owens and Ken Lyons

been touched in decades. The next time in class, Lyons showed Chris and the others how to use it. "That's the first time I ever learned how to use a Bible," Chris said.

Chris also learned, for the first time, at age 9, that the church — specifically, The United Methodist Church — is a warm, welcoming group of people.

Eventually, Chris's cousin became an Eagle Scout and, at the age of 18, so did Chris.

"My scouting experience has prepared me for a lifetime of leadership and cultural impact with integrity and honor," said Chris — the Rev. Chris Owens, now pastor at Trinity

UMC in Annapolis. He shared his story and the power of Scouting at the annual Bishop's Dinner for Scouting, held at the Conference Mission Center in October.

Owens spoke about all the ways Scouting has impacted his life, none more important than the relationships he formed along the way. "If it was not for Scouting," he said, "if it wasn't for pastors like Ken Lyons, if it wasn't for churches who took an interest in my troop, my life would not be what it is today."

The person who introduced Owens as the speaker was none other than Lyons, now a retired Elder in the Baltimore-Washington Conference and Scouting Ministry Coordinator for the BWC.

"Chris is someone I look up to, now," said Lyons in his introduction of Owens. "I'm proud to say that."

"I hope you can see what a powerful impact a church can have on Girl Scouting, on Boy Scouting, on Adventure Scouting," Owens said. "When congregations host a troop, you do far more than just open the doors and pray that nothing gets broken."

Owens encourages churches to look at Scouting as an extension of their youth ministry. He offered four practical ways that churches can form partnerships with Scouting.

- 1) Show up — visit troop meetings, attend Courts of Honor, for example;
- 2) Make a relationship with the troop's planning committee — learn how to better support their work more than unlocking doors and turning on lights;
- 3) Teach a religious emblems class; and
- 4) Volunteer.

Bishop Marcus Matthews echoed Owens' words, noting that it would only take one hour a week to make an impact on another person's life.

"These young people that we are privileged to see in our Scouting programs, these young people need us," Bishop Matthews said. "They need people like Ken or Chris. They need citizens who are willing to be role models, people who are willing to give up some of their time to help make a difference in someone else's life."

The bishop stressed the urgency of the situation, saying that the fast-paced nature of society today places heavy demands on youth.

"Our task is to continue to go and seek out those young

persons and to instill in them something of the hope, something of the joy, something of the blessings that you experienced, so that they, too, can be receiving some of this joy," Bishop Matthews said.

Lyons, who has been involved in Scouting for 61 years, said that he's passionate about it because Scouting is faith-based and builds character.

"When the church and Scouting come together," he said, "it becomes an evangelism tool. Because children will join



Bishop Marcus Matthews

the Scout unit quicker than they will come through the door to participate in a church program.

Lyons, a former District Superintendent, noted that the PRAY awards are a key entry point into exploring faith in Scouting. Formerly called "God and Country" awards, PRAY awards — Programs of Religious Activities with Youth — are given to more than 28,000 Scouts of all ages every year.

The United Methodist Church has more children in its Scouting programs than any other organization in the United States, Lyons noted. If a UMC does not host a Scouting program and wishes to become involved, Lyons suggested calling an Area Council and inviting a representative to come and share.

"These precious lives, these young people who come to us, often every week," Owens said, "I pray that we would bless them richly, and that we would love them with our prayers and our support and our presence. And then, watch them become God's blessing in the world."