

UMCConnection

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church • Becoming fully alive in Christ and making a difference in a diverse and ever-changing world • www.bwcumc.org • Volume 26, Issue 08 • September 2015

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InspireDC sets the table for hospitality



Members of InspireDC, a new BWC faith community, joined with members of area churches, Campus Kitchens, the new FEED ministry and other community groups for a Back-to-School block party outside Mt. Vernon UMC in Washington, D.C.

BY ERIK ALSGAARD
UMCConnection Staff



A COMMON FACTOR THROUGHOUT Jesus' ministry was his love of gathering people together to eat. From the feeding of the 5,000 to the Last Supper, time and again we read of Jesus sharing a meal with people.

So when hundreds of people gathered outside Mount Vernon UMC in Washington, D.C., on a sunny Saturday in August, it should not have been surprising that they gathered around a table to eat, except that this table was 800 feet long, ran right down the middle of Gault Place and sat more than 500.

"For far too long, different parts of our city have remained isolated and disconnected from one another," said the Rev. Dottie Yunger, director of Metropolitan Memorial UMC's Campus Kitchen Project. The project provides food every week for Mount Vernon's neighborhood feeding program, and for other programs. "What we want to show with this table here today is that folks from all over the city are coming together and we're gonna sit down and we're gonna share a meal together."

Rather than holding their regular Saturday meal inside the church, leaders decided to hold it outside and turn it into a block party, complete with moon bounce and entertainment on a stage.

With hotdogs, fresh vegetables, hand-made coleslaw and a variety of other foods, neighborhood residents who often don't wave hello to one another, or who only see each other while

sitting on a front porch in the evening breeze, got together as one.

Yunger noted that the District – like Baltimore City to the north – has experienced a rise in homicides in 2015. However, she noted, as people of faith come together to break bread, relationships are formed and neighborhoods and communities are strengthened.

Yunger said that there are about 50 Campus Kitchen Projects (CKP) throughout the United States. The CKP, which is part of the DC Central Kitchen network, works with food providers on various college campuses to recover food that otherwise would go to waste. That recovered food, then, is shared throughout communities in need.

Yunger's CKP is housed at St. Luke's UMC in Washington, D.C., part of the overall ministry of Metropolitan Memorial UMC. Her program is a "little different," she said, in that it is not housed on a college campus.

"We work with local universities nearby and students from those colleges run the program," she said.

Robrette Vaden, the Executive Director of InspireDC, was also at the event. She said the block-long meal almost didn't happen. The mayor of Washington, D.C., Muriel Bowser, cancelled it just days before it was scheduled.

"We got on the phone, and we were like, 'We have to make this happen,'" she said. And they did.

See Inspire DC, page 5

42 years of pioneering ministry shapes clergywoman's life

BY MELISSA LAUBER
UMCConnection Staff

FIRST IN A SERIES ON WOMEN IN MINISTRY

WHEN SHE BECAME a clergy woman 42 years ago, the Rev. Susan Halse was a pioneer. She is listed in the Chronological Roll of Clergy as the third woman ordained in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. When she graduated from Duke Divinity School, there were about 25 women enrolled and it was unusual for

her to have another woman in her seminary classes. Conference leaders would ask her, "And what does your husband think," and the Cabinet initially hesitated to appoint her because there was, reportedly, a sense that the Conference had enough women



Rev. Susan Halse

pastors. The people she served sometimes paused at the thought of a female pastor. But Halse felt called, she said, to follow the Holy Spirit.

She was hired by a pastor at Capitol Hill UMC in Washington to serve as an associate pastor. Then the Spirit led her, 34 years ago, to Middletown UMC, a tiny church outside of Frederick that many people believed was very close to being closed.

In an age when pastors were encouraged to "take thou authority," Halse listened to her lay people, and quickly discovered they loved their church and

See Halse, page 4

... well said

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

By MANDY SAYERS
Pastor, Covenant UMC, Gaithersburg

LET ME STATE that I don't like the idea of writing about this word. "Resume." As in, "We shall resume pressing those cotton sheets, Felicia, as soon as we have prepared the plum pudding." I think it has to do with the "resumption" of school in September (see what I mean? So dry...). I'd pick "periwinkle" (for my favorite Crayola color) or "backpack" (blessings of backpacks; Jesus' directive to go out without many extra provisions). "Resume" has an air of tedium about it. "Resume" seems to pair up well with that military directive, "As you were." You had fun, now the alarm is going off and it's back to work, back to school, back to the status quo. But here's the thing: "resuming" turns out to be so much more than its cracked up to be when you're talking about life with God, about discipleship, about a God who is always doing a "new thing" in and through and in spite of us. We'd like to think that September is just a "resumption" of our old way of thinking in ministry also, a resumption that features last year's craft fair, last year's Bible study, last year's stewardship campaign. But the Holy Spirit is always blowing where She will, and is nudging us to do more than "resume" our way of doing church this September. We are called to grow and change and deepen in our love of God and neighbor. You can try to "resume" if you want to, but God has always laughed when I've tried to drive the truck we're riding in together. Consider this: After resting on the 7th day, presumably God got up the next day to do more work. According to church tradition, that work on the 8th day was to raise Christ from the dead—ushering in a new creation, a new hope, and a whole new understanding of God. So whenever we set about to "resume" our work, I think we'd better wear our seat belts. Because God seems to be calling us to live in the world as Easter people, even in September. "As you were" is really hard to do once you're baptized. Pass me a periwinkle crayon, please.

... 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 A KID growing up in New York, the worst holiday of the year was Labor Day. When Labor Day came around I would begin to get bummed out. You would have thought I would be a fan of Labor Day. It had all of the makings of a great holiday. Every Labor Day weekend my family would travel to Washington, D.C., to visit our family that lived here. I like traveling so that should have been good a good thing. When we got to D.C., we would always eat crabs. I love crabs so that should have been a good thing. We would always have a big family gathering at my Uncle Elliot's house with great barbecue, great fun and I did mention the crabs, right? Good thing. Such a good thing I had to mention it twice. So why didn't I like Labor Day? Simple. I didn't like Labor Day because the ride home from D.C. always led to the first day of school. Labor Day has always been a reminder to me that the summer was over and that I would have to resume my normal schedule. No more long, lazy summer days. No more staying up late. No more playing baseball for hours on end. Things were going back to normal. Then as I became an adult I had a two shocking revelations: 1) Adults don't get the summer off; and 2) Adults look forward to Labor Day because they get to send their kids back to school! These revelations absolutely floored me. So now I have a new relationship with Labor Day. Labor Day reminds me that vacations are great but we have to resume our regular lives to appreciate time off. It is in the resuming of the normal that we can find meaning, purpose, pleasure and a reason to look forward to the next vacation. So as fall creeps in, the days get shorter, and the weather gets cooler let us all look forward to resuming the life, the love and the ministry that God has blessed us with. And as my mother would say, "Playtimes over, lets get back to it."

... well said

EVENTS

Historical Society Annual Meeting
Asbury UMC, Washington, D.C.
Sept. 26, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The film, "Building the Beloved Community: Race, Reconciliation, Reconnection," will be shown. The film examines the relationship between Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C., and Asbury UMC, a congregation formed by African-Americans who left Foundry in 1836. The filmmaker, John Coleman, and the film's producers and pastors will take part in a panel discussion. The event also includes a catered lunch. To register go to www.lovelylanemuseum.org/contact.

The Bishop's Dinner for Scouting
BWC Mission Center in Fulton
Oct. 14, 6:30 to 9 p.m.

The dinner celebrates this important ministry in our Conference. Early bird registration is \$18. Register at <https://arenaweb.bwcumc.org/default.aspx?page=3115&event=2490>.

WesleyNexus Discussion
Salem UMC in Brookeville
Oct. 17, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Gather for a discussion on "What Pastors Should Know About Science," with a focus on the Science for Seminaries Project. Learn more and register at www.wesnex.org.

10 Prescriptions for a Healthy Church
Glen Mar UMC, Ellicott City
Oct. 24, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The BWC Vibrant Communities ministries and Glen Mar UMC will host a workshop on the top 10 issues surrounding church growth. (See ad on page 6) Register at <https://arenaweb.bwcumc.org/default.aspx?page=3115&event=2477>.

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, you are already registered the the Advent gathering.


Plan to Attend: 2016 Annual Conference Session
Wardman Park Marriott,
2660 Woodley Road NW, Washington
June 1-4, 2016

A Pre-Conference Briefing will be held April 30, 2016, at First UMC in Hyattsville.

ROCK 2016



February 5-7, 2016
Ocean City Convention Center, Ocean City
bwcumc.org/rock



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Maidstone Mulenga

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

Why we apportion: John Wesley’s thoughts on money

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff



SECOND IN A SERIES

APPORTIONMENTS. THE BANE of United Methodist churches? The cost of doing business? What are they and why do we have them?

In the first part of this series (May 2015 *UMConnection*, page 6 or bwcumc.org/why-do-united-methodists-have-apportionments/), we learned that the Book of Discipline has some helpful answers to these questions.

In this installment, we look at how John Wesley’s teachings and attitudes towards money also inform our system of connectional giving.

John Wesley – the man who started the Methodist Movement in the mid-1700s in England – is known for many things including his thoughts on money and the way he actually put stewardship into practice.

Charles White was assistant professor of Christian thought and history at Spring Arbor College in Michigan in 1987 when he wrote an article on John Wesley and money. Wesley, White wrote, was a rich man. In a day and age when a person could comfortably live on 30 pounds a year, White noted, Wesley earned upwards of 1,400 pounds a year thanks to publishing pamphlets, books, sermons and other items. White also notes that Wesley gave more than 90 percent of that money away.

Wesley learned his own spiritual lesson on giving while a college student at Oxford. Wesley had just finished paying for some art to hang on the walls of his room when one of the chambermaids came in. “It was a cold winter day,” White wrote about Wesley’s experience, “and he noticed that she had nothing to protect her except a thin linen gown. He reached into his pocket to give her some money to buy a coat but found he had too little left. Immediately the thought struck him that the Lord was not pleased with the way he had spent his money. Wesley asked himself, Will thy master say, ‘Well done, good and faithful steward’? Thou hast adorned thy

walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold!”

In 1731, Wesley began to limit his expenses so that he would have more money to give to the poor. Wesley – never at a loss for things to write about in his *Journal* – records that one year, his income was 30 pounds and his living expenses 28 pounds, so he gave away 2 pounds. The next year, he records that his income doubled, to 60 pounds, but that he kept his living expenses to 28 pounds. Thus, he was able to give away 32 pounds.

This practice, White notes, continued all his life. “Even when his income rose into the thousands of pounds sterling, he lived simply and he quickly gave away his surplus money.”

As the old saying goes, “You can’t take it with you.” The only money mentioned in Wesley’s will when he died in 1791 was the various coins found in his pockets and in dresser drawers. Most, if not all of the 30,000 pounds he had earned in his lifetime had been given away. “I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence,” Wesley wrote, “but in every other respect, my own hands will be my executors.”

Unlike many pastors today, Wesley was not afraid to preach on money. In his sermon, “On the Use of Money,”

Wesley outlined his thoughts in three succinct phrases: “Having, First, gained all you can, and, Secondly saved all you can, Then ‘give all you can.’” Wesley was clear that the first two items were important, but that if a person stopped there, they were missing the point. “Not to use, is effectually to throw it away.”

Wesley was keen on how spending money is a living theology in response to what God first gave us. First, he said, “provide things needful for yourself; food to eat, raiment to put on, whatever nature moderately requires for preserving the body in health and strength.” Next, he called for provisions for your wife/husband and children, and “any others who pertain to your household.” When that is done, Wesley had this to say with any money left over: “If when this is done there be an overplus left, then ‘do good to them that are of the household of faith.’ For all that is laid out in this manner is really given to God. You ‘render unto God the things that are God’s,’ not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household.”

NEXT TIME: Personal stories of the impact of connectional giving



ASL video glossary opens new doors to Deaf community

By BARBARA DUNLAP-BERG
United Methodist News Service



THE REV. KIRK VanGilder, a clergy member of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, was born Hard of Hearing. At school, he said, “I was continually made to feel different, strange and ‘not normal’ by kids who noticed my hearing aids or giggled when I had to ask the teacher to repeat something.”

When he discovered Deaf culture and community, VanGilder realized there simply was something different about him. “Far from needing to be ‘fixed,’” he said, “that difference of being deaf was a gift from God ... a language, culture and way of being that honored how I was made and contributed to the world around me.”

As his ability to hear declined, VanGilder transitioned into using American Sign Language (ASL) in college and seminary. Today he is assistant professor of religion at Gallaudet University in Washington.

LaSander Saunders experienced hearing loss as an adult. “Because my Deafness was gradual,” she explained, “I was constantly faced with the need to do something about it. I struggled with depending on others. When I decided to further my education, I began to learn (ASL).”

Christ Deaf UMC in Baltimore was a refuge for Saunders. Today, she is a leader in that congregation and in her annual conference, with church choir directing and lay speaking among her many contributions.

“I found a place of worship and identity with people I had something in common with,” she said. “I was blessed to have this life-changing experience and be accepted.”

“My parents are Deaf and my first language is ASL,” said the Rev. Leo Yates. His family attended the former Washington UMC of the Deaf in Takoma Park.

“Being in Deaf ministry was ingrained in me since childhood. Being bilingual and bicultural, it is natural for me to bridge hearing and Deaf individuals.”

VanGilder, Saunders and Yates are among the few members of the Deaf community who have found welcome in any church. Of the approximately 32,000 United Methodist congregations in the U.S., fewer than 200 have any accommodations for Deaf people who use ASL, said Carol Stevens, a lifelong United Methodist and a certified ASL interpreter.

Today, however, the denomination is working to close the gap between hearing and Deaf communities through the United Methodist Committee on Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Ministries.

A recently released ASL video glossary “is a significant step in opening the doors of The United Methodist Church to the community whose primary language is ASL,” said Michelle Provart Menefee.

A certified ASL interpreter – next year’s General Conference will be her third in that role – she is a lifelong United Methodist.

In autumn 2014, the Rev. Tom Hudspeth, president of the United Methodist Congress of the Deaf and pastor of Deaf ministry at Lovers Lane United Methodist Church, Dallas, approached Menefee about taking on a project to develop a resource of United Methodist terms in ASL for interpreters.

“I said, ‘YES!’” she recalled. “Then I took a couple steps, looked up to heaven and said, ‘We can do this.’”

“From that moment, I began praying for a clear vision on how this project should be developed. I prayed for the right people in the right places to make this work worthy. Most importantly, I prayed that when it was done, all the glory would go to God.”

Patricia Magyar, top executive of U.S. health for the General Board of Global Ministries and liaison to the United Methodist Committee on Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Ministries, set up a conference call with Tim Tanton, a staff executive at United Methodist Communications.

“I shared a starting goal,” Menefee remembered. “Then the Holy Spirit took over the call. A conversation began, and a new vision was born.”

The resulting ASL video glossary, with Deaf people signing a lexicon of religious terms with explanations as well as the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostles’ Creed in sign language, is now available on The United Methodist Church website and available via YouTube and other social media.

“This is unprecedented work on behalf of the Deaf community,” said Bishop Peggy A. Johnson, Philadelphia Area, who previously served Christ Church. “With increasing mobile Internet use, this kind of resource can be accessible to all people – hearing people trying

to learn sign language and Deaf people wanting to understand the theology better in their own language.”

The videos show the common signs for a term and explain the concept.

“It is a teaching tool for Deaf people to understand the concepts and for interpreters to know how to interpret and expand the information as part of the interpretation for clarity or meaning,” Stevens said.

“Sign languages are not universal,” she pointed out. “At Christ Church, we work with Deaf people from 40 countries – often with immigration issues and all from countries with different sign languages.”

Menefee noted, “American Sign Language is not English in signs. The two languages are very different in syntax, grammatical structure and other ways.”

Yates believes the glossary will prove invitational. “We hope this will further help the Deaf community to fall in love with what The United Methodist Church offers,” he said. “This signed glossary provides the viewers to see what The UMC is about.”

A combined grant from the United Methodist Committee on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Ministries and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Ministries Advance Special funded the project.



LaSander Saunders provides words for new ASL glossary.

Mike DuBois / UMS

Halse: Learning to lean on the Holy Spirit & tend roots

From page 1

believed they were supposed to be there in the valley, doing the Lord’s work.

She learned from them. One lay person taught her strategic planning before it was a popular corporate trend. Another person brought Disciple Bible Study to the congregation. The church began to grow and Halse kept listening to the Spirit and to her people.

Tremendous mission ideas would come out of the congregation, she said. Middletown sponsors a school for the Deaf in Liberia – providing teacher and curriculum training and helping with the building.

“I wouldn’t know how to do those things,” Halse said. “But I do know how to enable lay people who know how to do those things. Connecting is a huge thing for me. We just kept asking, ‘Where else does God want us to be?’”

When she retired in July, she left a completely different church – which has four weekly worship services, is a vibrant community center and has more than a thousand members.

Halse’s tenure at Middletown was longer than most other pastorates in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. (The Rev. Andy Lunt, for example, served for 31 years at Glen Mar UMC.) While appointments for clergy have been lengthening to beyond the more historic three or four years, 34 years is a testament to a ministry that makes a difference.

Halse jokes that the answer to why she wasn’t appointed to a new church is that she started new building projects about every five years. No new pastor wants to be appointed into construction or the subsequent debt.

But more likely, she believes, is that the Holy Spirit was at work. Each year during appointment season, Halse says, she entered a time of deep discernment. And each year, she and the congregation, and the district superintendent, arrived at the same conclusion: God wasn’t finished with her at Middletown yet.

While for some, the Holy Spirit can be deeply conceptual and theological, for Halse, the Spirit is as close as her breath. “I have a real strong understanding of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit,” she said. “The Spirit leads me, not with neon lights, but when I step toward something I can get a sense of God’s will, of where I should step next.”

Following these steps has led her to essentially pastor four different congregations, all in the same place, as the congregation has grown and changed over the years.

Recently, a parishioner gave her a card that she feels might sum up her sense of ministry. It said, essentially, “Tend to the root, the fragrance and flowering will come.”

“Sometimes we can be so sure about what something will or should smell like, or what kind of flower we will make bloom,” Halse said. “But I have learned, and am learning, to let the Holy Spirit work on the flower. My job is to tend to the root.”

For her, that root involves aligning herself with God through all the church’s ways, especially through tending to her soul through music and learning and being open to Scripture. “The holy Word of God is astonishing,” she said.

As she prepared to retire, another member of her congregation gave her two photos, one of a little boy she had baptized and another of that same boy grown into manhood. “I realized I’d been there for that,” she said. “The church is a fabulous arena for loving people.”

A lot has changed in the church over Halse’s 42 years in ministry. Today, according to the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, 27 percent of all United Methodist clergy are women.

Halse hesitates to make gender a determining factor in any part of ministry. But her years have taught her things that new women and men entering the ministry might consider. Among them:

- Be authentic. Be who you are.
- Do things that feed your soul.
- Always search for, be open to, and be surprised by the Spirit.
- Keep coming back to the facts that it’s not always about you and it’s not always up to you.
- Remember where you came from and how God has been in your life and trust that.

“Don’t let yourself or your ministry be labeled or neatly boxed,” Halse said.

Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.”

“Lean on that,” said Halse. “Depend on it.”

Connect, care, trust the Spirit

Many of the first women ordained in The United Methodist Church met the challenges they faced by being “in regular connection with other clergywomen,” said the Rev. Nancy Webb, who “re-retired” in 2015. To today’s clergy women she shares the message: “When you get busy, never go it alone. The Spirit works through your sisters of every race and theological perspective.”

The Rev. Sandra Taylor, who was ordained 30 years ago, argued with God about her calling, wondering at the time how a woman with two children could serve in the ordained ministry. She cooked her husband a good meal, and was nervous the night she spoke with him about it.

He said, “The only thing I can think of is how to support you.”

In her ministry, Taylor learned that it’s still often hard for women to be assertive leaders. “The bottom line is turn it over to God – with tears, with laughter; know that God will give you the strength.”

In the pulpit, Taylor said, “when you put on a robe, you are no longer male or female. You are God’s servant.” Claiming this identity in her life has been important. “In my first appointment, I learned that often the most important thing is to love God’s people.”

Recently, both Taylor’s husband and son died. She read the 23rd Psalm at her son’s funeral service.

“I can be bold when I need to be,” she said. “As a clergywoman, as me, I love serving the Lord -- body, heart, mind, soul and spirit.”

Are you being called to ordained ministry? Have questions about it? Visit <http://www.explorecalling.org/>.

Disciples making disciples: Life-transforming small groups

By JOE IOVINO*

FOR A TIME, I received phone calls from the health-coaching program offered by my insurance provider. The cheerful people on the phone were nutrition and exercise professionals who offered information and encouragement to help me stay healthy. As one call concluded, the coach asked if I had any questions. I replied, “No. I know what to do. I just have to do it.”

That is as true for my life of discipleship as it is for my health. I know what I am supposed to do to grow spiritually, but without encouragement and accountability, I struggle.

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, described the plan of discipleship in what he called “The General Rules.” As Christians, we are to (1) do no harm by avoiding evil of every kind; (2) do good to all people; and (3) attend upon all the ordinances of God like participating in worship, taking Communion, reading the Bible, praying, and more.

Unfortunately, knowing that does not always translate into living it.

While trying to pay off a mortgage after the Methodist movement purchased a building where they would hold Society meetings, Wesley and the other leaders came up with an ingenious plan. They divided the Society into “classes” of about 12 people each where one was designated the leader. The leader’s job was to meet with each member weekly to collect a penny.

Wesley would later describe what the leaders learned during their visits. One member was “quarreling with his wife. Another was found in drink.” Clearly, the early Methodists knew the General Rules, but were struggling to follow them.

“It immediately struck into Mr. Wesley’s mind,” Wesley wrote about himself, “This is the very thing we wanted. The leaders are the persons who may not only receive the contributions, but also watch over the souls of their brethren” (Wesley “Thoughts upon

Methodism”).

Soon, the Classes started meeting together to “watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”

The weekly Class Meetings had a singular purpose. Each person was to answer this question, “How does your soul prosper?”



Wesleyan small groups bring people together to watch over one another in love.

United Methodist congregations and pastors have a renewed interest in these kinds of groups. Rather than devising strategies to grow congregation size, they are investing their time and energy into growing disciples of Jesus Christ.

This aligns with what members have said matters most. In a 2014 survey, United Methodists named “creating disciples of Christ” as the most important issue facing the church today — ahead of other issues that get more headlines.

“Disciples of Jesus Christ are made today by disciples who have been loved and taught by other disciples,” the Rev. Steven Manskar, Director of Wesleyan Leadership with Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church teaches in a webinar. This is the method Jesus modeled and passed on, through Wesley and others, to us — disciples making disciples.

Many churches have small groups, but as the Rev.

Kevin Watson, Assistant Professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies at Candler School of Theology, writes in “The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience,” “Not all small groups are created equal! Some small groups are better than others.”

Affinity groups are good for forming friendships, but not very effective for making disciples. They invite people to get together for an activity like sewing, jogging, or daycare.

Information driven groups that bring people together to learn something are better. These include Sunday school classes, Bible studies, parenting classes, and the like.

The best small groups for forming disciples, according to Watson, are transformation driven.

“I think the Class Meeting meets the need that every person has for meaningful connection and an appropriate place to be deeply known,” Watson said in a recent interview. A transformation-driven group “pushes people outside of the comfort of an abstract, distanced discussion of ideas,” he continued. “The Class Meeting is about knowing Jesus, being in Christ, and being in an active and transformative relationship with the Triune God.”

If like me, Paul, and the early Methodists, your spiritual life would benefit from encouragement and accountability, consider joining a Wesleyan-style small group.

This is the first in a series of stories on Wesleyan small groups for today. Read the other stories at <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/wesleys-small-group-model-for-today>.

**Joe Iovino works for UMC.org at United Methodist Communications*

Inspire DC: Creative partnerships lead to new ministry

From page 1



“We don’t want to look like we’re coming from 20011 (ZIP Code) or 20005 to come and serve in 20019, because we’re a part of the community, we are the community. There was just this outcry that this had to happen.”

Vaden’s group – not a church but a non-profit group of mainly young adult United Methodists – were there because of their love for “20019,” the ZIP Code of the block party neighborhood.

“We need to be here, to rally around what is going on in two-hundred and nineteen,” she said. “There is so much good happening here.”

InspireDC partners with various organizations throughout the city to serve others. “We are like the umbrella organization,” she said, noting that other



feeding programs are in the works, including hydroponic gardening and sustainable fish farming.”

InspireDC will also be providing education opportunities for churches in the community, offering ways to alleviate at-risk hunger.

Looking out at the table, now filled with people sharing a meal, Vaden stood amazed.

“Thank God that this happened,” she said. “We have plenty of people and plenty of food. We have a table with people sitting at it. People that may never sit at a table at home; they may not have a dining room table, but they are dining at a table in their community. It makes me, like, crazy, but I love it and I’m excited.”

“The violence that we’ve seen in the community this week is not the only story,” said Yunger. “The more we are in community together, the more that good things can happen.”



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Children enjoy a moment in the moon bounce; hotdogs and fresh fruit were on the menu; a child proudly shows a new backpack; hundreds of people sat down at a very long table to enjoy a meal together; Robrette Vaden (L) and the Rev. Dottie Younger (R); Pastor Armon Nelson (R) of Mount Vernon UMC, and his wife, La Taska.


Photos by Alison Burdett

Healthy Church Prescriptions

OCTOBER 24, 2015

Do you have a desire to transform your congregation and community? The Healthy Church Initiative was developed as a transformation process for church leaders desiring to grow their church and reach new people.

Guest Speaker: **Bob Farr**

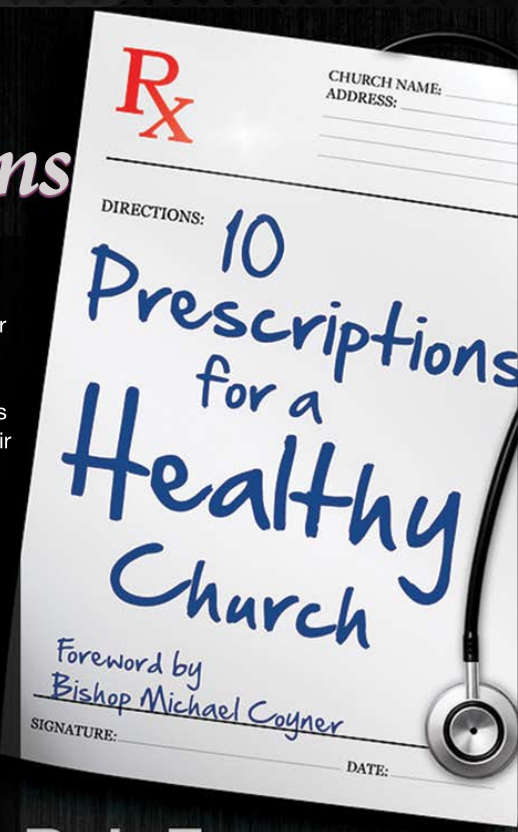


Glen Mar United Methodist Church
4701 New Cut Rd
Ellicott City, MD 21043
9 am - 3 pm

\$30 advanced registration required:
<http://bit.ly/1KzBLiL>

Bob Farr
Kay Kotan

SPONSORED BY THE BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON CONFERENCE AND GLEN MAR UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



CHURCH NAME:
ADDRESS:

DIRECTIONS: **10 Prescriptions for a Healthy Church**

Foreword by *Bishop Michael Coyner*

SIGNATURE: DATE:

FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR LAITY

A FOUR-PART SERIES ON FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH
NOV. 2015 / MAR. 2015 / SEPT. 2016 / NOV. 2016

NOV. 2015
Session 1: A Theology of Stewardship and Creating a Culture of Giving

MAR. 2015
Session 2: Organizing for Effective Stewardship and Using Vision and Mission to Budget

SEPT. 2016
Session 3: Best Practices for Church Finances as well as Annual and Capital Campaigns

NOV. 2016
Session 4: Endowments, Planned Giving and Property and Insurance Issues

NOV. 2015 LOCATIONS

BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON CONFERENCE	EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE	PEN-DEL CONFERENCE
NOV. 7: GRACE UMC, HAGERSTOWN MD	NOV. 7: TINDLEY TEMPLE UMC, PHILADELPHIA PA	NOV. 7: CALVARY UMC, MILFORD, DE
NOV. 14: BWC MISSION CENTER, FULTON MD	NOV. 21: WEST LAWN UMC, READING PA	NOV. 14: CORNERSTONE UMC, BEAR, DE
NOV. 21: SOLOMONS UMC, SOLOMONS MD	NOV. 21: ASBURY UMC, ALLENTOWN PA	

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Society of John Wesley award given to BWC Elder

WASHINGTON, D.C. – At Wesley Seminary’s graduation service in May, the Rev. Malcolm Frazier received the 2015 Society of John Wesley Award of Merit, given each year to recognize a Wesley graduate who exemplifies a high standard of commitment and devotion to God, the church and the seminary.

Frazier, an ordained Elder, is currently executive secretary of mission volunteers at the General Board of Global Ministries’ Mission and Evangelism Section. But he is probably better known throughout the conference as the chaplain and Wesley Foundation director at Howard University where he led students on spring mission trips to Haiti, South Africa and other places. For more than 20 years Frazier has advocated for youth and young people, helping recruit and mentor the next generation of leaders for the church.

The award was presented by Wesley president, the Rev. David McAllister-Wilson. Upon accepting it, Frazier said, “It has been an exhilarating journey through the local church, the college campus, the classroom and the global mission field, and my journey continues.”

Church offers sports camps to kids

INDIAN HEAD – More than 50 boys and 20 girls, ages 6 to 17, participated in football and cheerleading camps at Metropolitan UMC in July, the second year for football and the first for cheerleading. The camps are one of many missional activities of the church.

The camp started last year when the Rev. George E. Hackey Jr., and his son-in-law Mike Martin, a scout for the NFL’s Houston Texans, put their heads together.

“Team sports are great,” Hackey said. They teach life lessons, including losing sometimes, he said. “It teaches you to lose with dignity and respect and when you win, win with humility.”

“Losing builds character,” said Tyme Collins, 14,

beginning his freshman year in high school. He signed up to hone his skills.

Sports can develop structure and discipline, according to Martin.

Joseph Simmons, 8, was there because “I love football. It calms me down and give me time to myself,” he said. And unlike watching TV all day, sports keep him moving. “It works you out.”

The girls worked out at the church, stretching and working on jumps, dances and cheers, coached by Natalie Greer who coaches at the local high school.

A week later, the girls, ages 8-17, had a chance to attend Candy Cosmo camp where they addressed self-esteem through fashion, food, fitness, freedom,



More than 70 youth enjoyed football and cheerleading camp at Metropolitan UMC in Indian Head this summer.

friendship and friendships.

A fuller story by Sara K. Taylor, was published in SoMdNews.com, the Southern Maryland Newspapers Online.

A place that matters to UMs

NEW WINDSOR - A UMC.org feature story lists seven sites “every United Methodist should see.” Among the seven is the BWC’s First Methodist meeting place, the Strawbridge Shrine.

On this hallowed ground the seeds of Methodism were planted in the New World by Robert and Elizabeth Strawbridge. The couple came to Maryland from Ireland about 1760. While Robert traveled for long periods to preach and hold circuit meetings, Elizabeth led Bible

studies for neighbors. She is credited with leading John Evans to become the very first convert to Methodism in America.

The site at New Windsor helps visitors to learn the story of everyday people who started the Methodist church in their homes. At the same location is also the John Evans house and a re-creation of the first log cabin meeting house.

The other sites added to the “Wesleyan wonders of the world” in the USA in 2014 are: Mother African Zoar and Tindley Temple, two churches in Philadelphia; the Christmas and Easter Totem Poles at Saint John UMC in Anchorage, Alaska; John Street UMC in New York City, at 250 years old, the oldest Methodist congregation in the U.S.; and Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center and home of the World Methodist Council, near Asheville, North Carolina.

Add these important historical spots to your travels.

Trees for Sacred Places

CHURCHTON – When the Interfaith Partners of the Chesapeake were looking for sacred places to plant trees, West River Camping and Retreat Center volunteered immediately. The camp is partnering with Interfaith Partners, the West Rhode Riverkeeper and the Anne Arundel County School system to plant trees on its property on Sept. 16. Any volunteers who would like to participate in this greening effort should contact Andy Thornton at director@westrivercenter.org. For more information, visit www.interfaithchesapeake.org/tree_planting_program



'Christ has made me a winner:' My Walk with the Lord

BY RON DETER*

At the May annual conference Session, Ron Deter received the Harry Denman Evangelism Award. He was unable to pick it up because of an illness. Below is his testimony.

THIS ALL BEGAN in June of 2000 when my surgeon told me that a lymph node he removed from under my left arm and sent off to be analyzed was malignant cancer. As the doctor was telling me this horrible news of my having cancer, I was asking the Lord to help me, be with me and give me courage and strength to face this terrible disease. I would never attempt to fight a battle like this alone and knowing of God's blessed assurance that he would always be with me through all trials and tribulations was a tremendous comfort. "Because He lives, all fear is gone: because He lives, I can face tomorrow." Because He lives, I can face cancer or anything or anyone.

The doctor told me, after reading the films from my PET Scans, that I had cancer in nine places in my body, plus in my bone marrow. He told me that I was a prime candidate for bone marrow transplant. There was no facility here in Cumberland to do that and I would have to go to Johns Hopkins to have the procedure done.

I told the doctor that I wanted a second opinion. My cancer was a stage four condition, which is an advanced condition and severe. He asked me where I wanted to go for the second opinion. I prayed about this and I truly believe the Holy Spirit guided me to Ruby Hospital in Morgantown, W.Va.

A consultation appointment was made with the chief oncologist at the cancer center at Ruby Hospital. She told me she had several programs to offer me to fight this cancer and that I didn't have to be put through the bone marrow transplant.

Her treatment was to have eight treatments, one every 21 days, while staying in the hospital each time for five days. Half way through the eight treatments, she had me tested and my cancer was completely gone! She was amazed at the immediate, complete results. I was

overwhelmed and overjoyed at the diagnosis -- but not surprised at God's healing powers.

I prayed hard and often during those first four visits and treatments for God to help me and be with me through this battle. The Holy Spirit was with me. I could feel it, especially in the hospital room when I was praying to my Lord for help and strength. This is the most wonderful feeling.

At the doctor's suggestion, I took the final four treatments for what the doctor said was to be on the safe side and just in case. This I knew was not necessary because I know that God touched me and made the chemotherapy work. I prayed for God to help the doctors make the right decision in my treatments and they did. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Amen

My cancer stayed in remission for three months. Then it came back ... with a fury, causing me to have flu-like symptoms. The doctor told my wife on the phone to get me there right away; we arrived the next day. Off we went on the next leg of my journey, with God right with me all the way.

This time the PET scan films showed that my insides looked like a bowl of spaghetti. The cancer was wrapped around everything inside of me. Immediately, I started praying asking God to help me and give me courage and strength to defeat this cancer: to be with the doctors.

This time I was going to take eight treatments as an outpatient and go home after taking about six hours of chemotherapy on the same day.

Another miracle was given to me, by God. Halfway through the eight treatments, my cancer was gone, every speck. Again, the doctors and staff were amazed and they called me the miracle man. I said "I'm just the receiver of God's miracles. He healed me through the efforts and talents he gave to you."

This time my cancer stayed in remission for five years until, once more, it reared its ugly head in me. "Here we are again, Lord", I said as I prayed and asked if I was worthy of his saving grace again. "Touch me, Lord; help me."

There were large tumors growing in me. One next to my stomach about four inches in diameter, and one on

my neck about the size of a golf ball. The one on my neck didn't hurt, but the one in the stomach area was terribly painful. So much so that I was put on narcotics for pain and even this didn't give me complete relief. I slept sitting up in pain for about six weeks because it hurt so bad to lie down to try to sleep.

They operated on me and cut out samples from the large tumor to find out what type cancer I had this time. Tests showed it was the same kind so they knew what to treat this cancer with, but I had to heal from surgery before chemo. They gave me chemo as an outpatient and again, halfway through the treatment plan, my cancer was gone! "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Again, God was gracious to me and showed me how much he loved me and showed me how special I am to him. How honored and privileged this made me feel! It brings me to tears every time I think about it. This is more proof that God lives and is my Savior and wants me to ask Him for help, strength and courage.

Never walk alone! I won't because the Lord walks with you no matter what you face. Just ask God and he will be with you now and forevermore. He has touched me with his saving grace at least eight times in the past six-and-a-half years and I am grateful to him for all he has done for me.

I had two major heart attacks. God pulled me through. I had a major gall bladder attack. God pulled me through all three of the attacks and the operations. There were reactions I had to some of the medications that were life-threatening. God lifted me. I owe God, my Lord and Savior, so much; the least I can do is be a good witness and give my testimony at every opportunity, even create opportunities to give testimony. This I do with pride. This is the story of my journey so far. When I pass on, whether from cancer or whatever God's plan is ... Christ has made me a winner! He has given me victory in Jesus! Amen and Amen.

**Ron Deter is a member of New Covenant UMC in Cumberland.*

Young Adult Ministry: Part of the Church we often ignore

BY CHERYL COOK*



WHEN I WAS hired a little over two years ago to be the associate director for Young Adult and Campus Ministry at the Baltimore-Washington Conference, I was provided with a job description and the understanding that I had the opportunity to help "shape" the position. I was beyond thrilled and spent the weeks leading up to my start date envisioning the different fellowship events, mission and service projects and small group studies that I would help organize for use across the conference for young adults.

What I didn't envision was that I would regularly have to educate people on why young adults are important in the life of the church. I just assumed everyone knew how important it is to have young adults engaged and involved in every way possible. Well you know what they say when you assume...

Within a few short weeks of starting, I was sitting outside the Mission Center with a co-worker eating lunch when a retired pastor was heading in for a committee meeting. My co-worker introduced me to the pastor and told him my position.

He looked at me and said, "Young adults, huh? I don't worry about them. They don't have any money."

I almost choked on my Chick-Fil-A sandwich. I wish I could say this is the only time in the last two years where someone has expressed those sentiments to me. Sadly, it is not.

So, in the last two years, I have tried to find different ways to provide education and training on young adults. Writing this column is one more avenue that I'm using. Over the next few months you are going to hear from

me and other members of the young adult community. And I'm warning you now: you aren't always going to like what we have to say.

Some of what you're going to read might make you uncomfortable and force you to re-think the way you do ministry. Engaging young adults isn't easy, it certainly isn't always pretty, and there isn't a specific formula to make it work. But engaging young adults is vital to the longevity of our churches. We need them to survive, and unless we make some serious changes, young adults are going to take their time, talent, families and — yes! — money, to other denominations or charitable causes.

At this year's Annual Conference, Daniel Barnett, co-chair of the Young Adult Council, gave a speech during the laity session regarding young adults (bwcumc.org/myths-about-young-adults-and-the-church/). He told us that it is time to stop believing a few myths that we have come to accept as facts about young adults, like the myth that tells us dropping out of church is a natural part of young adults' maturity. Or the myth that says young adults will come back to church like they always do, we just have to wait for them to marry and/or have children. Or the myth that says if you really want to attract young adults, you need to offer a contemporary worship service, a coffee shop setting or better technology. Or that young adults don't have money or anything of value to offer our churches. These are all myths.

Friends, I beg you to please journey with me and the young adult community over the next few months. We want to be heard, but we also want to hear. If you're frustrated or confused or have questions or need resources, we want to know and address them for the good of the group.


But more than anything, we want to be disciples. We want to grow in community and make a difference in the world. Don't United Methodist churches want the same?

**Cook is the Associate Director of Young Adult Ministries at the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Her e-mail is ccook@bwcumc.org.*



Cheryl Cook, right, with her husband, Ryan, and new daughter Joanna.

Belle Baby Photography



LEARN. LIFT. LEAD.

A love offering to celebrate the ministry of Bishop Marcus Matthews

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.

You and your congregation have the opportunity to create a health and sports complex on the campus of Africa University. Your gift will transform the lives of the school's 2,500 students and honor a man who has given his life to the ministry of The United Methodist Church.

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.

Send your contributions, marked Bishop's Love Offering, to the Conference Treasurer at 11711 E. Market Place, Fulton, MD 20759.

Biblical Storytelling Festival shares Scripture ‘by heart’

By ERIK ALSGAARD
UMConnection Staff

MOST GOOD STORIES begin, “Once upon a time...”. For the 250 people gathered in the sanctuary of Chevy Chase UMC in mid-August, the story they heard began, “In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning.”

The Network of Biblical Storytellers, who were holding their Annual Festival Gathering across the street at the National 4-H Center, came to hear the “Epic Telling” of the Book of Acts. One by one, or sometimes in pairs, storytellers came to the front of the sanctuary and shared the first 10 chapters of Acts not as a biblical text to be read, but to be told as a story.

The Rev. Dennis Dewey, from Utica, New York, and a newly retired Presbyterian pastor, served as emcee for the evening’s 150-minute long storytelling. Dewey is also on the board of the Network.

Biblical storytelling, he said, is not rote memorization of the text and repeating it back.

“We call the process ‘learning by heart,’” he said, “which is very close to memorization. It comes out pretty much word for word, but it’s not just memorizing words, it’s learning images, feelings, characters, the places and the spaces as a storyteller would do. We just happen to clothe that with something like the words that have been given to us in translation.”

The Annual Festival Gathering, he said, is like a

conference, “but it’s chock-full of storytelling workshops and presentations.” Workshops ranged from how to use gestures, movement and voice during storytelling, to learning how to do exegesis of the text. The Rev. Tom Boomershine, founder of the Network in 1977 and United Methodist clergy, offered a series of workshops telling stories of “The Messiah of Peace,” the title of his latest book.

“I’d never heard Acts told as a story,” said Boomershine. “It was a very powerful experience.”

Boomershine looked back on the early days of the Network, recalling how an “Epic Telling” was not something that had even been thought of nor considered. Looking forward, Boomershine envisions a youth event, much like the current Festival, but specifically tailored for a younger crowd.



Rev. Tom Boomershine

Another possibility is so-called “Scriptures by Heart” groups, Boomershine said, where people gather every week in local churches to learn and tell the stories of the Bible.

“It has been a profoundly transformative experience for the people,” he said, speaking about the group he belongs to at his own church, Grace UMC in Dayton, Ohio. That group, he added, has grown to 30 people since its start nine years ago.



The Rev. Dennis Dewey tells a story from the book of Acts.

The Bible, Boomershine believes, was not a text read by readers, but was a series of compositions performed for audiences. There is energy – and power – in the stories and in the telling of them.

“To observe the sheer energy that is being generated by the learning and the telling of these Scriptures by heart is truly a remarkable thing,” Boomershine said. “It is truly the energy of the story that has generated this interdenominational, global community.”

Dewey said that members of the Network came to the Festival from as far away as Australia. The 2016 Festival will return to Chevy Chase from Aug. 3 to 6.

For more information on the Network of Biblical Storytellers, visit www.nbsint.org/

Photos by Erik Alsgaard